Impacts of the management of COVID-19: Reshaping understandings of precarity

An investigation of normative power in the case of female migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry during the pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to contribute to the precarity literature by investigating how the management of COVID-19 induces a condition of precarity which affects the work and private life of female migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry. To do so, we analyse how normative powers throughout the pandemic legitimise specific practices which differentially affect female migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry and how they act upon and experience these practices. Since we are interested in understanding the experiences, feelings and opinions of female migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry during the pandemic, we have decided to conduct qualitative research.

By building on a post-structuralist standpoint, we develop our theoretical framework on Judith Butler's (2016, 2020) conceptualisation of precarity as a politically induced condition. To analyse precarity we use the analytical lenses of recognition (Butler, 2016; Fraser, 2007; McQueen, 2015) and performativity (Butler, 1988, 2015; Phillips & Knowles, 2012) as well as through the concept of performative spaces (Gregson & Rose, 2000). Through the findings of our analysis, we propose a conceptualisation of precarity as a process induced by changes in normative power. Such a conceptualisation implies investigating how these changes in normative power condition the objective and subjective aspects within precarity as well as how people become differentially precarised through space and time.

Keyword: COVID-19, precarity, precarisation, gender, migration, cleaning industry, space

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19 NCP	COVID-19 National Communication Partnership
DHA	Danish Health Authority
DMH	Danish Ministry of Health
DMJ	Danish Ministry of Justice
DWEA	Danish Working Environment Authority
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MCE	Ministry of Children and Education
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PRG	Professional Reference Group
WHO	World Health Organisation

INTRODUCTION

"*This is not just a public health crisis; it is a crisis that will touch every sector – so every sector and every individual must be involved in the fight. I have said from the beginning that countries must take a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, built around a comprehensive strategy to prevent infections, save lives and minimise impact.*"

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General,
Media briefing on COVID-19, 11th of March 2020.

Since Word Health Organisation Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared the spread of COVID-19 a global pandemic in March 2020 (WHO, 2020a) more than 167 million people have been infected and 3,4 million people have died from the virus on a global level (WHO, 2021). To manage the outbreak of COVID-19 and its consequences, 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approaches have been implemented leading to various degrees of closures of whole societies during what have been termed national lockdowns. In many countries, these lockdowns have entailed closures of kindergartens, schools, and other public institutions, businesses assumed 'non-essential' such as restaurants, hotels, and the retail industry as well as the tourist industry due to closed national borders. Not surprisingly, unemployment rates skyrocketed within the first months of the pandemic (ILO, 2020) and in October 2020 a joint statement from ILO, FAO, IFAD and WHO announced that "nearly half of the world's 3.3 billion global workforce are at risk of losing their livelihoods" (WHO, 2020b). Consequently, within the last year, national governments have in various ways adopted measures "to prevent infections, save lives and minimise impact" (WHO, 2020a) such as the national lockdowns which have had enormous effect on states, economic markets, and people's everyday lives.

However, the consequences throughout the global pandemic have not been equally distributed on all shoulders. Several statistics and researches of the effect of COVID-19 define COVID-19 as a both health and economic crisis whose impacts are unfolding in highly differential ways for human lives at a global, regional, and national level. Thus, many argue that the political management of COVID-19 is exposing already existing inequalities while simultaneously creating new ones (ILO, 2020; WHO, 2020b; Gore, 2020; KVINFO, 2020; Langford, 2020; Damiani, Kaik, Dervishi & Bech Olsen, 2020). Obviously, the differential experiences of the severity of the consequences differ in accordance with national contexts. In liberal states such

as the US and UK, inequality is higher, and citizens are less protected by the state in terms of health issues and unemployment (Alesina & Glaeser, 2006). In welfare states, such as Denmark, inequality is low and the universal welfare system is designed to provide all citizens with equal access to health care and social protection (Diaz et al., 2020: 1). Despite the solidarity and universalism underpinning the Danish welfare system, the management of COVID-19 has exposed important socioeconomic inequalities existing in Denmark related to gender, ethnicity, and types of job which we will outline in the following. Furthermore, as we have previously investigated (Damiani et al., 2020), the Danish political management of COVID-19 has further enhanced some of those existing inequalities as well as created new ones. Thus, with the strong welfare state and high equality among Danish citizens, we find the Danish context an interesting case for investigating the differential experiences of COVID-19 related to inequalities along axes of gender, ethnicity and profession.

Different jobs are differently exposed to infection of the virus as well as impacted by the management of COVID-19 by Danish authorities. These differential impacts on people's lives in Denmark are therefore highly linked to the structures of the Danish labour market. It is widely recognised that the Danish labour market is characterised by being gender segregated which entails that men and women obtain employment in different sectors and industries (Larsen, Holt & Larsen, 2016: 10). In Denmark, women are primarily employed in jobs within health or care work (Ibid.). This entails that women are more likely to be in direct contact with people who are already infected with COVID-19. This has been argued to be one of the explanations why the number of infected in Denmark is higher for women than for men – which is also the case on a global level (KVINFO, 2020). However, it is not only the exposure to infection which is different between men and women. As argued by several scholars in the last decades, industrialised countries have developed a labour market which builds on a male breadwinner model providing men with higher levels of security and benefits associated with employment (Lewis, 1992; Sirianni & Negrey, 2000; Vosko, MacDonald & Campbell, 2009). Gender segregation in work is not only prevalent in the labour market, but also in most Danish households. According to a national study from 2018 on how Danes spend their time, Danish women spend more time on household work than Danish men (Bonke & Christensen, 2018: 32). In general, women spend an hour more daily on tasks such as shopping, cleaning, and cooking and in the families with children below the age of 7, women spend an hour more daily on childcare compared to their husbands (Ibid.: 35-37). The small difference between men and women in Denmark, compared to an international context, is highly connected to the welfare

provision of affordable daycare and free schools. However, as Danish authorities close these institutions as a reaction to the spread of COVID-19, the organisation of work in the household and the women's possibility to uphold commitments in both their paid work and the unpaid work in the household is affected (KVINFO, 2020). Therefore, we find it interesting to investigate how the management of COVID-19 differently affects women as well as its consequences on these unequal gender relations.

Besides being characterised by gender segregation, a report from 2016 shows that the Danish labour market is also characterised by being ethnically segregated with 'Danish jobs' and 'migrant jobs'. While the latter is concentrated in a limited number of professions, Danish workers are employed across more diverse types of jobs (Skaksen, 2016: 7). Migrant workers are often employed in low-wage industries that require low or no qualifications, such as cleaning, care work, restaurants, construction and transport (Roseldahl & Møller, 2006: 60-62; Skaksen, 2016: 7; Spanger & Hvalkof, 2020: 6). This is due to the fact that various barriers hinder the chances of migrants to find employment in other and higher-paid industries (Roseldahl & Møller, 2006: 60). Due to these structures of the Danish labour market, migrant workers have been more exposed to COVID-19 because of the close interpersonal contact that these jobs entail. This is reflected in a recent report by the Danish Human Rights Institute, which shows a higher infection rate among migrants employed in the health sector as well as cleaning, service and transport industry (Vikkelsø Slot, Kirkelund Søndergaard & Zaken: 2020). This study further shows that the higher infection rate among migrants is particularly related to their housing situation. In this sense, a low income and lack of network affect other aspects of their lives such as housing, where many often live together with several people within a smaller place, which makes migrants more exposed to COVID-19 as it becomes more difficult to keep a distance and isolate from family members (Vikkelsø Slot et al.: 2020). Another aspect showing the social inequalities in Denmark during the pandemic can be seen in the lack of health information and guidelines provided to migrants in different languages by the state authorities. Until August 2020 the information about COVID-19 was only communicated in Danish, neglecting the fact that migrants may lack the necessary Danish language skills (Diaz et al., 2020: 2). In this sense, we find it interesting to investigate how the management of COVID-19 is creating new inequalities regarding migrants.

As our previous project has shown, the cleaning industry has been highly affected by the management of COVID-19 with a rise in unemployment among cleaners working in the private sector (Damiani et al., 2020). On the other hand, cleaners are also in high demand since state

authorities are stressing the importance of higher levels of cleaning in order to control the spread of COVID-19 and comply with new health guidelines. This has created space for more job opportunities as more cleaning is requested in specific workplaces, such as in schools and other institutions (Olesen, 2021). At the same time, the cleaning industry has been one of the industries with the highest number of infected workers since not only are they more exposed to COVID-19 but they have also continued working during lockdowns (Østergaard, 2020). In this sense, the cleaning industry is an interesting case study as these workers have been differentially exposed to infection of COVID-19 compared to other industries and the management of COVID-19 has affected workers differently within this industry.

Albeit COVID-19 has been regarded as a 'great equaliser', since no one seems immune to both the health and economic consequences of the lockdown measures (Galasso, 2020), the management of COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting specific categories of people. As we have presented above, it is particularly exposing pre-existing as well as generating new inequalities in terms of gender, ethnicity and profession. There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of investigating these inequalities through the concept of precarity (Ahmed, Gore and Langford, 2020; Comunian & England, 2020; Kınıkoğlu & Can, 2020; Mavin & Yusupova, 2020; Sumner, Ortiz-Juarez & Hoy, 2020). Drawing upon our previous project investigating how the management of COVID-19 has affected migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry, we develop a theoretical framework to investigate precarity through power relations. We build on Judith Butler (2016) who argues for the importance of distinguishing between the existential concept of precariousness and the political condition of precarity. The former designates a generalised condition which is shared by all human as well as non-human lives, whereas precarity is defined as "the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (Butler, 2016: 25). By the differential distribution of wealth and the unequal exposure of certain people, power relations maximise precariousness for some while minimising it for others (Ibid.). Building on these intersecting concepts, precariousness and precarity, we investigate how COVID-19 has been presented in ways which emphasise the precariousness of life and how the management of COVID-19 has created new inequalities and exposed already existing ones. Therefore, we set to contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept of precarity during the pandemic through the following research question:

How does the management of COVID-19 contribute to understandings of precarity in the case of female migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry?

In order to address this research question and investigate precarity through power relations, we will be supported by two working questions:

- How does the management of COVID-19 legitimise practices affecting female migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry?
- How do female migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry experience and act upon the practises legitimised by the management of COVID-19?

In order to answer our research question, this thesis will draw upon the literature offered by Butler (2016, 2020) which conceptualises precarity as a condition induced by power relations, namely norms. To investigate how the management of COVID-19 induces a condition of precarity which affects the work and private life of female migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry we use two analytical lenses, namely recognition (Butler, 2016; Fraser, 2007; McQueen, 2015) and performativity (Butler, 1988, 2015; Phillips & Knowles, 2012). In particular, we use recognition to examine how practices enact norms through which our informants are differently recognised and thus inducing a specific condition of precarity. On the other hand, we use performativity to analyse how our informants participate in and act against their condition of precarity. Moreover, through the concept of performative spaces offered by Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose (2000) we set out to analyse how female migrants employed in the cleaning industry are differently affected by the management of COVID-19 in multiple spaces. By building on a post-structuralist methodology and this theoretical framework, we do not investigate the inequalities exposed or created by the management of COVID-19 to better understand the position of female migrants working in the cleaning industry but rather examine their situation to better understand the concept of precarity. Therefore, this thesis will contribute to the precarity literature with a conceptualisation of precarity as a normative process.

METHOD

Methodology

The methodological standpoint of this thesis is located in the post-structuralist epistemology and ontology offered by the French philosopher Michel Foucault and by the American gender theorist Judith Butler. Following their perspective, we reject any epistemology of the truth. As Foucault argues, truth does not exist by itself and thus it is not something which can be discovered and accepted but is rather linked to a system of power which distinguishes the true from the false. Accordingly, truth cannot be understood as outside power as it is produced as well as transmitted under the control of socio-economic and political apparatuses (Foucault, 2019: 131-133). In this sense, what we recognise and come to know, hear and see as truth in a specific time and space is framed by socio-economic and political powers and is thus saturated by power (Butler, 2016: 1).

The fact that what will count as truth and what will not is regulated and delimited by power implies that our ability to feel, think and act critically and publicly is endangered (Butler, 2020: xxi). For this reason, Foucault argues for the importance of problematising the system of power, which sustains "the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements" (Foucault, 2019: 132), by questioning what has been presented to us as necessary, universal and obligatory (Bardon & Josserand, 2010: 506). In this way, we may expose the taken-for-granted truth that has been presented to us as well as the power relations which determine it (Butler, 2016: 12). In this regard, we understand that the truth about COVID-19, which has been presented in Denmark since March 2020, is produced by multiple power relations. However, this does not only refer to the truth about COVID-19 and its 'necessary' and 'obligatory' management. In particular, we argue that our possibility to think, see and feel about cleaners, migrants and women is also conditioned by various power relations, namely norms (Butler, 2015: 63), which are enacted and relayed through the ways in which truth has been framed (Butler, 2016: xix). Therefore, throughout this thesis we do not aim at discovering the truth about the pandemic and our informants, but rather at investigating the truth which is produced by dominant power relations during the pandemic and its effects on the lives of our informants (Foucault, 2019: 119).

As we reject an epistemology of truth, neither can we accept an ontology of being. From Foucault's anti-essentialist perspective, we adopt an ontology of becoming in which his philosophy originates. This entails that "there is no being as such, in the same way as there is

no knowledge as such" (Bardon & Josserand, 2010: 503-4). Through this ontology, the being of lives is not found in what they *are*, but rather in what they *do* and in what they *become* as a consequence of their doing. This implies an understanding of the being of lives as their becoming through their actions and practices (Ibid.). Consequently, one self *is* not, for instance, a woman but rather *becomes* one by continuously repeating specific acts and practices through which the self comes to conform to a specific conception of what a woman is. In this way, the self comes to enact specific norms through which we come to think, see and know them as a woman (Butler, 1988: 522). Accordingly, the epistemological problem inherent to what we come to know, see and feel as truth raises the subsequent ontological issue that the being of lives cannot be referred to outside operations of power but is rather produced according to them. In this sense, the normative conditions for the production of the being of lives originate a historic- and context-specific ontology (Butler, 2016: 3-4). In this regard, we do not understand people as 'beings' but as continuously 'becoming' in accordance with specific historically constituted and context-specific norms which, through people's actions and utterances, they come to embody.

Building our thesis on a post-structuralist methodology demands selecting a theoretical framework which is built on an understanding of precarity as produced by power relations. In this sense, we set out to investigate how dominant norms produce a certain truth during the pandemic in Denmark and how our informants become positioned in specific conditions of precarity due to various norms.

Terminology

Throughout this thesis, we deploy the term 'COVID-19' to refer to the virus whose characteristics in terms of spread, infection and mortality rate in the world and Denmark resulted in its categorisation as a pandemic. We use the term 'management of COVID-19' for defining the specific truth about COVID-19 which has been presented to us by dominant power relations. These power relations have consequently shaped how we come to think about and understand COVID-19 as well as legitimise specific practices. We use the term 'pandemic' to describe the timeframe which limits our investigation to the period between the closure of Denmark in March 2020 until now. Moreover, in this thesis we deploy the term 'migrant' to refer to those people who are residing outside their country of origin and do not have a Danish citizenship. We are aware that by utilising this term we are reproducing dominant power

relations delimiting our world into nation states, which we will reflect on in one of the following sections.

Our informants

For this thesis, we have interviewed sixteen people. In particular, our informants are fourteen since they are female migrants employed in the Danish cleaning industry during the pandemic, while the other two are experts. One expert is our contact in the private cleaning industry from Italy, who is also one of the researchers of this thesis, while the other is a Danish female cleaning in hospitals of Turkish origin who has been interviewed with one of the fifteen informants with the role to translate and guarantee a flowing conversation. In this sense, we also consider her as an expert. Our informants come from different countries, two come from Romania, two from Lithuania, two from Pakistan, two from Thailand, one from Turkey, one from Bangladesh, one from Morocco, one from Nepal, one from the Philippines and one from Croatia. Except for one informant, who has been living in Sweden for 18 years and works in Denmark, the rest of our informants have been living and working in Denmark for between two and twenty-four years. In particular, six of them up to five years, two of them almost ten years and the other six more than ten years. Seven of our informants are fluent in Danish and one is not confident in speaking it, while the other six only speak English. Our informants are in different age groups, five of them are in the late twenties or early thirties, two are in their late thirties and the other seven are in their late forties and early fifties. All our informants have been working for many years in the cleaning industry, in particular six of them for more than ten years, one informant nine years and the other seven less than five years. Within this industry they are employed in the private and public sector, five of them work as cleaners in hospitals, eight informants are employed by private companies subcontracting cleaning services to hotels and schools, and the last informant cleans offices for a private cleaning company. The majority of our informants have been moved during the pandemic. Three of the five informants employed in hospitals have been moved to COVID-19 units, while six of the informants cleaning in hotels have been moved to schools and then back again to hotels. All the informants that work in schools except two of them have been sent as COVID-19 support staff to schools and therefore they are in charge of disinfecting highly touched surfaces. While we were conducting the interviews two of our informants explained that they were given notice of dismissal. Regarding their private life, nine of our informants are married and have children,

three of them are only married and two of them neither are married nor have children. Finally, five of our informants have higher education, one of them started but could not finish and the other eight never attended higher education.

Research design

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the government has been sending public workers home and encouraging private companies to do the same. However, cleaning personnel have been one of the few groups of workers who have continued working throughout the year since their tasks have been deemed important to contain the spread of the virus. In this sense, cleaners have had a higher infection rate compared to other workers (Østergaard, 2020). For this reason, we find it interesting to investigate how the management of COVID-19 has affected their working and private life by either reinforcing already existing inequalities or creating new ones. In this sense, we are interested in understanding the experiences, feelings and opinions of our informants during the pandemic. As we value their knowledge as worth exploring and meaningful, we have decided to conduct a qualitative research which has been defined as the appropriate approach for collecting such data (Choak, 2012: 90). Such data was collected through qualitative interviews, emails sent by the cleaning companies to our informants as well as governmental press meetings about COVID-19.

As far as the qualitative interviews are concerned, we decided to select our informants through three different non-probability sampling approaches. In particular, since we wanted to gain knowledge on the experiences, opinions and feelings of female migrants working in the Danish cleaning industry during the pandemic, we utilised a judgement sampling. In this sense, we deliberately and carefully chose all our informants based on their gender, ethnicity - in terms of not having Danish citizenship - and profession as it allowed us to accurately represent our research question. While our informants working in schools and hotels were selected through both our network within 3F and Angelina’s previous workplace, the process was different for our informants cleaning in hospitals. In order to get access to them, we contacted cleaning departments in hospitals through phone calls and emails and, after explaining the purpose of the interview, we were given contacts to some of their employees. Furthermore, since we had already written a project on migrants working in the cleaning industry, we decided to select some of the informants we had interviewed in our previous project and with whom we had already been in contact throughout the year. In this sense, we used convenience sampling as an

approach to select some of our informants. Finally, we selected one of our informants through the snowballing sampling approach as we asked our interviewees if they could identify other potential respondents (Ibid.: 97-98). Moreover, in order to have a diverse sample, we selected informants of different ages and nationalities, with and without a partner, with and without children as well as employed in both the private and public sector. This has allowed us to have a more nuanced understanding of how the management of COVID-19 has differently affected our informants in both their working and private life (Merkens, 2004: 167).

In order to gather an in-depth account of subjective viewpoints and individual experiences of our informants, we have conducted thirteen qualitative interviews in March 2021. These enabled us to see the data through the eyes of our informants as well as "discover and do justice to their perceptions and the complexity of their interpretations" (Richard & Morse, 2007 in Choak, 2012: 91). Since we wanted to enhance a less constrained conversation as well as allow our informants to lead the conversation, we have chosen qualitative semi-structured interviews as our research method. Having had an in-depth knowledge of our methodology and theoretical framework allowed us to both let our informants answer the questions openly but also to ask for further elaborations or clarifications on some issues that were relevant for our research question. All our interviews were conducted in either English or Danish, but since, in one case, our informant's language knowledge was not extensive, we decided to conduct a paired interview. In this sense, Sandra was supported by Anna, one of her colleagues and friends, who helped translate and create a more informal atmosphere (Choak, 2012: 92-93).

In order to conduct the interviews, we wrote an interview guide after having familiarised ourselves with our post-structuralist methodology and theoretical framework. This implied having a list of open questions regarding how our informants come to think and understand themselves and their working and private life during the pandemic as well as making them reflect on the reasons behind their answers. In particular, we asked about the protective equipment used during their working hours, their working condition, the division of tasks within their home as well as the worries for their families in their home country. As we wanted to understand whether we were asking the questions in the most appropriate order while also avoiding ambiguous language, we decided to test our interview guide. In this sense, after the first two interviews we rearranged the order of the questions, added new ones regarding some of the themes that had been discussed in the first interviews and deleted those questions that had resulted inconcludent or had not elicited detailed responses (Ibid.: 95).

The interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour and a half and were carried out in different ways. The first interviews were conducted by either one or two interviewers. In particular, we decided to be two interviewers with those informants with whom we had not a pre-established rapport as we wanted to make them feel at ease with us while asking some questions that were personal and related to their private life. In this sense, while one of the interviewers was paying special attention to the interview guide and to not repeat the questions that had already been answered, the other was concentrating on follow-up questions and on the body language of the informant. On the other hand, we had informants with whom one of us had already established a personal contact. For this reason, in these cases we decided that only the interviewer who had the personal relation with them had to interview them in order to create an atmosphere as confidential and informal as possible (Ibid.: 96). Moreover, four of these were carried face-to-face, two in the hospitals where our informants work and two in our informant's homes. The other eight interviews were conducted through Zoom video calls since we were prevented from meeting them due to COVID-19 restrictions. While conducting interviews through Zoom video calls hindered the possibility to establish a direct contact with our informants and observe their body language and non-verbal communication (Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury, 2012: 88-90) as well as increased the chances of being interrupted by family members (Choak, 2012: 99), it made the communication accessible for both parts. In particular, some of our informants emphasised on how being virtually interviewed from their homes was comfortable as it enabled them to speak more freely and feel at ease.

While conducting the interviews, we decided against writing down notes in order not to seem less interested or distracted. Therefore, since all our informants gave permission to record our conversations, we transcribed all the interviews in their entirety (Choak, 2012: 99). The analysis of the data collected started with an intensive and repeated reading of the interviews in which we were guided by the research question, the working questions and the theoretical framework. At the beginning, the aim was neither to find the same topics and aspects in all the interviews nor compare them but rather to concentrate on each one of them and identify some key topics, words, ideas and aspects related to our research question and working questions. In this sense, while reading we decided not to restrain ourselves in terms of what was said in another interview as well as of our theoretical framework but to rather keep an open mind and let the collected material guide us (Schmidt, 2004: 254). On the basis of these topics and ideas we formulated some codes, such as being provided with protective equipment, being responsible for affective labour, being worried for their families living abroad. In order to

organise these codes we grouped them into specific themes. In particular, we categorised them into predefined themes coming from the knowledge of our theoretical framework, such as the focus on recognition, performativity and performative spaces, and on emergent themes originating from the data, such as the focus on schools, hospitals and home. By doing so, we let ourselves be guided by both the theories and the interviews in discovering what we found were the most interesting themes (Choak, 2012: 101-102). In this process, we decided to all be part of identifying codes and themes. For this reason, each one of us first independently read some interviews and, afterwards, we decided to compare and discuss our findings. This decision allowed us to find a consensual solution we all agreed on (Schmidt, 2004: 256).

Since we let the data guide us, the process of coding and analysis of our interviews led to a loss of information. Since our data showed interesting similarities and differences among the workspace of the hospital and the school we decided not to utilise one of our informants as she cleans only in offices (Ibid.). At the same time, nonetheless, this process allowed us the flexibility to introduce new participants in the study as we noticed that we needed more data to answer our research question (Choak, 2012: 98). We approached this in two ways. Firstly, in April 2021 we decided to contact seven of our informants again to ask some follow-up questions regarding, for instance, their opinions about the COVID-19 vaccination and their experience as being migrants in Denmark during the pandemic. In particular, we decided against having a second interview with all of our informants since some of them had already discussed these themes in the first interview. The process for creating the interview guide for these interviews was similar to the one used for the first interviews, which means that we wrote and ordered our questions having in mind our methodology and theoretical framework. We also tried this guide on the first few interviews and then rearranged the order, added some questions and deleted inconcludent ones. Five of the seven follow-up interviews were carried out through Zoom video calls while the other two were conducted in our informants' homes. All of these interviews were conducted by one interviewer as we had already established a personal contact with them. Secondly, we decided to use some of the semi-structured interviews we had conducted through Zoom video calls in April 2020 for our previous project. Despite having had a different interview guide and theoretical framework, we decided to use five of these interviews since they were providing a nuance to some themes we were planning to analyse in our thesis. In order to adequately represent our present research question and working questions, we chose only the five interviews conducted with female migrants who had been cleaning in both hotels and schools during the pandemic. In conclusion, in our thesis we

have analysed a total of twenty-five interviews, five from our previous project, thirteen conducted in March 2021 and seven follow-up interviews from April 2021, conducted with sixteen different interviewees.

We acknowledge that by conducting interviews we incur ethical issues. We are aware that we risk exposing our informants by using their conversations in our thesis. In order to protect them and guarantee their anonymity, we decided to change their identities, maintain the interview transcripts confidential and conceal the names of the cleaning agencies, hospitals, schools and hotels where they are working (Scheyvens, Nowak & Scheyvens, 2003: 140). Moreover, before starting the interview not only did we ask permission for recording the conversation but we also clarified our informants' role as well as the purpose of the interview and of our thesis. We further told them that if they wanted they could withdraw from the interview whenever they wanted and from answering some questions they did not feel comfortable with (Choak, 2012: 99). However, ethical research does not only mean 'do not harm' but also 'empower' and 'do good'. For this reason, we focused on respecting not only our informants but also their culture, religion and knowledge. Moreover, at the end of the interviews we informed our informants that if they wanted we could send our thesis to them once completed so that they could have seen how we analysed their information and knowledge and what findings we produced. In the end, we also explicitly thanked our informants for their contribution to our thesis (Scheyvens et al., 2003: 139-141). In this sense, we tried to be transparent, create a comfortable and positive atmosphere and value our informants' knowledge throughout the whole interview. This positive experience was especially stressed by one of our informants who thanked us for having had the chance to share her experience and speak in Danish with us for one hour (Adams, 2010: 18).

Reflections - How do we position ourselves?

In this section we will discuss our role as knowledge producers. With inspiration from Kathy Davis' (2014) arguments about doing intersectional research, we will discuss some of our experiences of being co-producers of data during our qualitative interviews. This will be further discussed with Gregson and Rose (2000) emphasising the importance of paying attention to the production of specific subjectivities through our performance of knowledge production.

Throughout the process of writing our thesis we had some interesting discussions along the way, which made us in particular reflect upon our own position as researchers. As a group of

four women, we reflected upon our own multiple positionings as researchers in terms of national, ethnic, gender as well as religious and non-religious subject positions (Davis, 2014: 22). We saw how these multiple positionings as researchers influenced our inquiry when conducting our interviews. We had an interesting experience with some of our informants who we interviewed twice during our writing process. We saw how, during the first interview with one of our informants, where the interviewer did not perform a religious subject position during the interview, gave us one set of answers. The second interview with the same informant was later carried out where the interviewer was Danish but with another ethnic and religious background. During the interview, the performativity of the interviewer by casually using the word 'mashallah' made visible a religious affiliation which affected the answers we got from our informant (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 447). For instance, during her first interview our informant emphasised the fact that she has never been worried during the pandemic and we saw how the questions about worrying struck her as a bit funny. During the second interview when asked about worries again, she answered: "I don't think so much about it. Because I believe in Allah so it doesn't matter" (Linda, 2021). In this sense, we see how not being worried during the pandemic was linked to her frame of reference, where religion is inevitably linked to how she has experienced the pandemic. The shared religious understanding between interviewer and interviewee created a trust-based interview and thus, provided different answers underpinned by religious reasonings. This gave us a better understanding of our informant as it provided more context to her previous answers. In this sense, we see how we come to co-produce the data we get, since who we are as researchers and how we position ourselves inevitably influence the answers we get from our informants. According to Davis (2014), our social location will always shape the way we look at the world and thus, influence the "kind of questions we ask as well as the questions we haven't thought of asking" (Davis, 2014: 23). For example, we see how by not focusing on the religious aspects of our informants lives, we fail to ask the question: 'what does religion have to do with how you have experienced the pandemic?' Accordingly, we experienced how our positionings as well as our theoretical perspective can create a blind spot - during the first interview - as well as enable us to see what our informants have to offer us - during the second interview (Davis, 2014: 25).

As we become co-producers of knowledge, we need to pay attention to our own subject positions in our writings (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 450), in order not to reproduce but rather expose existing power relations. As touched upon in our methodology, we adopt a non-essentialist ontology claiming that the being or essence is nothing in itself but rather constituted

by power relations. As scholars we are not free of these power relations, and thus, when doing research, we also come to perform specific subject positions as well as reproduce specific norms (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 449). While conducting our research we noticed that there was much attention on ethnic minorities in Denmark during the pandemic, which was focusing on high infection rates among people in certain housing areas. Therefore, we became interested in knowing how our informants were experiencing this and thus, in our follow up interviews we asked questions such as ‘Do you feel that there's been a lot of focus on non-Danish people during the pandemic?’ Or ‘There have been some places in Denmark, where the number of infected has been high among ethnic minorities - why do you think it has been like this?’. We also asked questions related to some of the critiques raised towards ethnic minorities such as ‘Do you think that there is a difference in how people with ethnic minority background take responsibility during the pandemic?’. During the interviews we noticed how our informants did not understand these questions right away and we had to rephrase them several times because of the way we had formulated them, using terms like ‘ethnic minorities’ and ‘non-danish background’. In some cases, we were even asked what the word ‘ethnic minority’ meant, and we were confronted with our own shortcomings of not questioning these categories used mainly by policy makers and in public debates. Instead with our questions we were confirming the categories by reproducing them ourselves (Bakewell, 2008: 437). Additionally, the way in which we were asking these questions were influenced by norms about ethnic minorities in Denmark. In some ways we were repeating what was being presented to us in the media and thus, we ended up reproducing existing power relations related to ethnic minorities. As we had to explain what ethnic minority is, we inevitably fell into the trap of distinguishing between people living in Denmark by using dichotomies such as ‘Danes’ and ‘migrants’ or ‘Danish people’ and ‘Danes with other backgrounds’, which reproduces the understanding of ‘us’ and ‘them’. This influenced the way our ‘white’ informants came to think and speak about ‘brown’ migrants in Denmark. As we, through the formulation of our questions, legitimise a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, we see how our ‘white’ informants reproduced this distinction within a racialised hierarchy among migrants where ‘white’ migrants are superior to ‘brown’ migrants (Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017: 66) . For example, when asked about if they felt that there had been a lot of focus on ethnic minorities during the pandemic, our informant Jennifer answered that she does not know because she “don’t have friends from those obviously other kinds of race, you know, different skin colour, religion and so on” (Jennifer, 2021b). Another informant answered that there has been a lot of focus on: “ghettos and throughout the minorities like Ethiopians, Somalian and in Ishoj because they have different culture and the families are

staying together, there's many in the family, more generations" (Kate, 2021b). She later connects the 'lack of responsibility' of 'brown' migrants during the pandemic to their "other customs and habits" (Ibid.). In this sense, we saw how our 'white' informants reproduced the understanding of 'us' and 'them' within the racialised hierarchies among migrants. Consequently, asking questions in this way only confirmed existing power relations and did not provide anything interesting to our paper and, thus, we ended up not using this part. Despite this, we found it extremely interesting to reflect upon our own role as researchers and knowledge producers throughout the paper, as it showed us how crucial it is to continue to have a critical sense toward oneself and challenge existing truths presented to us in order not to reproduce but rather expose the existing power relations.

Limitations

In writing this thesis we have encountered some limitations which we acknowledge can limit our findings. Firstly, by analysing the experiences, opinions and feelings of our informants through Butler's (2016) precarity theory, we have emphasised on how power relations induce a specific condition of precarity and how our informants experience and navigate their situation. We are aware that 'reality' is constituted by multiple and complex relations of power and thus we cannot engage with an analysis of all the norms which affect our informants. This implies that we will inevitably fail to analyse other norms which affect our informants' work and life by only selecting specific dominant norms which produce interesting effects. Moreover, by only focusing on gender, ethnicity and profession, this thesis does not provide a comprehensive picture of how other aspects, such as age, religion, status in Denmark and health, affect our informants during the pandemic.

Furthermore, we are aware that since COVID-19 has been presented as a health and socioeconomic issue we could have analysed the management of COVID-19 through the concepts of biopolitics and biopower as presented by Foucault. This would have provided us with tools to investigate how power relations administrate and control life and death. In this sense, it would have given us an interesting lens through which to analyse our data and understand the practices implemented by the Danish government as ways to regulate life and death during the pandemic where the focus has been on reducing deaths and protecting lives. Moreover, we limit our findings to this thesis to a specific timeframe starting on the 6th March 2020 with the first press meeting about COVID-19 of the Danish government, until now.

Accordingly, we acknowledge that our thesis does not provide a historical analysis of how the power relations that we investigate during the pandemic have become dominant norms which influence the ways we experience, navigate and come to understand ourselves and our situation.

Reflections on interviews

Moreover, we are aware of the limitations of having conducted qualitative research as an approach to collect data and of having a post-structuralist methodology. In this sense, we acknowledge that our findings based on the experiences and opinions of our informants cannot be generalised. However, this approach has enabled us to gather an in-depth insight into how the management of COVID-19 has affected our informants and how they have navigated their situation during the pandemic. Furthermore, we are aware of the limits inherent to our interview process. Since the interviews have been conducted in two languages, Danish and English, the two Danish researchers had to translate all the interviews conducted in Danish into English. This process has not required the use of a translator but, at the same time, we are aware that by translating the data we may incur a loss of data. However, it has simultaneously allowed our informants to express themselves in the language in which they feel the most confident. Another language-related limitation is related to one of informants who has difficulties in expressing herself in Danish. For this reason, the conversation was facilitated by the mediation of one of her colleagues who translated our questions into Turkish and then translated back into Danish when our informant was not able to understand. We are aware that the data which was translated may have been presented to us through the biases and perceptions of the expert as she was not a professional translator but a colleague. In this sense, through this double translation (Danish from and to Turkish) as well as the transcription from Danish into English we may have lost valuable data. However, this has allowed us to speak with this informant who will not have been enabled to communicate with us, otherwise.

Furthermore, since all our informants working in the hospital were interviewed during their working break, this has implied having shorter interviews and thus having to select some of the questions and disregard others which may have elicited interesting responses. Moreover, we are aware that having interviewed them in their working space as well as having had their contact through their employers may have interfered and produced biases in our informants whose answers, consequently, may not have been completely sincere. In this sense, these limitations may have limited our data and hindered the possibility to get the same information

as the rest of our informants. Nevertheless, this has also provided us with valuable information about their experiences as cleaners in the hospital as well as in their private life.

In addition, we acknowledge that having engaged with some of our informants for one year may as well as with other informants some of us already knew, may have limited our data. Our informants already knew us and may have had some preconceptions and bias towards us which may have influenced their answers. In this sense, their answers may not have been completely sincere and thus affect our findings. On the other hand, however, having established a longer relationship with these informants enabled us to gain more detailed answers for the questions related to their private life. Finally, we are aware that the answers of those two informants who had received a notice of dismissal may have been influenced by it.

STATE OF THE ART

A contested family of concepts

As we embark on the journey of investigating and contributing to understandings of precarity, we enter a body of literature which has a decades-long and complex history. The concept of precarity emerged in leftist movements and social activism in continental Europe in the 1970's confronting the prevalence of more insecure and contingent employment (Alberti et al., 2018: 448). Emerging as a central organising platform for a diverse group of workers the term mobilised millions of workers across Europe by the beginning of the 2000's with demonstrations under the name 'EuroMayDay' protesting against a rising alienation by a globalised and neoliberalised labour market and retrenchments of social protections (Standing, 2011: 1-2). This opposition was founded on perceptions of a development diverging from the more stable and secure working conditions during the first half of the 20th century, a period also termed Fordism, where work was associated with high levels of labour protection, job security and stability. Thus, Fordism became the point of departure for the European precarity movement (Neilson & Rossiter, 2008: 55). Initially used as a catalyst for opposition within European worker mobilisation, the term evolved into an academic concept with a considerable body of literature especially within employment relations research (Campbell & Price, 2016: 315). Following the connotations from the political movements associating work with Fordist employment relations as 'normal' and 'stable', scholars have developed understandings of precarity in terms of 'atypical', 'unstable' and 'insecure' employment relations (Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson & Waite, 2015: 584-585). In this sense, the activist use of the concept which is based on ideas of Fordist employment relations has become an integral part of the academic use of the concept as scholars reproduce notions of what is 'typical' and 'atypical' employment relations. This intertwined political and academic adoption of the concept is also seen in the efforts to conceptualise the precarity movement into a Marxian class theory starting with the workerist tradition of Micahel Hardt and Antonio Negri in the 1960's and proposed recently by Guy Standing (2011). In Standing's conceptualisation of the Precariat as "a class-in-the-making, if not yet a class-for-itself" (Standing, 2011: 7), he develops a new class of workers who share specific conditions of social struggle. The Precariat as a class encompasses workers of different characteristics such as the young, elderly, female, male, natives, migrants, skilled and unskilled (Standing, 2011: 14). Where notions of a shared identity could be a valuable tool applied in the mobilising efforts of the precarity movement, the academic adoption of a shared identity as a distinct class have been criticised for conceptual stretching, diminishing the

explanatory power of the concept (Alberti et al, 2018; Breman, 2013). In this sense, understandings of precarity have evolved through its appliance in both academic research as well as socio-political movements and in sometimes intertwined and indistinguishable ways.

So, when we ask the question 'What is precarity?', the answer is far from simple but rather highly dependent on which perspective and approach are adopted to answer the question (Della Porta, Hänninen, Siisiäinen & Silvasti, 2015: 1). Since Pierre Bourdieu's first use of *précarité* in his research on different types of workers, the proliferation of the concept into various academic contexts has entailed new conceptualisations of precarity such as 'precariat' and 'precariousness' (Alberti et al., 2018: 448). A common feature of the varying conceptualisations of precarity is founded in the latin verb *precari* meaning to beg, entreat and pray as well as its derived adjective *precarius* which designates a state of insecurity and instability as well as dependency on others' favours and exposure to danger (Breman, 2013: 134). Albeit, a certain degree of commonness based on the etymological origin which is working as a red thread through the conceptualisations of precarity, the concepts are adopted in interchangeable ways and often without clear distinctions to each other. In this sense, a family of concepts has evolved where contestations over the different meanings and usages of the concepts reflect the "discursive, and often ideological, controversies taking place between different schools of thought and their different theories, methods, motives, interests, and desires" (Della Porta et al., 2015: 1). Thus, when we present and discuss the literature in the following sections we will use the concepts in interchangeable ways as they are adopted by the respective scholars. However, as we outline the theoretical framework of our thesis, we will make clear how we distinguish different conceptualisations of precarity and how we intend to adopt these in our analysis.

The proliferated adoption of the concept has led scholars to question the conceptual value of precarity (Alberti et al., 2018; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008) and the concept has further been described as in danger of becoming "a catchall, meaning everything and nothing at the same time" (Anderson, 2010: 303). To counter this over-stretching of the conceptualisation of precarity, scholars are arguing for different theoretical and methodological limitations when doing research on precarity. In the following sections, we will therefore take into account and discuss the various approaches to investigate precarity.

Precarity as a work-related condition

As mentioned above, academic understandings of precarity have historically been highly associated with labour, labour markets, and employment relations. However, another strand of precarity research is emphasising precariousness or precarity as an inherent feature of human life which we will turn to in one of the following sections. For now, we will engage with the extensive literature on precarity understood as a condition which is specific to work in the context of neoliberal and globalised labour markets (Lewis et al., 2015: 584).

In order to overcome conceptual diffuseness, some scholars have turned to narrow and measurable criteria or indicators of work-related precarity. Examples of such studies are found in the context of the UK (Jayaweera & Anderson, 2008) as well as Nordic (Friberg et al, 2016) and Danish labour markets (Arnholtz & Hansen, 2012) investigating migrant precarity in host country labour markets. The key indicators applied are commonly set to be wages, working hours, type of employment (non-permanent, agency or self-employed) and unionisation (membership and coverage by collective agreements). Although the research data has been collected with a mixed method of both national statistical data, surveys, questionnaires and interviews, the results of the different studies are presented as quantified descriptions of precarity. Examples of this are that work-related precarity is described with results such as that 11% of migrants in UK are in non-permanent employment compared to 6% of the national sample (Jayaweera & Anderson, 2008: 21) or that 12% of Polish migrants in Denmark are members of a union compared to 68% of the native Danes (Arnholtz & Hansen, 2012: 23). With these approaches to precarity research and more specifically the attempt to quantify precarity, we find a critical point to be made about experiences of precarity. The studies tend to present an understanding of, for example, below average salary and long working days as connected to precarity. They argue that their studies of the above mentioned indicators provide explanations to the *precarious* position of migrant workers (Arnholtz & Hansen, 2012: 412 - emphasis added) and "evidence on *vulnerable* employment among migrant workers" (Jayaweera & Anderson, 2008: 7 - emphasis added) as they demonstrate how migrants are earning less or working more hours than natives. However, earning less than natives or working more hours per week is not necessarily experienced as dissatisfying by the respective workers (Damiani, 2020). As Iain Campbell and Robin Price (2016) notes "individual workers may have different, even positive, subjective experiences and perceptions of the same objectively 'bad job'" (Campbell & Price, 2016: 318). While the studies do built on mixed method approaches with collection of qualitative data through interviews, the indicators of precarity

applied by the scholars dominate the findings and definitions of precarity and undermines the experiences of the workers, thus missing out on the important point that "precarious contexts might not lead to precarious experience" (Ivanova, 2017: 495). Therefore, we find that the findings of Jens Arnholtz and Nana Hansen (2012) as well as Hiranthi Jayaweera and Bridget Anderson (2008) are useful in understanding the position of and the employment among migrant workers but whether these positions and employments can be termed *precarious* must be described in a more qualitative way.

As acknowledged by many scholars within precarity research, an attempt to measure and develop quantitative analyses of precarity has proven too limiting (Alberti et al., 2018: 448). We therefore find an extensive literature on qualitative research where the experiences of workers are the point of departure for conceptualising precarity. Some scholars have investigated the experiences of precarity with a highly 'subjective' approach applying personal characteristics as the explanatory factor. This strand of literature emphasizes that individual characteristics such as ethnicity, age, skills and gender, explain people's position in the labour market (Herrera, 2008; McLafferty & Preston, 1992). This approach would indicate that positions in low-skilled jobs are explained by low skills or that low wage is explained by lack of years of experience because of a young age. Such a subjective understanding of differential positions in the labour market has been criticised since various studies demonstrate how people find themselves in low-skilled and low-wage jobs despite individual characteristics such as having high educational background and years of work experience (Cook, Dwyer & Waite, 2011; Arnholtz & Hansen, 2012; Lewis et al., 2015). Thus, we also find another strand of literature applying a more objective approach to investigate the experiences of precarity. These scholars typically connect the experiences of precarity to management and structural dynamics in the labour market as well as institutional settings and governmental policies. We see examples of how employers transfer insecurity to their employees (Ollus, 2016) or create insecure working conditions by circumventing established labour market settings (Refslund, 2016, 2018), but also how the work of trade unions are excluding specific workers from labour protection (Ford, 2015). Where other studies investigate the functioning of staffing agencies and their deterioration of employment relations (Andrijasevic & Sacchetto, 2017; McDowell, Batnitzky & Dyer, 2008), we also find literature focusing on how state regulations, such as immigration controls and legal entitlements, place workers in specific precarious jobs (Anderson, 2010; McDowell, Batnitzky & Dyer, 2009; Spanger & Hvalkof, 2020). By pointing the analytical gaze towards employers, institutions and the state in investigating experiences of

precarity, we acknowledge that the experiences of precarity is not relative to personal characteristics but have an objective dimension that requires careful attention (Campbell & Price, 2016: 318). However, conceptualising precarity by investigating subjective experiences through objective dimensions has been criticized for framing precarity theoretically "in a structurally deterministic fashion" (Ivanova, 2017: 495) which leads to a static analytical concept of precarity as a 'fixed' condition (Alberti et al., 2018: 450; Byrne, 2016: 875). This may lead to underestimations of the extensive effects of changes in the world of work and employment.

Precarity as a class-related condition - The Precariat

Where the above mentioned literature has examined precarity as a work-related concept, Standing's (2011) conceptualisation of The Precariat as a new global class encompasses various workers including women and migrants. For this reason, it has received acknowledgement for contributing to an understanding of the concept of precarity which extends beyond employment conditions and working life (Hirslund et al., 2020: 19). However, simultaneously, Standing (2011) has been criticised for various reasons. His conceptualisation has been claimed to collapse a composite workforce characterised by multiple registers of exploitation as well as individual differences in terms of resilience and coping behaviours within one 'single' class (Breman, 2013: 136). This also produces consequences on an analytical level, since the collapse of various situations within a single catch-all concept results in a conceptualisation of precarity as an empty signifier (Nielson & Rossiter, 2006: 11). Furthermore, Standing (2011) has been criticised for both the historical and geographical dimension of his analysis, as he claims that the precarious working and living conditions of this 'new' and 'global' class appeared in the post-Fordist era during the 1970s (Ettlinger, 2007; Nielson & Rossiter, 2008; Paret, 2016; Waite, 2009). Consequently, his analysis does not consider the number of people who worked contingently during the so-called golden age of Fordism, since "uneven power relations along the lines of gender, age, race/ethnicity, and citizen/noncitizen meant that societal others were denied access to privileged jobs, collective bargaining, and more generally to a social safety net" (Ettlinger, 2007: 322). Moreover, Standing (2011) has been criticised for the 'global' character of The Precariat. It has been claimed that he focused solely on advanced economies whose condition of precarity was then generalised and replicated to the rest of the world. Through this analysis, other regions of the

Global South were not taken into consideration, despite their conditions of precarity, exploitation and oppression (Breman, 2013: 136) and their lack of the security nets typical of Global North's welfare states. Critics, therefore, argue that by widening both the historical and geographical scope, it is precarity rather than a Fordist economic organisation with its security nets and collective agreements which appears to be the norm of work for most people in the world - both before, during and after the Fordist era (Nielson & Rossiter, 2008: 54).

To counter a homogenisation of precarious workers and the use of "precarity as a common name for diverse and singular labour situations" (Neilsson and Rossiter, 2006: 11), feminist scholars have approached precarity in what has been termed the feminisation of precarious work (Ibid.). According to Laura Fantone (2007), young Italian feminist scholars are contributing with new and important perspectives on the struggles over precarity as they critique the precarity movement for building on the politically imagined subject of the 'precarious worker' being a young single man with a rather privileged background (Ibid.: 9). They argue that this ideal-type is "juxtaposed with the stereotyped ageing housewife, living in the suburbs, engaged in social reproduction, shopping and taking care of her family" (Fantone, 2007: 9). This critique brings to fore who is recognised as 'precarious' within a delimited political discourse of precarity argued to be too universalistic as well as euro-centric (Ibid.: 18). The feminist scholars within precarity research are developing their theoretical approaches on the background of decades of feminist research and the domestic labour debates in socialist feminism going back to the 1970's (Oksala, 2016: 285). These debates have up until today been emphasising the unpaid and undervalued work of women within the domestic sphere which together with more women's entrance to employment has transitioned into national labour markets where women come to be concentrated in lower-paying jobs than men (Sirianni & Negrey, 2000: 63) Motakef (2019) joins female scholars who have criticised the precarity research for only emphasising precarious working conditions the moment Western white male started experiencing the negative effect of the post-industrial and flexible labour market (Ibid.: 157). Motakef (2019) points out that previous studies using the concept of *precarity of life arrangement* have demonstrated how female breadwinners remain primarily responsible for taking care of the family and housework while also working full time due to gender arrangement (Ibid.: 160)

To counter a conceptualisation of precarity as an exception, some scholars have researched the position of migrants from marginalised classes and ethnicities with the conceptual lens of precarity. According to Breman (2013), during the so-called golden age of Fordism there were

already people working in informal sectors of the economy. In particular, land-poor migrants from Latin America, Africa and Asia, after migrating to cities in the hope of finding better working conditions, often found themselves employed in low-paid jobs and living in makeshift shelters on the outskirt of cities with little chances to be hired in formal sectors of the economy (Ibid.: 130). These working and living conditions, however, were not only affecting land-poor migrants up until the 1970s but still affect a significant proportion of people in the Global South, especially short-term and undocumented migrants (Deshingkar, 2019: 2639). The issue that migrants in the Global South were not regarded as working and living in exploitative conditions has also been researched by other scholars. According to Mayblin (2014), during the negotiations of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the UK was against the institutionalisation of human rights as they were claimed to have negative effects on the activities of the British Empire. In particular, the UK argued for excluding non-European asylum seekers from the right of asylum and simultaneously opposed the abolition of forced labour in the colonies, as it was claimed to be a way to develop both these territories and the colonised people (Ibid.: 429). In this sense, people in the Global South were not considered as having exploitative working conditions by European countries in the 1940s. Mayblin (2014) thus argues that these events demonstrate the existence of a rationale distinguishing between 'insider' and 'outsider' which has been informing policies and discourses excluding migrants since the 1940s (Ibid.: 428).

In conclusion, albeit precarity has been argued to be an exception which has been investigated when Western male in the post-Fordist era first experienced it, we see how precarity is the norm when the historical and geographical scope is broadened and the experiences of both females and migrants prior to the 1970s are included. In this way, precarity becomes an enduring and long standing feature of human life (Ettlinger, 2007: 322).

Philosophical understandings of precarity

While dominant approaches to precarity focus primarily on economic insecurity, another strand of this literature defines precarity or precariousness in more expansive terms as an inherent feature of life. In John Dewey's metaphysics, for instance, "the intricate mixture of the stable and the precarious, the fixed and the unpredictably novel, the assured and the uncertain" (Dewey, 1981 in Harris, 2007: 39) characterises all existence. This implies that precariousness and stability are the two general traits of existence. However, Dewey claims that neither stability nor precariousness are equally distributed among people, as the former is more a

characteristic of adults whereas precariousness is more a characteristic of children (Harris, 2007: 44). This metaphysical conceptualisation of precariousness as a precondition of life and, thus, not conditioned by social interactions, differs completely from Butler's (2020, 2016) analysis in the aftermath of 9/11. She, in particular, conceptualises precariousness within a frame of sociality as it is associated with "being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure" (Butler, 2020: 20). Another scholar which approaches precarity in more extensive terms is Nancy Ettlinger (2007). Despite taking point of departure in the 9/11 attacks, her approach differs from Butler's (2016) as she focuses on the phenomena rather than the power relations engendering precarity. She conceptualises precarity as the uncertainty and unpredictability permeating people's everyday life, as it can be engendered by various phenomena, like domestic and/or gang violence, authoritarian relations, repressive surveillance, organised hate, ecologic disasters and disease (Ibid.: 322-324). According to Ettlinger (2007), as people construct an illusion of certainty through the denial of their precarity, they reproduce their own precarity (Ibid.: 320). The reproduction of precarity is also central in Butler's (2016) theory of precarity and recognition as well as Butler's (2015) theory of performativity to which we now turn.

OUR THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In the following sections we will unfold our theoretical framework which is based on Butler's (2016, 2020) theory of precarity and her understanding that precarious conditions are induced by power relations, namely norms. To analyse precarity we will use two analytical lenses, namely recognition (Butler, 2020; Fraser, 2007; McQueen, 2015) and performativity (Butler, 1988; Butler, 2015; Philips & Knowles, 2012), as well as the concept of performative spaces offered by Gregson and Rose (2000). Our theoretical framework is inspired by our one-year engagement with the concept of precarity, which we already investigated in our previous project about COVID-19 and migrant workers from new EU countries employed in the Danish cleaning industry. We argued that COVID-19 becomes an additional dimension of precarity which makes visible three of the dimensions of precarity already constituting the lives of our informants, namely renting rooms through the employer, earning an unpredictable and low income as well as being hired through subcontracting arrangements. In particular, we demonstrated how COVID-19 as an additional dimension of precarity reinforces certain elements which are already present within these dimensions of precarity, such as dependency on the employer, forced flexibility and the merge of non-work and workspaces. In this sense, we analysed how specific objective aspects, such as immigration controls, placed our informants in a specific working and living position of precarity. Furthermore, by analysing how the workspace merges with the non-work space where the employer's control extends beyond the workspace, we showed how these spaces are strictly interrelated (Damiani et al., 2020). Building on our previous project, we have become interested in investigating the norms behind these objective aspects as well as how spaces merge as a consequence of the movement of these norms. Moreover, despite having analysed our informants as 'migrants' in our previous project, our data showed that they spoke about themselves as 'expats'. For this reason, we discussed the epistemological struggle engaged by our informants who, through their words, were trying to challenge established conceptions about the 'Western' and 'Eastern' world (Damiani et al., 2020). Taking this struggle as a point of departure, we have become interested in investigating how people come to reproduce or challenge the norms sustaining these conceptions and thus how they act against or become complicit in their conditions. In this sense, we take these findings and reflections as inspiration to construct the theoretical framework of our thesis, through which we set to investigate how multiple norms differently shape our

informants for recognition depending on the space and induce a specific condition of precarity which our informants act against or reproduce.

Analytical tools

Recognition

Recognition as co-extensive with power

McQueen (2015) claims that a theory of recognition needs to address the regulatory as well as the normative dimensions of recognition, i.e. the ways in which recognition governs and normalises the types of viable subject positions that people can become, rather than the psychological processes of subject-formation which pursue self-realisation (Ibid.: 53). In order to understand these interconnections between power, recognition and subject formation, McQueen (2015) argues that we need to turn to Butler's theory of recognition and gender performativity. However, since these theories tend, at times, to over-emphasise the psychic and linguistic dimensions of recognition, it is necessary to focus on the Foucauldian aspects within Butler's theories (Ibid. 58). This will enable an analysis of recognition which can be examined as regulatory "socio-institutional practices of subject-formation" (McQueen, 2015: 47) which are infused by power operations (Ibid: 48).

This understanding of recognition being co-extensive with power is further examined by Butler in her theory of precarity (Butler, 2016, 2020), where she investigates how specific norms allocate recognition differently and, thus, how these norms operate to produce recognisable people and others who are difficult to recognise. Butler (2016) defines recognition as "an act or practice undertaken by at least two subjects and which [...] constitutes a reciprocal action" (Ibid.: 6). Recognition takes place on the basis of more general historically constituted and context-specific conditions of recognisability, such as norms. Such norms prepare, shape, and establish a living being for recognition and by doing so they 'act' as they craft living beings to become recognisable (Ibid.: 5-6). In this sense, in order to be recognised, a living being has to conform to the subject position established by the norms (Ibid.: 141). Butler (2016) analyses this with how victims of torture were presented in photographs but with censored faces and names to protect their privacy. According to Butler (2016), through this presentation these victims do not conform to what a recognisable living being is because of the lack of names and faces through which a living being is recognised. This means that in order to be recognised, a

living being needs to be seen and perceived as conforming to the subject position established by the norms (Ibid.: 94). Therefore, recognisability is described as preceding the act or practice of recognition itself. At the same time, such norms are conditioned and produced by schemas of intelligibility which are general historical schemas determining certain domains of the knowable (Ibid.: 5-6). However, Butler (2016) argues that there are aspects within life which cannot be fully and properly recognised (Ibid.: 13). For this reason, she introduces the concept of apprehension, which is defined as a less precise form of knowing that is connected to the senses and the perception. Albeit we are informed by existing norms when we apprehend, we are not completely limited by such norms and, in this sense, apprehension is not yet recognition (Ibid.: 4). The difference between apprehension and recognition is central in Butler's (2016) theory of precarity. In fact, she claims that some lives, despite being apprehended as 'living', fail to be recognised as 'lives' since they fall outside the norms about what a life is (Ibid.: 8). Since they cannot be recognised outside these norms, these "lives that are not quite lives [are] cast as "destructible" and "ungrievable"" (Butler, 2016: 31) which results in a differential allocation of protection, grievability and liveability among humans (Ibid.). In order to investigate how living beings are recognised, we need to examine how "the normative operates, namely, through norms that produce the idea of the human who is worthy of recognition and representation at all" (Butler, 2016: 138).

Recognition and redistribution

Nancy Fraser (2007) develops a feminist theory of gender justice whcih offers a useful analytical tool to examine recognition. Despite developing a gender theory, she argues that it also applies to other social differentiations including sexuality, ethnicity, religion etc. (Ibid.: 28). Fraser (2007) further argues that within feminist theories there has been a broader political move from the socialist-feminists focusing on redistribution and the contemporary cultural-feminists focusing on recognition (Ibid.: 23). She opposes an either/or approach and argues that gender is a two-dimensional category which "contains both a political-economic face that brings it within the ambit of redistribution and also a cultural-discursive face that brings it simultaneously within the ambit of recognition" (Fraser, 2007: 26). This means that not being recognised cannot be simply attributed to the economic structure of redistribution, as well as the gender inequalities in redistribution cannot be simply attributed to the status order within society. In this sense, gender difference is constructed "simultaneously from both economic

differentials and institutionalised patterns of cultural value" (Fraser, 2007: 26). Fraser (2007) therefore argues for a feminist politics that combats the subordination of women by combining a politics of redistribution with a politics of recognition (Ibid.: 27).

In order to examine social differentiations, Fraser (2007) proposes a concept of justice which builds on the principle of *parity of participation*. The principle emphasises that "justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another *as peers*" (Fraser, 2007: 27). This has implications in the politico-economic sphere where material resources must be distributed to ensure all participants independence. Thus, social arrangements leading to gross disparities in wealth, income and leisure time are denying some people the opportunity to interact with others in society on equal foot or *as peers*. Similarly, it has implications in the cultural-discursive sphere where the cultural value in a given society must express equal respect towards all participants. Thus, institutionalised value patterns leading to the depreciation of some people and their associated characteristics – often by ascribing them with excessive difference or by not acknowledging their difference – are denying those people the status to interact fully and equally with others (Ibid.). Consequently, the two-dimensional approach provides an analysis of how economic structures enable or deny some people full participation in social interaction as well as how the status order constitutes some people as equal or inferior participants in social interaction.

In this way, Fraser (2007) proposes a conceptualization where recognition is a matter of social status. She argues that "what requires recognition is not feminine identity but the status of women as full partners in social interaction" (Fraser, 2007: 30). Hence, her approach requires an investigation of recognition which centers on how patterns of cultural value influence what she terms the *standing* of women and other groups of people in society. This means examining how social institutions regulate social interaction according to norms which are enabling or denying equal status. Examples of not being recognised are thus when patterns of cultural value constitute some people as "inferior, excluded, wholly other or simply invisible" (Fraser, 2007: 31), hence those people are constituted as less than full partners or peers in social interaction.

How we use recognition

Building our analysis on a post-structuralist standpoint, we will investigate our informants' experiences during the pandemic as constituted by operations of power, namely, norms. As we apply an approach focusing on the Foucauldian aspect of Butler's (2016) theory of recognition,

we examine how socio-institutional practices enact and are informed by specific norms through which our informants become recognised. We will investigate how dominant norms related to COVID-19 prepare, shape and establish our informants for recognition and how these norms intersect with other norms to produce specific subject positions through which our informants become recognisable. In this sense, we analyse how our informants conform to the subject positions established by these norms and their intersections and thereby become recognised in different ways in their workplace and their home. In addition to Butler (2016), we argue that Fraser's (2007) two dimensional approach provides us with a useful analytical tool to investigate the experiences of our informants. This means looking into how recognition as well as how redistribution of material resources influence the social status of our informants and their ability to participate on equal terms within their home, workplace and society.

Performativity

Performative acts and utterances

As it has been outlined above, recognition is a reciprocal action taking place on the basis of norms which shape and establish a subject position through which a living being can be recognised. In order for the established subject position to exist, it has to be acted and performed. In this sense, in order to be recognised, a living being needs to embody and perform the subject position which has been available by the norms. In this sense, we see how the act of recognition is not separated from performativity, but rather recognition and performativity are two sides of the same coin. However, the concept of performativity is argued to be often confused with the concept of performance and their theoretical differences elided (Brickell, 2003: 158). In particular, while the concept of performance has a theatrical resonance implying the existence of a performer or actor who consciously chooses to play a role and put on a mask, Butler's performativity is related to the reified acts which bring regulatory norms into being (Ibid.: 168-171). In this thesis, we distance ourselves from the theoretical concept of performance since we argue from a post structuralist standpoint that people's acts and utterances cannot occur and be understood outside norms and, thus, operations of power. In this sense, we position ourselves within the understanding of performativity as theorised by Judith Butler.

According to Butler (2015) performativity is defined as an utterance which "in the moment of making the utterance makes something happen or brings some phenomenon into being"

(Butler, 2015: 28). In this sense, the utterance does not only act but acts powerfully since it is acting through power. However, according to Butler (2015) the power of this act should not be considered as originating from a sovereign person or institution, but rather as diffused and coming from various institutional and discursive powers constituting the norms (Ibid.). Performativity, nonetheless, does not only describe utterances but also bodily acts which are structured and informed by norms. In this sense, a norm is not only imprinted upon living beings, as if they were passive recipients, but it rather produces them by informing their modes of embodiment which they acquire through time (Ibid.: 29). This implies that a norm precedes, conditions and acts upon living beings who, through their performative acts, enact and reproduce this norm (Ibid.: 31). In this sense, performativity characterises "both the processes of being acted on and the conditions and possibilities for acting, and […] we cannot understand its operation without both of these dimensions" (Butler, 2015: 63). Accordingly, performativity describes not only their acts but also how a norm affects, constrains and moves living beings to act in ways which they come to understand as 'their own' acts (Ibid.: 64). Since Butler is concerned with issues of gender and sexuality, the concept of gender performativity is central in her theory. Claiming that gender is performative implies an understanding of gender as a reproduction and enactment of gender norms demanding that people become either one gender or the other (Ibid.: 32). In this sense, one is not born a woman but rather *becomes* a woman. This implies an understanding of gender as "constituted in time [...] through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler, 1988: 519). This statement enables an understanding of gender as a reified and naturalised illusion which is constituted and brought into being by performative acts. In this sense, gender must be considered a performative accomplishment which through time comes to be believed and performed "in the mode of belief" (Butler, 1988: 520). Due to being performative, gender is not a fact but it is rather constructed by various and reiterated acts without which there would be no gender at all. Despite this, living beings keep on reproducing gender as they are brought to believe in its naturalness as well as necessity by the norms (Ibid.: 522). This reproduction also occurs since failing to perform one's gender well initiates social punishments and sanctions as one does not perform in accordance with the norms (Ibid.: 528). Therefore, to *be* a woman is to have *become* one, to have compelled the body to conform to cultural and historical conceptions of what a woman is supposed to be and, thus, to have embodied and enacted, through repeated acts, a historical constituted and context-specific norm (Ibid.: 522). However, the act of embodying and enacting gender is not an individual act, an act that one performs alone, but it is rather an act which has been performed through time, a repetition of prior acts. In this sense, an individual act should not be understood as one's act

alone since it reproduces and re-enacts pre-existing norms and, consequently, legitimises the subject positions already established by these norms (Ibid.: 526). In this sense, rather than being expressive of gender, these acts are socially shared, historically constituted, and performative since they produce and construct the idea of gender which does not pre-exist the acts themselves. Therefore, gender is performative since it is not only real to the extent in which it is performed (Ibid.: 528-530) but it is also a matter of taking up a specific gender subject position established by the norm. Since a living being *is* not a woman but rather *becomes* one through performative acts, gender is something which is never done once and for all but rather over and over again (Phillips & Knowles, 2012: 421)

According to Butler, albeit we are compelled to repeat, reproduce and maintain norms, we are not wholly determined by these norms. In this sense, while performative acts and utterances keep on performing and being informed by specific norms, Butler rejects the possibility that future acts and utterances will be the identical enactment of previous acts and utterances, since they are always different from each other. This implies that, due to the necessity to repeat and the slippage inherent in the repetition process, there is the opportunity that practices become transformed and norms become challenged. In this sense, Butler claims that the option is not *whether* to repeat and perform these norms but rather *how* to repeat and perform them, as norms can be performed in ways which expose as well as question them (Ibid.: 420). In particular, how a living being performs specific norms and, thus, whether these norms will be either challenged or reproduced, depends on the living being's previous engagements with historically contingent and context-specific norms. In this sense, living beings are enacting various norms which, however dominant some of them are, there will always be conflicting and challenging norms being enacted simultaneously. This entails that these norms are continuously in a process of change (Ibid.: 421).

Performative spaces

As outlined above, the practices which living beings do, say and think must be understood as saturated with power and thus, produced by power relations embedded in norms. The ways in which living beings become recognisable and, thereby, come into being through their performativity are further developed within critical human geography by the scholars, Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose (2000). With their concept of performative space, Gregson and Rose (2000) provide tools for analysing how Butler's concept of performativity relates to space,

arguing “that it is not only social actors that are produced by power, but also the spaces in which they perform” (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441). Different locations such as the bank, the restaurant and the home do not pre-exist the performative practices which living beings do within these locations. This means that the bank is only real as a bank because living beings enact the norms produced by various power relations related to the bank. Accordingly, since performative acts “are themselves articulations of power, of particular subject positions” (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441), we must conceptualise a specific location as a space which has been brought into being by performativity and thus, understand spaces too as performative of power relations (Ibid.). Since the performativity of living beings are informed simultaneously by a wide array of subject positions, spaces are always brought into being by multiple and also conflicting norms. The performative spaces are therefore “not discreet, bounded stages, but threatened, contaminated, stained, enriched by other spaces” (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 442). This means that norms move through spaces as living beings enact them in new contexts and thus, it is argued that spaces infiltrate each other. This entails an investigation of “the interrelational nature of space” (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 446) and how performative practices bring spaces into being through multiple and intersecting norms. The concept of performative space is thus extending Butler’s antifoundationalist argument to include spaces and thereby enabling an investigation of spaces as operations of power - always reiterative, unstable and in a process of change (Ibid.: 447)

How we use performativity

As we analyse how norms and their intersections produce subject positions, we are interested in how our informants take up these subject positions made available to them during the pandemic. This we investigate by analysing the acts and utterances of our informants, their family, colleagues and employers, as performative practices. This implies looking into how they reproduce or challenge the norms through which our informants become recognisable. Furthermore, we focus on how specific norms move between spaces and enter the workplace and the home of our informants through performative practices and how, in this way, these norms intersect with other already established norms. In this sense, by analysing the performative practices informed by these intersecting norms, we examine how different performative spaces are brought into being.

Precarity and precariousness

Judith Butler develops her theory on precariousness and precarity in two of her works, *Precarious life: the powers of mourning and justice* (Butler, 2020) and *Frames of war: when is life grievable?* (Butler, 2016), which were published for the first time in, respectively, 2006 and 2009. In both contributions, she adopts a humanist and post structuralist standpoint, taking the 'question of the human' as a point of departure to analyse the 9/11 attacks and the following circumstances of escalating vulnerability and aggression in the US (Butler, 2020: xi). In the following section, we will outline her theory and her arguments as she develops them in her two contributions.

In *Precarious life: the powers of mourning and justice*, Butler (2020) argues for a conceptualisation of the human "in which we are, from the start, given to the other, […] in which we are, from the start, even prior to individuation itself and, by virtue of bodily requirements, given over to some set of primary others" (Butler, 2020: 31). These relational and social ties which constitute us are brought to the fore by grief which is not a privatising experience, as it does not return us to a solitary condition, but rather a publicising one. In this sense, grief emphasises the public dimension of the life which implies physical proximity, physical dependency and physical exposure to the other (Ibid.: 27). Butler (2020) argues that transforming grief into a resource for politics may be the starting point to identify with the other and their suffering. At the same time, however, we need to critically evaluate how certain lives become less grievable than others (Ibid.: 30). This differential allocation of grievability is controlled by norms governing what life will be a grievable life while simultaneously prohibiting the public grieving of others (Ibid.: 38). This signifies that the differential allocation of grievability cannot be evaluated outside differential operations of power and, specifically, of norms (Ibid.: 45).

To address this issue, she analyses the media portrayals of living beings, which are represented in order to dehumanise. Butler (2020) claims that this approach enables an investigation of the relationship between humanisation and representation as well as how personification sometimes leads to dehumanisation. By portraying images of bin Laden or Saddam Hussein as well as Afghan women stripping off their burkas, we cannot see and hear any vocalisation of suffering, grief and agony (Ibid.: 141-143). For this reason, media portrayals of living beings need to be understood in terms of norms which "establish what will and will not be human, what will be a liveable life, what will be a grievable death" (Butler, 2020: 146). This works

through two typologies of normative power. On the one hand, the power produces a *symbolic identification* between the human and the inhuman, the evil, such as in the case of bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. On the other hand, the power operates with *radical effacement*, through which certain lives and deaths become unrepresented and occluded, so that there was never a life and thus never a death. In this way, power operates to regulate and decide what will publicly appear as reality and as worth hearing and seeing (Ibid.: 147). Therefore, to produce the public sphere it is necessary to establish what living beings *can* hear, see, feel and know in terms of what life counts as a life and whose death counts as a death. In this sense, our capacity to feel, apprehend and think critically as well as the fate of certain lives and deaths hang in balance (Ibid.: xxi).

In *Frames of war: when is life grievable?*, Butler (2016) builds on these arguments as she develops her theory on precariousness and precarity through the concept of differential allocation of grievability. In particular, she expands on her argument about the public sphere being governed by operations of power, which she analyses through the analytical concept of the frame. The norms, which govern the differential allocation of grievability of life, are relayed, enacted and made effective through visual and narrative frames (Ibid.: xix). Butler (2016) claims that even the most innocent image or event is framed, and this is done with a specific political purpose which is carried within and implemented through the frame itself. This means that the frame operates not only by delimiting but also by structuring what can be seen, heard and felt (Ibid.: 70-71). In this sense, the way in which a reality or action is presented by the frame leads to a specific interpretation about the reality or action itself (Ibid.: 8). Therefore, "we can think of the frame […] as active, as both jettisoning and presenting, and as doing both at once, in silence, without any visible sign of its operation" (Butler, 2016: 73). As a result, we cannot examine what can publicly appear by focusing solely on its explicit contents as it is formed especially by what is left outside the frame (Ibid.).

Since reiteration and reproduction is an inherent quality of norms, this also characterises the functioning of frames. In order to succeed in conveying and determining what can be seen, heard and felt, frames need to move through time and space. However, for this reproducibility to happen, the frames have to 'break out' and 'break from' the original context in which they were formed as they need to land somewhere else (Ibid.: 10). As a consequence of this landing in a new context, "it also creates new contexts by virtue of that landing, becoming a part of the very process through which new contexts are delimited and formed" (Butler, 2016: 9). In this sense, the frame is not circumscribed within one content but rather needs to break from itself

by perpetually moving between different contexts. This self-breaking, which is thus part of the definition of the frame itself, conveys a different understanding of the efficacy and vulnerability of the frame. Depending on the framing of the content in the new context, the shift of the temporal and spatial dimension of the frame can influence the public response by, for instance, enhancing outrage, astonishment or admiration. Therefore, when a frame breaks from itself, there is the possibility that a taken-for-granted reality is critically questioned. In this sense, what is taken for granted in one context can be challenged in the other contexts where the frame lands. This exposes the orchestrating power that is controlling the frame (Ibid.: 10-12).

Butler (2016) relates this analysis of the frames, which govern a differential grievability of lives, to the issue of the precariousness of life itself. She argues that apprehending precariousness cannot be taken for granted since there are norms which presuppose precariousness while others refuse it. In particular, precariousness is defined as a shared condition of human as well as non-human lives, which underscores an existential finitude of lives and the fact that all lives are 'injurable', losable if neglected to the point of death (Ibid.: 13). Being an existential condition of human lives, precariousness does not appear later in life or after being born but rather "precariousness is coextensive with birth itself (birth is, by definition, precarious)" (Butler, 2016: 14) and that "no amount of will or wealth can eliminate the possibilities of illness or accident for a living body, although both can be mobilized in the service of such an illusion" (Butler, 2016: 26). According to Butler (2016), this illusion is argued to be constituted by norms which deny or refuse the existential finitude of all lives. Building on her conceptualisation of the human as always given over to others, she argues that due to the existential finitude, the other should be urged to take care and provide the conditions for one's survival. However, through norms the conditions for survival are constituted by whether a life is recognised as griveable, which means that it is mourned if lost. In this sense, "only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear" (Butler, 2016: 14). Accordingly, grievability presupposes the life that counts and, consequently, anticipates and makes possible the apprehension of the existential finitude of life, namely the precariousness of life. In this sense, grievability is defined as linked to precariousness.

Precariousness is not only referred to as an existential condition but also as a social condition of life, since our lives require socio-economic as well as political conditions in order to flourish and be sustained (Ibid.). Accordingly, "precariousness as a generalized condition relies on a conception of the body as fundamentally dependent on, and conditioned by, a sustained and sustainable world" (Butler, 2016: 34). In this sense, every life needs to be supported and

sustained by what is outside itself, which requires supplying basic support, such as food, medical care, work, protection against injury (Ibid.: 22) as well as sustaining social relations (Ibid.: 19) in order to minimise precariousness. However, this basic support to sustain lives and thereby minimise precariousness is not always provided. Accordingly, in some circumstances a line is drawn between, on the one hand, grievable lives and thus worth protecting and, on the other hand, ungrievable lives and thus unworthy of protection. This differential allocation of grievability is possible because those who provide support are guided by specific norms which inform the decision to protect *some* lives rather than *all* lives (Ibid.: 21-22). Through the distinction between grievable and ungrievable lives, norms and socio-political institutions have historically maximised precariousness for some while, at the same time, minimised it for others (Ibid.: 22). This differential allocation of precariousness is what Butler (2016) defines as precarity which is a "politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (Butler, 2016: 25). In this sense, precarity not only cuts across identity categories (Ibid.: 32) but it is also a material as well as a perceptual issue, since the lives that are not recognised as grievable have to bear the burden of a differential exposure of injury, unemployment, violence and death. Since all lives are precarious but some are at a heightened risk of injurability and mortality, Butler (2016) considers precariousness and precarity as interrelated concepts (Ibid.: 25).

How we understand the concept of precarity

Building on Butler's (2016) theory, we argue for a conceptualisation of precarity as a politically induced condition where specific power relations maximise precariousness for some while minimising it for others. While precariousness can be maximised and minimised, we claim for an understanding of precarity which cannot be accumulated. In particular, since there are always dominant and conflicting norms which are enacted simultaneously, we cannot analyse whether and how people become *more* or *less* precarious as a consequence of a specific norm but rather *how* dominant norms intersect to induce a specific condition of precarity. Additionally, as we have outlined above, Butler (2016) argues that norms and frames move between spaces and by doing so create new spaces. Thus, norms which regulate the differential allocation of grievability and protection in one space may not be reproduced in another space but rather challenged or even reversed. Building on this argument, we further argue that we

need to look at *how* people are differently precarious in different spaces of their everyday life, which cannot be investigated through a conceptualisation of precarity as accumulated. Moreover, Butler (2016) argues that in order to minimise precariousness, we need to provide basic support, such as “food, shelter, work, medical care, education, rights of mobility and expression, protection against injury and oppression” (Butler, 2016: 22). However, we argue that even the conceptualisation of basic support is embedded within norms about life and how a life should be lived. In this sense, by applying a conceptualisation of precarity which is built on normative understandings of basic support, we risk becoming blind to and undermining the subjective experience of those whom we, as scholars, claim become precarious. In this sense, when analysing the position of our informants we do not only focus on the objective aspects which are provided or not but also on how this is experienced by our informants. Therefore, we argue for an approach to precarity where both objective and subjective aspects are taken into consideration in order to say *how* people become precarious in specific ways and *how* they navigate in these positions. In this sense, we use the concepts of recognition and performativity to investigate precarity as a politically induced condition through normative power, which is always interrelated to precariousness.

How we use precariousness and precarity

Building our analysis on Butler’s (2016, 2020) theory of precarity and precariousness, we will investigate how COVID-19 has been framed in a specific way which emphasises the precariousness of life, in order to understand why socio-political decisions and measures have been implemented since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Denmark. Moreover, we will use the concept of precarity as a politically induced condition to understand how the management of COVID-19 affects the everyday life of our informants in different performative spaces. We will analyse this through the differential allocation of grievability and, thus, how our informants are recognised as lives worth protecting during the pandemic. By building on the concept of precarity, we will analyse how dominant norms during the pandemic and their intersection either create new inequalities or reinforce already existing inequalities.

Analysis strategy

We will structure our analysis in the following order. Firstly, we will analyse the norms related to COVID-19 and how these intersect with other norms, producing different subject positions through which our informants become recognised. Through the analytical lens of recognition, we will analyse precarity as induced by the differential allocation of recognisability. Secondly, we will investigate how these norms inform the acts and utterances of our informants and the people around them. Through their performativity, we will analyse how our informants perform the available subject positions by either reproducing or challenging the norms. Through the analytical lens of performativity, we will investigate how our informants either become complicit in their precarious condition or act against it. Throughout the analysis of recognition and performativity, we will examine how our informants and the people around them bring specific performative spaces into being through their performative practices. Finally, through the conceptualisation of precarity, we will investigate how norms related to COVID-19 as well as their intersection with other norms either create new inequalities or reinforce already existing ones.

CONTEXTUALISATION

The governmental practices implemented during the pandemic

Danish lockdowns

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020, the strategy of the Danish government has been to close parts of society down as well as implement restrictions on travel and social gatherings as an attempt to reduce the infection rate in Denmark. For this reason, throughout the pandemic, the government has been emphasising on the importance of limiting social interactions and social gatherings, maintaining distances as well as disinfecting hands with sanitisers (PMO, 2020f; PMO, 2021a). In particular, on the 16th of March 2020 the government initiated the first lockdown. Based on this decision, those places where many people could gather, such as day-care institutions, schools and other educational institutions as well as cultural institutions, libraries and sport organisations, were shut down. This implies that pupils and students as well as the majority of public employees were sent home except for those workers, such as policemen and healthcare personnel, who perform critical functions for society (PMO, 2020c). Moreover, private companies and private education institutions were encouraged to do the same and send home their employees and students (PMO, 2020a). The government further decided to close liberal businesses such as hairdressers and other companies in close contact with customers as well as bars, restaurants, nightclubs (PMO, 2020f) and shop centres (PMO, 2020g). This lockdown was firstly implemented for two weeks (PMO, 2020c) and then it was prolonged until after Easter on the 12th of April 2020 (PMO, 2020g). In order to prevent the negative economic consequences of the lockdown measures, the government negotiated temporary help packages with the bargaining institutions to prevent companies from going bankrupt and wage earners from becoming unemployed. In particular, while companies were enabled to postpone taxes and to receive loans, the salary compensation was implemented to support Danish wage earners. This entails that the government paid 75% of the salary of private employees who were in risk of being fired. This measure was first implemented between the 9th of March 2020 until the 9th of June 2020 (PMO, 2020e) and was later prolonged multiple times until the 29th of August 2020 (Danish Chamber of Commerce, 2020). Moreover, in order to enable parents who were still working during the first lockdown, the government gave municipalities the task to facilitate and establish emergency day-care institutions for children up to nine years old and, thus, between 0-4 grade as well as children with special needs (MCE, 2020a). On the 15th April 2020 the first phase of gradual reopening

of society started. As part of the reopening of society, the Danish government launched a reopening-strategy, scheduling different parts of society to open in four phases depending on both a medical and socio-economic assessment (Danish government, 2020). In this strategy, day-care institutions, kindergartens as well as primary schools for children between 0-4 grade were the first ones to be allowed to reopen (MCE, 2020b). Between the 20th of April and the 27th of May 2020, liberal businesses, shop centres, restaurants, educational institutions and other services which had been closed were gradually reopened. This entailed that also public workers were enabled to be physically present at work (Bæk, 2020-2021).

The second lockdown was initiated on the 17th of December 2020. The government decided to shut down again, among others, shop centres, liberal businesses, restaurants, bars and schools. Only drugstores, supermarkets and grocery stores as well as day-care institutions remained open (DMH, 2020a) and only public workers performing critical functions for society were allowed to go to work. In order to prevent negative economic implications due to this new lockdown, a salary compensation was reinstated based on the previous compensation implemented in the spring 2020 (BDO, 2020). The Danish Prime Minister decided to extend the lockdown until the 28th of February 2021 due to new COVID-19 mutations (PMO, 2021b) but then the lockdown was further prolonged until the 6th of April 2021. While the strategy of gradually reopening society started on the 6th of April 2021 (COVID-19 National Kommunikationspartnerskab, 2021), primary schools for children between 0-4 grade were allowed to reopen already on the 8th of February 2021. In this sense, schools for 0-4 grade were the first ones to reopen (Ravn, 2021).

Danish travel restrictions

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Danish government has been implementing, easing and tightening travel restrictions to enter Denmark as well as travelling to foreign countries depending on the infection rate of COVID-19 both in Denmark and other nations. In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, on the 14th of March 2020 the government further decided to implement travel restrictions and temporarily “close the borders” (PMO, 2020d). While this decision did not affect the transportation of food, medicine and other supplies which are deemed essential for industry production, foreigners were not allowed to enter without exhibiting “a credible reason to enter” (PMO, 2020d). Moreover, while the government advised against travelling outside Denmark for vacation, tourism or other unnecessary travels, Danish

citizens and foreigners with residence permits were allowed to enter Denmark regardless of their purpose of entry (PMO, 2020d). They were anyway highly encouraged and expected to quarantine for two weeks upon arrival. Despite being a temporary measure, the decision to implement travel restrictions and the closure of Danish border was prolonged until the 10th of May 2020 (MFA, 2020a). Until the 31st of August 2020 the Ministry of Foreign Affair advised travel only to specific countries, such as Germany, Iceland and Norway, while at the same time advising against travelling to the rest of Europe as well as the rest of the world (MFA, 2020b). From 29th October 2020 until the 17th of January 2021, all travels outside Denmark were discouraged and the people with a reason to enter were expected to self isolate for ten days. The quarantine could, however, be interrupted if the person had a negative PCR test taken on the fourth day after arrival (DMJ, 2021a). These travel restrictions were firstly prolonged until the 28th of February 2021 (PMO, 2021b) and then until the 5th of April 2021 (Berlingske, 2021). As a consequence of the gradual reopening of Denmark, the travel restrictions have been gradually eased and the government has been implementing different measures based on the infection rate and the presence of COVID-19 mutations in foreign countries. However, people coming to Denmark still need a test upon arrival as well as self isolate themselves (DMJ, 2021b).

COVID-19 National Alert System

The decisions to tighten, ease and implement various restrictions are based on an ongoing assessment of COVID-19 on a regional and national level. In order to assess the development of the infection and implement measures to prevent the spread of the virus, on the 31st October 2020 the government decided to establish the COVID-19 National Alert System (Danish government, 2020). This system has been instituted for the Danish population and companies with the aim of contributing to a greater predictability and transparency in regards to when and which restrictions would be eased or tightened. Based on indicators and trends about the current spread of the virus in Denmark and the expected epidemic development (DMH, 2020b: 3), the COVID-19 National Alert System prepares a weekly assessment of the level of the risk for both the whole country and the five different regions. This risk level is evaluated on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 reflects a low level of infection and 5 a widespread infection and an overburdened healthcare system (Coronasmitte, 2021). In order to monitor and take decisions, the COVID-19 National Alert System includes regional representatives of healthcare

authorities, various ministries among which the Danish Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Economics and Business Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the National Police as well as experts, who jointly evaluate the current situation. To support the COVID-19 National Alert System in its continuous assessments, the government instituted the Professional Reference Group which consists of various experts in epidemiology, medicine, social affairs and economics (DMH, 2020b: 13). This Professional Reference Group does not have the tasks to decide when the restrictions should be eased or tightened as this depends on various national and regional aspects which are not known beforehand and can variate through time. Rather, it contributes with assessments regarding the order in which to ease or tighten specific restrictions as well as the effects that these decisions will have for the spread of infection as well as for the economy and society. Simultaneously, the Professional Reference Group can also include knowledge in terms of how specific measures will affect the people's daily life and wellbeing (PRG, 2021: 2). Accordingly their assessment regarding what to ease and prioritise is based on four different dimensions, namely 'transmission rate', 'socioeconomic effects', 'people's wellbeing' and 'individual freedom' (Ibid.: 4).

The Danish vaccination plan

The vaccination plan provided by the Danish Ministry of Health, shows that elderly people living in nursing homes, people above the age of 65 receiving personal help, entailing cleaning, washing and grocery shopping, as well as people above the age of 85 are the first three groups to which the first vaccines have been offered. The fourth target group in line to receive the doses of vaccination is the front personnel in the healthcare and elderly sector as well as other selected parts of the social sector who are at risk of being infected or who perform a critical function. The two following target groups to receive the vaccination are those people with preexisting conditions and diseases who are in the COVID-19 risk group and their relatives. The rest of the Danish population has been divided into target groups based on their age and are receiving vaccinations accordingly. In this sense, the prioritisation within the vaccination plan is based on a health assessment in terms of protecting the most vulnerable citizens and workers while at the same time ensuring a reduction of the infection rate (DMH, 2021a). On the 10th of May 2021, the first three target groups as well as the majority of the healthcare personnel have already been vaccinated, while the rest of the healthcare staff is in process of

being vaccinated. Also the citizens over 75 have already received the doses of vaccine, while the rest of the population will receive them in accordance with the plan (DMH, 2021b).

Increased focus on cleaning

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there has been an increased focus on extra as well as more frequent cleaning within the public and private sector in order to prevent high infection rates (TV2, 2021; FOA, 2020). As a result, the Danish Working Environment Authority has provided workplaces with guidelines and information about how and what to clean during the pandemic in order to secure a safe environment for all employees as well as preventing the spread of COVID-19 (DWEA, 2021). The necessity for extra and frequent cleaning as well as for a high level of hygiene has also been prioritised by municipalities. As cleaning has become essential to hinder the spread of COVID-19, municipalities have been instructed by the government to comply with health guidelines and invest in cleaning. In 2020 municipalities were expected to spend at least 700 million kr., corresponding to approximately 20% more of a yearly budget for cleaning. This increase in cleaning expenses, however, has been compensated by the government who has granted extra money to the municipalities (KL, 2020).

As part of the reopening of schools, cleaning has been prioritised. In particular, among other conditions, the cleaning and hygiene procedures had to correspond with the guidelines provided by the health authorities in order for schools to reopen (MCE, 2020b). For this reason, municipalities have been intensifying cleaning in schools. Consequently, statistics show that since April 2020 more than 600 extra cleaners have been hired under 30-hour contracts to disinfect highly touched surfaces in schools, among others door handles and electronic screens (Olesen, 2021). As part of the reopening of schools, the Ministry of Children and Education has provided general guidelines for cleaning in schools and other educational institutions, containing health professional recommendations in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Within these guidelines, schools should guarantee frequent and regular cleaning of commonly touched areas which should be implemented at least once per day. Moreover, trash cans in rooms and bathrooms should be emptied completely before they are entirely filled up. For this reason, schools are required to identify and mark these commonly touched surfaces such as door handles, buttons, handrails, light switches, keyboards, mouses, tables, toilets and taps (MCE, 2020c). Additionally, in April 2021 schools have also been recommended to frequently open windows to ventilate rooms as well as to organise classes outside (MCE, 2021c).

Due to the high focus on cleaning during the pandemic, cleaners have become highly relevant in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and as a result have continued to work even during the lockdowns. As a consequence of working on the frontline throughout the pandemic, workers within the cleaning industry have been more exposed to COVID-19. This is reflected in the statistics which show that the cleaning industry has been one of the industries with the highest number of infected workers during the pandemic (Østergaard, 2020).

The Danish cleaning industry

The Danish cleaning industry comprises a different range of businesses, from many self-employed to a few big companies, which do cleaning services within hotels, schools, offices, restaurants, health sector, residential complexes as well as private homes (Korsby, 2011: 16). In order to reduce costs as well as guarantee more efficiency, almost all Danish municipalities have outsourced cleaning of public spaces, such as schools, libraries and administrative buildings, to private companies (Refslund, 2016: 609). In particular, approximately one-third of cleaners are hired in municipalities through subcontracting arrangements with private companies (Implement, 2020: 11). This focus on reducing cost in cleaning has been regarded to be a consequence of globalisation and neoliberalism (Refslund, 2016: 606; Søgaard, Blangsted, Herod & Finsen, 2006: 579).

Historically, cleaners enjoyed stable wages and working conditions, however, due to the increase in the outsourcing of cleaning services, there has been a sharp decline in wages and working conditions and an increase in subcontracted cleaners without collective agreements (Refslund, 2016: 609). Employees working in the public sector are usually covered by collective agreements but, as cleaning services have been outsourced to private contractors, the regulation of their working conditions and wages may not be covered by these collective agreements (Rasmussen et al., 2016: 73-74). This is due to the fact that municipalities are often outsourcing to private companies which subcontract to third companies and thus the municipalities are often not able to control the working conditions of the subcontractors (Refslund, 2016: 610). This implies that the working conditions and wage of the employees may change if the private contractor is not covered by collective agreement, since they become regulated by agreements and practises of the individual contractor. Albeit many private cleaning companies actually sign collective agreements, studies show that outsourcing has impacted the employees' working conditions resulting in an increased workload, lower wages

and shorter working hours (Rasmussen et al., 2016: 73-74). In particular, cleaners in the private sector have been argued to clean 30% more compared to publicly hired cleaners in the same amount of time (Implement, 2020: 11). The worsening of working conditions has led to work-related health problems (Søgaard et al., 2006: 579), higher levels of sickness leaves, poor work ability as well as early retirement (Hardman Smith, Hviid, Frydendall & Flyvholm, 2013: 4997). Moreover, even if they are covered by collective agreements in the private sector, these agreements have proven to be less generous than the public sector agreements in regard to social benefits such as paid sick leave, occupational pension contributions and maternity/paternity leave (Rasmussen et al., 2016: 74). In this sense, local authorities and municipalities have paved the way for a deterioration of both working conditions and collective agreements through widespread subcontracting (Refslund, 2016: 609).

Another consequence of the outsourcing of cleaning services has been in terms of working hours. In particular, while usually cleaners in schools used to work from 7 am to 3 pm, their working hours were then changed so that they could work from 5 am until 7 am and then in the afternoon when schools were closed. This guaranteed an increased efficiency of cleaners as they were working without pupils and other school personnel present. Due to these worsened working conditions, cleaners' unions campaigned to make cleaning recognised as a profession, to raise their wages and to transform cleaning into 'visible cleaning' (Refslund, 2016: 609-610). This movement from invisible to visible cleaning has further been emphasised by recent management strategies in municipalities. Based on this strategy, it has become common practice to have cleaners working during opening hours of municipal institutions or schools so that users are present. This entails a different planning, dialogue and cooperation between cleaning personnel, users and managers. This has been argued that in the long run would change users' behaviour towards cleanliness and enhance co-responsibility for cleaning standards. As a result of working alongside with users, visible cleaning has enhanced the opportunity for cleaners to be part of the community within these institutions. Moreover, it has been argued that visible cleaning has another positive consequence on cleaners as they experience contributing to the functions of their workplaces as well as they feel recognised for their work (Implement, 2020:19). Furthermore, municipalities have used an approach based on trust-based cleaning, where external controls have been replaced by an increased dialogue between managers of institutions and cleaning personnel. This entails that the cleaners' contribute with their professional judgment and are part of the decision process (Ibid.: 21).

Research has shown that the cleaning industry in Denmark is characterised by an overrepresentation of unskilled workers, which make up 90% of the workforce within the cleaning sector and where nearly half of the workforce is employed on part-time contracts. Since the cleaning work does not require any specific skill-based educational background or high language skills in order to perform the tasks (Korsby, 2011: 16-17), the cleaning industry has traditionally served as a labour market entrance, where many migrants have found employment throughout the years (Refslund, 2016: 598). Reports further show that migrant workers have continuously constituted a third of the workforce within the cleaning industry. In 2005 they were estimated to be 31% of the cleaning workforce in Denmark (Hjermov & Rasmussen, 2007: 13) and around 34,2% in 2016 (Danmarks Statistik, 2016). Between 2000 and 2005 most of the migrant workers within the industry were from countries such as Turkey, Thailand, Philippines, Pakistan and Sri Lank (Hjermov & Rasmussen, 2011: 13-14). This however changed after the EU-enlargement in 2004, where these positions increasingly became occupied by workers from new EU countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania (Spanger & Hvalkof, 2020: 7; Skaksen, 2016: 8-9).

ANALYSIS

The COVID-19 frame in Denmark

"It is our opinion that the measures which are now suggested are fitting in terms of the level of the threat"

The Danish government has been implementing specific practices, such as approving helping packages for companies, closing national borders, implementing travel restrictions, locking down society, limiting social interactions, enforcing social distance, implementing the obligation to wear masks as well as focusing on disinfection and personal hygiene. We analyse these practices as a consequence of how COVID-19 was framed by the Danish government at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak. In March 2020, the Danish government held eight press meetings regarding COVID-19 and the strategies implemented to manage it. In a press meeting on the 30th of March 2020, the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, emphasised that since the outbreak of COVID-19 the government has "acted consistently when it comes to both health and economy" (PMO, 2020h) in order to get Denmark through the pandemic. In particular, she stressed that the government has had three goals. The first one "is about saving human lives. If less get infected, less will die. And we have to care for our elderly and most vulnerable. Until now we have managed to halt the infection rate" (Ibid.). This focus on the negative health consequences of COVID-19 has been present throughout all the press meetings. This is due to the fact that COVID-19 has been presented as a serious 'threat' which "spreads more quickly and faster than the flu because more of those who get sick with corona are in need of a stronger treatment, for example intensive treatment to survive" (PMO, 2020a). This demonstrates how COVID-19 is presented as being contagious, deadly and dangerous. As a result, the government has explained the necessity to act now and quickly in order to contain and delay the spread of COVID-19 (PMO, 2020f) as the costs of not acting immediately would imply worse consequences for, among others, human lives (PMO, 2020a). We analyse the utterances related to avoiding the spread of infections and the loss of lives as regarding how "only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear" (Butler, 2016: 14). In this sense, we argue that the possibility to understand COVID-19 as contagious, dangerous and deadly for human lives is conditioned by a norm which values human life (Butler, 2015: 63). Thus, we analyse this norm as a health norm about COVID-19, which in turn informs practices of saving lives.

Alongside this focus on the negative health consequences of COVID-19, the Danish Prime Minister explained that the second goal of the government has been “to prevent our healthcare system from crashing. If this happens, it will affect all of us. Until now we have avoided that too many get infected at once” (PMO, 2020h). In particular, the focus has been to prevent the healthcare system from being overburdened (PMO, 2020c) as well as to increase its capacity to handle the threat in terms of number of intensive care spots, respirators and healthcare personnel (PMO, 2020b). Moreover, the Danish Prime Minister explained that the third goal of the government has been “to make sure that our economy and unique society model gets through the crisis so that Denmark, also on the other side of corona, will be both a rich and safe society” (PMO, 2020h). Since the second press meeting, the government presented strategies to minimise social activities and send public workers home while encouraging private companies to do the same. In order to hinder the negative economic consequences of these practices, the government implemented temporary help packages with the cooperation of the bargaining institutions to prevent companies from going bankrupt and wage earners from becoming unemployed (PMO, 2020g). We analyse how these practices of increasing the capacity of the healthcare system as well as of implementing temporary help packages are conditioned by an understanding of COVID-19 as a threat to the critical functions of Danish society and economy. Therefore, we analyse a socioeconomic norm about COVID-19 which informs practices of safeguarding Danish society and economy (Butler, 2015: 31). In this sense, by enacting and making effective these two norms about COVID-19, which we refer to as the health norm and socioeconomic norm, COVID-19 is framed as a threat for human lives as well as the Danish society and economy (Butler, 2016: xix).

Finally, we see how COVID-19 has been presented as a “crisis in which we are now” (PMO, 2020d) and which Denmark needs to ‘get through’ (Ibid.). Moreover, the evaluation of COVID-19 has been dependent on “an hour-to-hour, day-to-day assessment” (PMO, 2020b) of the situation in both Denmark and Europe. This has also been emphasised by the Police Chief, Thorkild Fogde, who explained that “it is clear that we are following the situation on an ongoing basis, and if the threat changes, more can also come from us” (PMO, 2020a). We analyse these utterances as presenting COVID-19 as a situation which continuously changes and with time it will no longer pose a threat to Denmark. We argue that the possibility to understand COVID-19 in these terms is conditioned by a norm, namely the temporary norm about COVID-19. In this sense, we argue that the intersection between this norm - which we refer to as temporary norm - the health norm and the socioeconomic norm, operates by

regulating what we come to see, hear and know about COVID-19 in terms of it being a temporary threat to human lives and the Danish socio-economy (Butler, 2020: 147). In particular, we argue that the public sphere is structured and delimited by the COVID-19 frame through which the three norms about COVID-19 are enacted (Butler, 2016: 70-71).

According to Butler (2016), however, frames are not only constituted by their explicit contents but also by what is left out and, consequently, they must be understood as "active, as both jettisoning and presenting, and as doing both at once, in silence" (Ibid.: 73). In this sense, we see how the COVID-19 frame is also jettisoning another reality, such as the negative effects on people's wellbeing and mental health. We see how later data on people's mental health and wellbeing have been increasingly presented. In particular, due to the lockdown of society and the limited social interactions, a larger number of women have been victims of domestic violence and, for this reason, centres against domestic violence have been creating new emergency rooms to accommodate this increasing number of women (Vaaben, 2020a). Furthermore, since the first press meetings a rising number of children have called the helpline for children since they have been scared of COVID-19 and frustrated due to the closure of schools. This implies that COVID-19 has become the second most popular topic on the children's helpline after issues related to parent-child relationships (Children's Rights National Association, 2020). In this sense, we analyse how, as the COVID-19 frame has landed in new contexts, it has been challenged and thus changed throughout the year (Butler, 2016: 10). We see these changes in the governmental decisions to reopen parts of society which are based on an assessment of 'transmission rate', 'socioeconomic effects', 'people's wellbeing' and 'individual freedom' (PRG, 2021: 4). Another example is provided by the Danish Prime Minister who, in her opening speech in the Parliament in October 2020, emphasised on: "Elderly, who experiences loneliness. Infected, who are scared. Employees, who are afraid of losing their job. Entrepreneurs, who fight for their life's work" (PMO, 2020i). We see how both the Danish Prime Minister and the COVID-19 National Alert System have focused on the negative socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 in terms of people's wellbeing, worries and mental health, rather than only stressing the unemployment rate and the overburdened healthcare system as in the beginning of the pandemic and, thus, in the initial establishment of the COVID-19 frame. In this sense, we argue that the governmental practices of including these other socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19 still enact the socioeconomic norm but in new ways where the assessment of people's wellbeing becomes necessary. Therefore, they have come to expose and question the initial socioeconomic norm (Phillips & Knowles, 2012:

420) and, consequently, have come to change the initial COVID-19 frame. Despite being changed, we see how the COVID-19 frame has been reproduced also in the new pandemic law approved by the Danish parliament in March 2021. Since COVID-19 has been categorised as 'a publicly dangerous disease' (Governmental Decree 2021/304) as well as 'critical for society' (Governmental Decree 2021/362), we analyse how this categorisation is informed by respectively the health norm and the socioeconomic norm. Moreover, since the categorisation of COVID-19 is based on continuous assessments (DHA, 2021b), we see how the pandemic law also enacts the temporary norm.

By presenting COVID-19 as a temporary threat to human lives and Danish socio-economy, the COVID-19 frame exposes the precariousness of human life underscored by both its existential finitude and its dependence on other people. In this sense, the presence of the virus makes visible that all lives, regardless of pre-existing health risks, can be infected and can be eventually lost (Butler, 2016: 13). According to Butler (2016), the precariousness of life entails that human lives require socioeconomic and political conditions in order to be sustained (Ibid.: 14). We analyse the temporary measures implemented by the government as conditions aimed at protecting people from being infected and preventing critical functions of socio-economy from being affected. Therefore, we argue that the management of COVID-19 is informed by the health norm, the socioeconomic norm and the temporary norm (Butler, 2015: 29).

As we have analysed, these intersecting norms about COVID-19 operate by regulating the public sphere through which we come to know, see and hear about COVID-19. This frame is, according to Butler (2016), active as it is bound to circulate across space and time in order to reproduce itself. In this sense, the COVID-19 frame breaks from the contexts where it is formed and lands in other contexts, such as our informants' workplaces and their homes. Within this process of self-breaking, the frame can be either reproduced or reversed (Butler, 2016: 10) through the performative practices of our informants, their families, their colleagues and their employers (Butler, 2015: 28). As the frame lands in a new context, we see how the norms are reproduced through these performative practices and how, in some cases, one of the norms becomes more dominant. In this way, we argue that this performativity brings specific performative spaces into being, creating the space of domesticity and the space of work during the pandemic (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441). In the following sections, we analyse how the health norm, the socioeconomic norm and the temporary norm enter these performative spaces, interact with other established norms and, consequently, inform practices within these spaces. In this sense, we investigate the interrelational nature of spaces through cases of how the space

of work enters the space of domesticity as well as how the space of subcontracting [hotel] enters the space of work. Albeit in some spaces there may be more norms being enacted simultaneously, we choose to emphasise our analysis on those norms which become dominant in affecting our informants in an interesting way.

The space of work

"If cleaning is not there, what happens to the hospital?"

- Cleaning in hospitals during the pandemic

As we have analysed above, since the outbreak of COVID-19, one of the priorities of the Danish government has been to avoid that too many people become infected simultaneously in order for the healthcare system not to be overburdened and consequently crash. We see how the government has stressed the importance of safeguarding important institutions which are critical for Danish society, such as the healthcare system. However, the focus has not only been in terms of reducing the infection rate among the population but also among the healthcare personnel, as their infection would have negative implications for the entire society. On the 10th of March 2020, the Danish Prime Minister explained:

> We can also run into capacity problems in terms of one of our most important resources, namely the healthcare personnel, because we also risk that important personnel groups can become infected. And that will not only have an effect on the people who themselves are at risk of being infected with corona but it may also affect other patient groups, who need the same equipment and the same staff, among other things in terms of respirator treatment (PMO, 2020b).

This demonstrates how healthcare personnel have been regarded as one of the most important resources during the pandemic. In this sense, we argue that the possibility to recognise healthcare workers as important resources for society is conditioned by the socioeconomic norm. This understanding implies that, albeit other workers have been encouraged to work from home, healthcare personnel need to keep working physically to guarantee the functioning of the healthcare system and thereby Danish society. Since this norm demands that healthcare personnel work in an environment where they are in close contact with COVID-19 patients, they become highly exposed to the virus. This is reflected in the numbers where healthcare personnel are the most infected group of workers in the Danish labour market (Grooss

Jakobsen, 2020), which we also see in our data. Our informants explain how all their colleagues as well as Sandra, Martha and Anna were infected with COVID-19 (Sandra, 2021; Martha, 2021; Anna, 2021). This shows that our informants are working in a life threatening working environment. Therefore, we argue that the socioeconomic norm maximises the precariousness of our informants as they become differentially exposed to COVID-19. In this sense, we analyse that, by becoming recognised as an important resource through the socioeconomic norm, our informants are placed in a politically induced condition of precarity (Butler, 2016: 22-25). As all our informants have been going to work since the outbreak of COVID-19, we see that our informants have been performing this norm and thus we argue that they have been reproducing and participating in their condition of precarity (Butler, 2015: 58). However, by failing to perform the norm by not going to work, there would have been negative consequences and sanctions in terms of losing their job (Butler, 1988: 528). Accordingly, the socioeconomic norm constrains our informants' possibility to act in a way where no matter what they do, they are placed in a politically induced condition of precarity.

However, since the healthcare personnel become recognisable as important for the functioning of society, the government has implemented practices to protect these workers. Some of the unnecessary activities in hospitals were suspended to avoid the spread of COVID-19 within hospitals (PMO, 2020d). Moreover, the Director of the Health Ministry, Søren Brostrøm, emphasised the necessity "to armour our healthcare system so that they can manage the development we are seeing" (PMO, 2020c). This demonstrates how the authorities intend to provide adequate protective equipment to healthcare personnel for 'fighting' against COVID-19. We see that our informants cleaning in hospitals are also included within the healthcare personnel as the hospitals provide them with protective equipment such as coats, masks, additional visors and hand sanitisers (Emily, 2021a). As Emily explains:

> We have a depot. Where we can go if we need some things. But at the COVID-19 units, you have to use special gloves, the long ones. [...] You have to change them and the clothes, you have to change them 8 times. But on the COVID-19 unit, you use a lot (Emily, 2021a).

This shows how the hospital provides our informants with enough protective equipment throughout their working day as well as demands them to wear and continuously change this equipment. Moreover, we see how they are also supported in these new practices of the hospital:

> The doctor said: “can I help you?” And I say “yes”, because there are two tables for clothes with each a sign that says ‘high risk’ and ‘low risk’, so I ask which kind of mask to wear – so sometimes you don’t know what to use [...]. So he explains to me, “you have to use this one, but you can also use this one” (Martha, 2021).

This demonstrates how our informants are taken care of in terms of not only easily accessible and enough protective equipment but also support from their colleagues. In this sense, we see how our informants are ‘armoured’ while cleaning in hospitals during the pandemic. We analyse the provision of protective equipment as redistribution of material resources which constitutes our informants as included and visible within their workplace as they are enabled to fully participate and maintain their function in the hospital (Fraser, 2007: 26-31). This inclusion of cleaners within healthcare personnel is also found in the vaccination strategy as most of our informants cleaning in hospitals have either been vaccinated (Sandra, 2021; Anna, 2021; Emily, 2021a) or are in the process of being vaccinated at the time of the interview (Linda, 2021a). We analyse these practices of ‘armouring’ our informants as practices which illustrate how, by working exposed to COVID-19 and being ‘important resources’, our informants’ lives need to be protected. This demonstrates how our informants’ lives are valued and would be mourned if lost, which implies that they are recognised as grievable lives worth protecting (Butler, 2016: 14). In this sense, we analyse how our informants become recognised through both the socioeconomic norm and the health norm which are enacted simultaneously by the practices of the hospital (Phillips & Knowles, 2012: 421). Where the socioeconomic norm places our informants in a condition of precarity by maximising their precariousness in a highly exposed working environment, the health norm is simultaneously aiming at countering this condition through the practices of providing protective equipment. Due to the emphasis both on being important resources taking care of society and on saving their lives, we argue that the socioeconomic norm and the health norm intersect and in this way inform the practices within the hospitals. We argue that these practices establish the subject position of *the essential worker*, whose function is critical for Danish society and whose life is worth protecting (McQueen, 2015: 47).

When investigating the practices of our informants, we see how they take up and act upon the subject position through which they are recognised. Our informants, especially the ones working in COVID-19 units, explain how they are cautious about wearing the protective equipment in order to avoid being infected. As explained by Martha: “you really need to be focused about how you put on your clothes and the mask and hat and glasses. And you need to

take care" (Martha, 2021). Also Emily explains how she continuously changes the gloves and the clothes she wears in the COVID-19 units in order to feel safe (Emily, 2021a). During the interview, she further demonstrates how, by moving her hands through her hair and on her clothes, when she leaves a COVID-19 room she puts hand sanitiser on her hair and clothes. When asked why, she explains that it makes her feel safer especially when "I feel that I have been too close to a patient" (Ibid.). This demonstrates how Emily has internalised a specific understanding about what clean is as well as protected which has turned into specific bodily movements which she repeats when working. In this sense, we see how our informants are performing that their lives are worth protecting. Accordingly, we argue that our informants come to believe that wearing protective equipment is protecting them from COVID-19, albeit both them and their colleagues have been infected with COVID-19 (Butler, 1988: 520). Another example of how our informants perform the subject position is found in the way in which they think about their function in the hospital. Martha describes her job in relation to the doctors and nurses in the hospital as: "We [the cleaners] are in the hospital and take care of the people there, together with the nurses and the doctors" (Martha, 2021). This shows how Martha understands her work as part of a team effort, where all employees in the hospital work together towards the same goal, namely taking care of the patients (Martha, 2021). The understanding of cleaning as important for the functioning of the hospital is further explained by other informants: "if cleaning is not there, what happens to the hospital?" (Rosie, 2021) and "if we don't work, who will do it?" (Emily, 2021a). This demonstrates how, by asking these rhetorical questions and understanding their job as part of a team effort, our informants come to think of themselves and their actions of cleaning during the pandemic as essential. In this sense, by going to work everyday and thinking about cleaning as important, they perform the subject position and, thus, are brought to believe in the naturalness of them being essential for the hospital (Butler, 1988: 522). Accordingly, the enactment of the two intersecting norms through the performative practices of the hospital brings into being a space of work where our informants are demanded to think about cleaning and themselves as cleaners in a specific way (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441). In particular, we argue that this specific way is informed by the subject position of *the essential worker* which our informants have to perform. This entails working in an environment where they feel included as well as contributing to the fight against COVID-19.

In conclusion, when the COVID-19 frame lands in this space, the socioeconomic norm and the health norm are reproduced by the practices of both the hospital and our informants. In this

way, our analysis demonstrates how the visibility of COVID-19 within the hospital in terms of infected and hospitalised COVID-19 patients makes our informants become visible as essential workers whose function is critical for Danish society and whose life is worth protecting. Consequently, we argue that the management of COVID-19 is simultaneously creating new inequalities, as it demands hospital cleaners to work in an exposed environment, while at the same time bringing into being a space of work where cleaners become included as full and valued participants in the function of the hospitals.

"They didn't care for our health, our protection"
- Cleaning in schools during the pandemic

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, Denmark has been under lockdown both in the spring 2020 and in the winter of 2020-21. Despite these severe restrictions, day-care institutions and primary schools for children in 0-4 grade were the first to reopen both after the first (MCE, 2020b) and second lockdown (Ravn, 2021). The decision to reopen schools is based on three dimensions which are 'transmission rate', 'socioeconomic effects' and 'children's wellbeing' (PRG, 2021: 8). According to various health assessments, children under the age of ten are less likely to become infected and spread the virus than adults (DHA, 2021c; Citroner, 2021; Parshley, 2020) and they also tend to develop milder COVID-19 symptoms (DHA, 2021c; Villines, 2020). Consequently, the Professional Reference Group argues that the reopening of schools:

> Has the highest priority among the assessed measures. This [school closure] is a restriction which has a big effect on the socio-economy and wellbeing. Simultaneously its effect on the transmission rate has been estimated to be low (PRG, 2021: 8).

This demonstrates how the decision of reopening schools is based on both the health norm in terms of transmission rate as well as the socioeconomic norm in terms of the negative consequences of having schools closed for pupils in 0-4 grade. However, we argue that the health norm becomes less dominant since the closure of schools is assessed to have higher negative consequences in the dimensions of 'socioeconomic effect' and 'children's wellbeing'. In particular, parents are affected by having children home from school and, thus, are not able to attend to their work as usual (PRG, 2021). As the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, explains:

> During the whole process we have tried to keep much of the Danish Business life – including the production – open as much as possible. In this sense, it also matters whether you can get your kids taken care of so that you can go to work (Brøns Riise, 2020).

This demonstrates how the Danish authorities' decision to prioritise the reopening of schools during the pandemic is based on the importance of enabling parents to do their jobs and keeping the economy afloat. As part of the reopening of schools, there has been more emphasis on extra and more frequent cleaning in schools. In particular, the government has implemented new regulations regarding what and how to clean in schools, such as frequent and continuous disinfections of commonly touched areas (MCE, 2020c; 2021c). Moreover, municipalities all over the country have been granted additional money by the government to prioritise extra cleaning in schools (KL, 2020). We analyse these practices in terms of increased focus on continuous and frequent cleaning as implemented in order to prevent the spread of the virus and hinder the closure of schools again. However, since children are less likely to develop serious symptoms as well as be infected and spread COVID-19, we argue that the practices of reopening schools are less concerned with transmission rates and saving lives. Rather they are implemented to maintain schools open in order to avoid the negative socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19. Therefore, we see how different norms work simultaneously. However, the socioeconomic norm becomes the dominant norm in informing the practices of reopening schools which are thus performative (Phillips & Knowles, 2012: 421).

In this section, we analyse how the socioeconomic norm affects the working conditions of our informants cleaning in schools. At the beginning of the reopening of schools, teachers and other school personnel returning to work were not allowed to wear masks or visors during school hours. However, due to teachers' continuous requests and complaints about feeling unsafe, the usage of masks has now become voluntary (Grooss Jakobsen & Møller, 2020; Johansen, 2020). We see how this regulation also affects our informants. Since it is not mandatory to wear a mask in schools, our informants are not expected to wear one while working and, consequently, their managers do not provide them with one (Kate, 2021a; Beatrix, 2021a). Additionally, our informants experience a shortage of other protective equipment such as adequate gloves and hand sanitisers, which are not provided by either their managers or the workplace. As Beatrix explains:

> I did tell them about gloves and I asked about other protection and I asked them about sanitisers and they were like: “gloves, you have to sanitise after each class, try, if there aren’t holes, don’t throw out. Use them as much as you can” and for masks they didn’t say anything, it was as they never have heard about that question (Beatrix, 2021a).

This demonstrates that, despite our informant’s requests and inquiries for more equipment, it was not granted to them. Instead, we see how Beatrix’s employer tells her to reuse disposable gloves multiple times until they break. The fact that our informants are not provided with the adequate protective equipment is interesting since our informants work during the schools’ opening hours. Albeit cleaning while teachers and pupils are around has become a common practice (Implement, 2020: 19), Jennifer explains how this is making her work “a bit tricky for people who are in a cleaning position, because there is always somebody” (Jennifer, 2021a). This demonstrates how our informants are working in the same space and at the same time with teachers and pupils which heightens their risk of exposure to COVID-19. This is also reflected in the statistics of infection rates among different working groups outside the health sector, where cleaners are the second most infected group of workers in Denmark (Østergaard, 2020). Despite being one of the most infected groups of workers, the governmental decision to reopen schools based on a socioeconomic assessment demonstrates how the government fails to recognise our informants as exposed to COVID-19. This we also see in managers’ practices of not providing adequate protective equipment to our informants. In this sense, we analyse these practices of both the government and our informants’ managers as performative since they are informed by the socioeconomic norm (Butler, 2015: 31). We see how, by simply focusing on the Danish economy and the children’s wellbeing, the socioeconomic norm operates through radical effacement which makes our informants cleaning in schools become occluded as exposed to the COVID-19 and thus, worth protecting (Butler, 2020: 147). In this sense, we analyse how through the radical effacement the socioeconomic norm establishes what we can see, hear and know in terms of which lives are grievable and which lives are ungrievable (Butler, 2020: 146-7). Therefore, we see that through the differential distribution of protective equipment our informants working in schools become ungrievable and, consequently, their precariousness becomes maximised. Accordingly, we argue that the socioeconomic norm induces a condition of precarity where our informants suffer from inadequate material resources which makes them become differently exposed to COVID-19 (Butler, 2016: 25).

We see that, by operating through the radical effacement, the socioeconomic norm affects how our informants experience working in schools during the pandemic. As analysed above, our

informants cleaning in hospitals are provided with enough equipment, which makes them feel protected while working. However, this is not the case for our informants working in schools. Beatrix explains that cleaning in schools during the pandemic is:

> Beatrix: Like a chess game. We were the front line, all the queens and kings are behind.
>
> Interviewer: What made you feel like that?
>
> Beatrix: Basically the thing that they didn't care for our health, our protection. Everybody outside is protected, everybody is taking care of themselves, even the stores, even they were protecting themselves to the maximum and what about working with the bacteria and all that stuff, with trash and…nothing? Really? (Beatrix, 2021a)

In this sense, Beatrix uses the chess game to illustrate how she feels like a pawn since she works in direct contact with bacteria and other people. By describing herself as a pawn, we see how she feels exposed to COVID-19 because she is not provided with adequate protective equipment. This we also see in the case of Jennifer who, when asked about whether she feels safe working in schools, answers: "how and why is nobody caring?" (Jennifer, 2021a). Also Kate expresses that not having protective equipment is "quite weird because the school is an indoor place" (Kate, 2021a). She further explains how she was expecting both the school personnel and cleaners to wear masks because:

> You work with many other people, right? [...] we are travelling by train, buses, we go to our families and you can get it both ways. You can get it from kids and you can take it from home, you don't know (Kate, 2021a).

The ways of questioning the lack of protective equipment demonstrate how our informants feel exposed and not protected while working. We see that there is a strong difference between our informants working in hospitals and those cleaning in schools in terms of feeling protected in their workplace. In this sense, we analyse the differential distribution of protective equipment as a performative practice enacting the socioeconomic norm which brings into being a space of work where our informants feel exposed to COVID-19 and thus are are forced to find different strategies to feel safer (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441). For instance, Kate has started buying masks personally and wearing them at work. She further explains that she is "trying to avoid coming close to others. That's why we need to take breaks when they take breaks." (Kate, 2021a). This we also see in the case of Jennifer. When asked what she does to feel more protected, Jennifer explains that in addition to wearing gloves all the time she:

> Avoid people! [...] For me it's difficult to check the work if I have a crowded school so I'm looking for the moments when kids are inside the class or when they are having lectures or are outside. I am catching those moments (Jennifer, 2021a).

This shows how Jennifer and Kate organise their work in ways where they try to minimise contact with the children and teachers. We see how, in order to feel safer at work, they implement different strategies, such as wearing protective equipment and 'catching' the moments when there are fewer people around them. We analyse these strategies as practices through which our informants start performing that they are worth saving and protecting. In this sense, we argue that these practices are performative as they are informed by the health norm (Butler, 2015: 31). At the same time, however, we see how our informants do not challenge the socioeconomic norm which is making them become occluded as exposed to COVID-19. In particular, as we mentioned above, teachers managed to challenge the management of COVID-19 by publicly demanding to use protective equipment. However, we argue that the practices of our informants to privately buy and wear masks as well as organise their work, do not challenge the socioeconomic norm. In this way, while our informants do not act against their condition of precarity (Butler, 2015: 58), they try to navigate their situation by finding alternative strategies to feel safe while working during the pandemic.

In conclusion, we have analysed how the reopenings of schools are informed by the socioeconomic norm which operates through radical effacement. This implies that the norm conditions the understanding of our informants in a way where they become ungrievable and unworthy of protection. In this sense, we see how the invisibility of the virus comes to constitute our informants as invisible in terms of exposure to COVID-19. This in turn induces a condition of precarity which our informants are not challenging but navigating through different individual strategies of protecting themselves.

"So I was working at the hotel and then I was sent to the school and then again at the hotel"
- Cleaning in different spaces during the pandemic

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Danish government has, among others, implemented the lockdown of society which has entailed the temporary closures of various workplaces (PMO, 2020f, 2020g). As we have shown above, alongside this measure, there has been an increase in the demand for cleaning in schools as part of the decision to prioritise the reopening of schools during the pandemic (MCE, 2020b, 2020c, 2021c; Olesen, 2021). In this sense, we

see how the management of COVID-19 increases the demand for cleaning in one place – the school – while decreasing the demand in another place – the hotels. Due to this change of demand, the private cleaning companies where some of our informants are employed have made an agreement with the municipality of Copenhagen to provide extra cleaning staff to schools (Mail from 21st of April, 2020). This implies that, due to the closure of hotels, our informants cleaning in hotels are sent to work in schools. As a result of this change in the workplace, we set out to investigate the interrelation between these spaces and, in order to do so, we will firstly establish the norms within the hotel which we analyse as the space of subcontracting.

"They call it smart cleaning"
- Cleaning in hotels

Cleaning is one of the industries where working conditions have been strongly affected by globalisation and neoliberal policies, which have led to a deregulation of capital and labour, increased competition, as well as demands of cost-effectiveness. As a consequence of these market conditions, subcontracting has become a widely used arrangement in the cleaning industry in order to increase competitiveness and reducing costs (Lewis et al., 2015: 583-584; Ollus, 2016: 25; Refslund, 2016: 606; Søgaard et al., 2006: 579). As we have analysed in our previous project, the extensive usage of subcontracting arrangements also affects our informants cleaning in hotels and their working conditions (Damiani et al., 2020: 40-45). This is due to the agreement stipulated between the hotel and the cleaning company, which defines specific parameters in terms of time needed to complete various tasks, cleaning procedures as well as quality criteria that the company needs to fulfill (Angelina, 2020). This agreement affects the working conditions of our informants as Jennifer explains:

> We are a company hired by the hotel and have a very strict [...] agreement. They are also pushing us a lot but it is also because of the condition. At 15 o'clock rooms should be done because new people are coming [...] you are stressed all the time, you are pushed by the reception, by the guests, by the management over the quality, you cannot relax and it's very exhausting (Jennifer, 2020).

This demonstrates how the subcontracting arrangement affects the working conditions of Jennifer as we see how she becomes pushed to clean rooms in little time, while simultaneously being expected to deliver quality. This is also shown by Alicia who explains that they do not

have enough time to complete the tasks she should be doing (Alicia, 2021a), However, this has not always been the case, as it is described by Helen who has been working in a hotel for 33 years:

> After some years, then they give more job and give more rooms. You need to do more tasks. When I started it was only 15 rooms I needed to clean for full time. Then you have good time to do your tasks [...]. But after a while, then it was more, 16 rooms, 17 rooms, 18 rooms. But you have the same time. They call it smart cleaning, then you have 10 minutes or 15 minutes per room, that smart cleaning (Helen, 2021).

This demonstrates how her working conditions have changed through the years due to the 'smart cleaning' which entails doing more tasks in less time. Thus, the 'smart cleaning' has become the new normal. We argue that these practices of subcontracting cleaning services between hotels and private companies are performative since they are informed by a norm, namely the neoliberal globalised norm. This norm demands cleaners to complete a large number of tasks in a limited amount of time as well as deliver quality (Butler, 2015: 29). This in turn enables an increase in competitiveness and reduction in costs within the cleaning industry. In order to manage these working conditions, our informants cleaning in hotels need to work effectively (Aida, 2020) and fast (Alicia, 2021a; Kate, 2020; Aida, 2020). The quick working pace of the cleaners in hotels is also shown by Jennifer who explains that she is "running all the time upstairs" (Jennifer, 2020). Aida further describes how she is favored by her manager because she is 'superwoman' in the sense that "I'm fast, they will give me double rooms [...] but I'm expected to help everybody because I can do it fast" (Aida, 2020). We argue that, by 'running' and 'being a superwoman', our informants perform the subject position of *the hotel cleaner* which is produced by the practice of the subcontracting arrangement between hotels and cleaning companies (McQueen, 2015: 47). In this sense, through this practice, the neoliberal globalised norm brings into being a space of subcontracting where our informants are demanded to work fast and effectively in order to become recognisable (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 442).

Moreover, the cleaning companies, where our informants are hired, employ cleaners with different titles: maids, room controllers, supervisors and head supervisors. In this sense, the organisation of work is structured in a vertical way where the lowest position is covered by the maids who can be promoted to room controllers, then to supervisors and finally to head supervisors (Angelina, 2020). We argue that the practices of the cleaning companies to hire

cleaners with different titles are performative since they are informed by a norm, namely the hierarchical norm (Butler, 2015: 29). This norm informs the practices of assigning different responsibilities to our informants depending on their title. This is also reflected in the work tasks of the supervisor and head supervisor, which is the case of our informants. The role of the supervisor consists of checking that the quality criteria are met and inspecting the maids during working hours (Angelina, 2020). Jennifer explains how being a supervisor not only implies having many tasks but it also implies being responsible for the maids. In particular, when a supervisor notices that the maid does not work fast enough, "she needs to make a decision, or she needs to kick ass and force the person to move faster" (Jennifer, 2020). For these additional responsibilities, supervisors "have a tillæg of 7 kr per hour [...] on top of the normal salary that you get all the time" (Kate, 2020). These quotes show how, by being a supervisor, our informants are expected to be responsible for guaranteeing the quality of cleaning and, for this reason, they are paid accordingly. On the other hand, being a head supervisor entails additional tasks and responsibilities. This is shown by Alicia who explains "the head supervisor needs to inspect the rooms, to be sure about everything in the public area, all the duties are only in her hand" (Alicia, 2021a). In this sense, the hierarchical norm produces various subject positions of *the maid*, *room controller*, *supervisor* and *head supervisor* who have different responsibilities, which our informants come to perform depending on their title (Phillips & Knowles, 2012: 421). Thus, the performative practices of the cleaning companies to structure the work in a hierarchical way bring into being a space of subcontracting where our informants are demanded and expected to fulfill specific working tasks in order to become recognisable (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441).

In conclusion, we see how the space of subcontracting is brought into being by different dominant norms which are enacted simultaneously, the neoliberal globalised norm and the hierarchical norm. However, this space is not a bounded stage but rather infiltrates other spaces where these norms are enacted by our informants moved to clean in schools. Thus, this entails an investigation of the interrelated nature of spaces to which we now turn (Ibid.: 442-446).

"I am not a part of their team, I am just a support person"
- Being moved from hotels to schools during the pandemic

In this section, we investigate how the socioeconomic norm and the temporary norm intersect and produce specific working conditions for our informants in their 'new' workplace. We

further analyse how an already established norm in the space of work affects our informants' position in schools.

As we have analysed in the section about cleaning in schools during the pandemic, the socioeconomic norm is the dominant norm in informing practices of reopening schools. In order to maintain schools open and provide extra and frequent cleaning and disinfection, the municipality of Copenhagen has entered into an agreement with the cleaning companies where our informants are hired. This agreement was established in April 2020 as a one-month agreement which was supposed to be prolonged monthly depending on the development of the pandemic (Kate, 2021b). This practice of establishing an agreement on a monthly basis is a temporary and short-term solution. Besides being informed by the dominant socioeconomic norm, we analyse this practice as a performative act of both the cleaning companies and the municipality since it is also informed by the temporary norm (Butler, 2015: 31). In this sense, we argue that the socioeconomic norm intersects with the temporary norm and thus these intersecting norms about COVID-19 come to inform the practices of the cleaning companies and the municipality. As the cleaning company and the municipality have prolonged the contract month by month for almost a year, this practice of repeatedly prolonging is reproducing the intersecting norms about COVID-19 in terms of requiring additional cleaning staff in schools on a temporary basis (Butler, 2015: 31). This prolonged one-month agreement affects the working conditions of our informants. In the case of Kate, she explains that she is just working in the school until the hotel opens again when she will be moved back to her previous position as a supervisor in the hotel (Kate, 2021a). Another example is the experience of Sarah who explains: "So I was working at the hotel and then I was sent to the school and then again at the hotel" (Sarah, 2021) which was also the case for Alicia (Alicia, 2021a). As we see in their experiences, it might not come as a surprise that the temporariness of the agreement is creating temporary working conditions for our informants which implies that they are only supposed to work in schools for a short but unknown period of time. Furthermore, their contracts with the cleaning companies are not changed due to the agreement. This means that our informants remain employed under a contract which states that they are cleaning in hotels (Kate, 2021b). In this sense, we analyse how our informants are not only working on temporary premises but also in a workplace where they do not 'belong' or are not 'supposed' to work according to their contracts. Thus, the intersecting norms about COVID-19 inform practices through which our informants become temporarily displaced.

We analyse the temporary displacement of our informants as a "socio-institutional practice of subject-formation" (McQueen, 2015: 47) as it produces a specific subject position of *the extra* through which our informants become recognisable in schools. One example of how our informants are recognised through this subject position is found in the practices of cleaning inspections. In particular, when there are changes in cleaning procedures the municipality hires an inspector to support and give feedback to the permanent cleaning staff in schools so that they can comply with the new guidelines (Implement, 2020: 22). Regarding this inspection, Jennifer explains:

> After the new year they had some kind of inspection. [...] there was sent an extra person who was checking all the procedures and as much as I know and saw, he was going to each woman and following how she is working. [...] To me he didn't say anything since I am just to support, but I said to him "if you see something, just tell me". He said that he had nothing to complain to me about it. It was more for them [the permanent cleaning staff] because I am working temporarily (Jennifer, 2021a).

As Jennifer describes, the cleaning inspection at the school only considers the cleaning procedures of the permanent cleaning staff. Even when Jennifer asks for feedback, the inspector tells her that he is not supposed to inspect her cleaning since she is there as a support on a temporary basis. In this interaction between the inspector and our informant, we analyse the response of the inspector as a performative act which reproduces the intersecting norms about COVID-19 and, thus, legitimises the subject position of *the extra* through which our informant becomes recognisable (Butler, 1988: 526). We argue that becoming recognised as an extra is conditioned by the intersecting norms about COVID-19 within the agreement between the cleaning company and the municipality. Therefore, we analyse how this agreement functions as regulating the social interaction between our informant and the permanent cleaning staff in a specific way. This regulation of social interaction establishes our informant as *the extra* who is not recognised as part of the permanent cleaning staff, but rather as *the extra* who is excluded and who does not have equal status with the permanent cleaners (Fraser, 2007: 31). This is also reflected in the types of tasks assigned to our informants. Jennifer explains how she is instructed to do only toilet refilling despite being a full-time cleaner. She explains how this is related to the fact that "we are supposed to be a support for the staff [of the school]" (Jennifer, 2021a). Another example is provided by Kate who, when asked about the organisation of working tasks when cleaning in schools explains that "in this 7-hour shift I need to disinfect the handles of the doors of the school two times and I need to brush, clean the toilets, refill with hand soap

and paper. It's two hours of total work" (Kate, 2021a). This shows how Kate's tasks are only related to disinfecting highly touched surfaces and how these tasks are so few that they only take up two hours of total work. Being assigned tasks of only disinfecting highly touched surfaces has become a common practice among the additional cleaners in schools during the pandemic (Olesen, 2021). This demonstrates how the tasks assigned to our informants working in schools are informed by the intersecting norms about COVID-19 which establish our informants for recognition as *the extra*. In this sense, we argue that, through practices of the cleaning inspector as well as of assigning specific tasks, the intersecting norms about COVID-19 bring into being a space of work where our informants are demanded to clean in a specific way which prevents them from being full participants in the group of permanent cleaning staff (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441). This is also experienced by Jennifer as she explains her role in the school: "I am not a part of their team, I am just a support person" (Jennifer, 2021a). In this sense, we see how, through the performative utterances about herself, Jennifer comes to perform the subject position of *the extra* as someone who is excluded from the permanent cleaning staff. By doing so, we see how she embodies the intersecting norms about COVID-19 and she is brought to believe in the naturalness of her becoming *the extra* (Butler, 1988: 522).

As our informants describe their working days in schools, it becomes evident that it is not only the intersecting norms about COVID-19 which shape our informants for recognition in a way where they become excluded from the permanent cleaning staff. As Alicia explains about the permanent staff: "He is not Danish, he is from Nepal, but he prefers to speak in Danish, but I don't know Danish. But it is the same in all the schools. Most of the staff are foreigners that don't speak English but just Danish" (Alicia, 2020). This demonstrates how our informants are moved to a workplace where the common spoken language among cleaners is Danish. Another example is provided by Jennifer who explains: "They speak in Danish and between them they are talking and I can't understand" (Jennifer, 2021a). As Jennifer only knows a little Danish, it becomes difficult for her to communicate with the permanent cleaning staff since they do not speak English. We see how these practices of speaking Danish are established by the management of cleaning in schools. In particular, due to the movement from invisible to visible cleaning, the management strategy to have cleaners in schools during the school opening hours rather than in evenings has become common practice. This management has resulted in increasing interactions between, on the one hand, pupils, school personnel and school managers and, on the other hand, cleaners (Implement, 2020: 19-21). We analyse this management strategy as a practice which demands cleaners in schools to be able to communicate in Danish.

In this sense, we argue that the practices of speaking Danish in schools are informed by a national language norm which establishes Danish as the common spoken language in schools (Butler, 2015: 63).

As we have analysed in our previous project, we see how our informants are used to working in an environment where the common spoken language is English (Damiani et al., 2020: 28) and therefore they are affected when they are moved to schools. As Jennifer explains, her contact with the permanent cleaning staff occurs on a minimum of "only hi and bye" (Jennifer, 2021a). Sarah describes her experience of the change in language when moved to schools: "So, I went to the school. It was a bit different for me. No one spoke that much because everyone was speaking in Danish. If no one speaks with you, you feel low. I feel actually in that school, just work and go home, that's it" (Sarah, 2021). In this sense, we see how the practices of speaking Danish within the school work as an exclusionary regulation of the interaction between our informants and the permanent cleaning staff. These practices in turn come to deny our informants the possibility to fully participate in social interactions within the schools (Fraser, 2007: 30-31). We see how, in this way, the national language norm fails to recognise our informants as peers due to their language skills and, therefore, they are not included in the everyday interaction between the cleaners at the school (Fraser, 2007: 26-27). Accordingly, we argue that the practices of speaking Danish bring into being a space of work where our informants are demanded to speak Danish in order to become recognisable as part of school permanent cleaning staff (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441). Within the space of work, we see how our informants become excluded because they are not able to speak English with the permanent cleaning staff as well as because they become *the extra* in the practices of the cleaning inspector and of being assigned only disinfecting tasks. We analyse this excluded position of our informants as not enabling them to sustain social relations within the space of work, but rather isolating them from the rest of the permanent cleaning staff (Butler, 2016: 19). In this sense, we argue that both the intersecting norms about COVID-19 and the national language norm simultaneously maximise the precariousness of our informants and thus induce a condition of precarity (Ibid.: 22).

In conclusion, the management of COVID-19 in terms of temporary displacements of our informants puts into practice a specific organisation of work where our informants become recognisable as *the extra* within their new working environment in schools. This entails that our informants become excluded from the permanent cleaning staff which is further reinforced by the national language norm within the space of work. In this sense, we see how both the

intersecting norms about COVID-19 and the national language norm produces unequal working conditions for our informants working in schools during the pandemic.

“In the school, you are a slave going with a mop”

In this section, we investigate how our informants experience their new working conditions in the schools. We do this through an analysis of the interrelational nature of spaces where we see how the norms established in the space of subcontracting enters and contaminates the space of work as the norms come to condition the experiences of our informants.

We see how, compared to their working conditions in the hotel, their working conditions in the schools are completely different. As we have been engaging with our informants working in hotels since the previous project in the spring 2020, our informants have openly told us about how and why they do not like their job in the hotels. The reasons for this are often related to the physically hard work. As Jennifer explained last year: “To work in a hotel is super hard work. It is one of the hardest. If you can do the housekeeping part, you can handle [...] many things” (Jennifer, 2020). This is backed up by Kate who explains that “it’s a hard job, so there are not many who fit [the job] and many give up after a couple of months” (Kate, 2020). That the job is physically demanding is further explained by Alicia who emphasises the temporal dimension of her work: “You need to find time also for your body to not push too much [...] most of the time I am like “I don’t like this”. So, the time is not okay in housekeeping” (Alicia, 2021a). This experienced mismatch between time and task is linked to the fact that the workload for private cleaners is 30% higher than for public cleaners, which means that our informants have to clean bigger areas than publicly hired cleaners within the same amount of time (Implement, 2020: 11). Researchers have shown how this relation between time and tasks has led to work-related health problems among cleaning personnel (Søgaard et al., 2006: 579). This is described by Helen who at the age of 55 is no longer able to work in the hotel because of the work’s effect on her body:

> I wish [for the job] to have less tempo, so then I could maybe make it until I was 70 years or 60 years. When you need all that fast tempo, you ruin your body and sometimes I think it is a shame for the cleaning industry that it is like this. That is the thing I really wish, that the tempo is not so hard, so we could more calmly work instead of that everything is so fast. Then I could keep on working (Helen, 2021).

In addition to the shortage of time to do the tasks required, Aida emphasises another aspect of how the work is organised in the hotel: "It's not just physical hard job, it's also the pressure because you have somebody going after you and checking you" (Aida, 2020). This shows that, in addition to doing a physically hard job, it is also mentally stressful as our informants are monitored while working. Moreover, as we have analysed in our previous project, working under pressure leads to having less energy to enjoy private life. Additionally, we analysed how the lower salary earned in hotels pushes our informants to be dependent on getting more hours at work as well as hinders the opportunity to attend language courses or do other leisure activities (Damiani et al., 2020). Due to the hard working conditions in hotels, our informants explain how they wish they could work under different conditions. As Alicia explains: "I want to work happy and not feel pressured. I want to have time to focus on the details and quality" (Alicia, 2021a). This is also expressed by Jennifer who wishes for "more time, less stress" (Jennifer, 2021a) and a working environment where the relation between time and tasks are better (Ibid.). In this sense, we see how they describe better working conditions which are comparable to the ones they have in schools, namely having more time, fewer tasks and no one watching over the shoulder. Furthermore, while working in schools, our informants receive a higher salary since cleaners working for the municipality are covered by another collective agreement than the one in the hotel (Kate, 2021b). In this sense, we see that the temporary displacement of our informants provides other working conditions characterised by having fewer tasks and more time to perform them and, consequently, our informants can work under less stressed conditions. As a result, Jennifer explains how she now has more time to recover from work, go jogging, do other leisure activities and prepare mentally for the next day (Jennifer, 2021a). In this sense, we analyse these working conditions as a material redistribution where our informants are provided with more leisure time as well as a higher income. This, consequently, enables our informants to participate in society and have interactions with others in their freetime (Fraser, 2007: 27). Therefore, we argue that the temporary displacement of our informants in schools provides conditions for our informants to flourish and sustain their lives in their freetime (Butler, 2016: 14). While, as we have analysed above, the intersecting norms about COVID-19 maximise the precariousness of our informants in terms of recognition within the space of work, we argue that these intersecting norms simultaneously minimise the precariousness of our informants in terms of redistribution of material resources in their leisure time (Butler, 2016: 25).

As objectively ‘good’ or ‘bad’ working conditions can be experienced in different ways by different people (Campbell & Price, 2016: 318; Ivanova, 2017: 495), we will analyse how our informants experience these objectively better working conditions provided by the material redistribution. As our informants start working in schools, we analyse how dominant norms within the space of subcontracting enter the space of work as they inform our informants’ experiences of their new working conditions. When asked about how she manages to do the tasks required in the school, Jennifer explains: “Simply because it is a different type of speed. For me was the main problem to slow down since I was used to the hotel where you had to be fast” (Jennifer, 2021a). This shows how it becomes a problem for her to settle with the pace which she experiences as slow in the school compared to the speed in the hotel. As we have analysed in the section about cleaning in hotels, the space of subcontracting is performative of the neoliberal globalised norm which shapes our informants for recognition through the subject position of *the hotel cleaner*. In this sense, we analyse her utterances about having problems to slow down as enacting the neoliberal globalised norm (Butler, 2015: 31). By believing in the necessity and naturalness of cleaning quickly, we argue that Jennifer comes to perform the subject position established in the space of subcontracting as she starts working in the school (Butler, 1988: 522). We see how our informants come to perform this subject position not only through their utterances about cleaning but also in the way they clean in schools. Although our informants become *the extra*, our informants start performing what the space of subcontracting demands from them in order to become recognisable. One example of this is provided by Jennifer who explains:

> At the hotel it was more strict. We had to clean the handles, the elevator buttons which were more touched. Here, as I said, nobody told me what I need to do. The person who ‘trained me’ said toilettes refilling [...] so it's coming more from my side, I am still disinfecting the handles of the toilettes, the buttons, the soap dispenser which are touched but because I think it's a good idea to do it (Jennifer, 2021a).

We see how Jennifer does extra cleaning tasks compared to what is required from her in the school and she explains how these extra tasks are based on her own initiative because she thinks it is a good idea to do so. In this sense, we analyse how Jennifer repeats the cleaning practices of the hotel in the school as she is informed by the neoliberal globalised norm. Therefore, we argue that she starts performing the subject position of *the hotel cleaner* as she is brought to believe that working quickly and completing a lot of tasks in little time is the way to become recognisable (Butler, 1988: 522). By doing that, she challenges the intersecting norms about

COVID-19 which establish her as *the extra* who is assigned fewer tasks compared to the permanent cleaning staff. Taking up extra tasks is also done by Kate:

> I don't understand why we disinfect the handles but we don't disinfect the glass on the door, [...] and you know, along the stairs, there are these bars where you put your hands, these are not in the list of disinfection. Okay, still, I do them because in my logic, they *should* be done (Kate, 2021b).

In the quote by Kate, we see that she questions the tasks required from her in the school and how she, like Jennifer, explains that the extra tasks she is doing depend on her decision to do so. We analyse our informants' practices of taking up additional tasks as performative since what they consider they 'should' do is informed by the neoliberal globalised norm. In this way, we see how, through their performativity, this norm moves from the space of subcontracting and infiltrates the space of work where our informants, despite also performing the subject position of *the extra*, come to believe that they need to do more (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 446). Therefore, we argue that our informants perform multiple subject positions within the space of work which are conflicting (Ibid.: 442). In this way, we see how our informants navigate their temporary displacement by taking up different subject positions established by different norms, which creates frustration for our informants. This we see in the case of Kate who asks the team leader to complete different extra tasks in order "to keep myself busy" (Kate, 2021a). However, when asking for more tasks to do, she explains that the team leader of the permanent cleaning staff responds: "I recommend you to not do it because it's not in your tasks and not even in our tasks or anybody's tasks actually" (Kate, 2021a). In this way, we argue that in the reciprocal action between the team leader and Kate, the team leader recognises her through the subject position of *the extra* (Butler, 2016: 6). This however frustrates Kate:

> I think it's absurd! I am offering you some work force here, and I am not charging you extra. There is something to improve [...] I do disinfect all the surfaces but it is not required. I find it absurd that I have to do *10% of what I should do*" (Kate, 2021a - emphasis added).

We see how Kate becomes frustrated because the way in which the team leader recognises her does not correspond to how she understands herself. The understanding of what she should do is conditioned by the subject position of *the hotel cleaner* which is conflicting with the subject position of *the extra* and thus she feels she is doing too little, 'only 10%'.

We further analyse this navigation between conflicting subject positions in how our informants experience their new working conditions in relation to their titles as supervisor and head supervisor in the hotel. When Jennifer is asked about her current job, she answers:

> Now, it's a bit tricky because in my contract I am a housekeeping supervisor [...] but with everything closed, now I moved to the schools and I'm a *simple cleaner* now. I'm not doing what I'm supposed to do […] I am just doing simple cleaning and nothing more (Jennifer, 2021a - emphasis added).

This shows how she considers the movement from the hotel to the school as a degradation of her status at work. This we see in the way in which she compares her title in the hotel to her new role in the school where she becomes 'just' a 'simple cleaner'. We argue that this comparison enacts the hierarchical norm which makes our informants recognisable through the subject position of *the supervisor* (Butler, 2015: 31). This is also explained by Alicia who is a head supervisor in the hotel:

> You got to be in charge [...], to give instructions to your maids. I knew that I was responsible in my post. Here I need to ask [...] I need to keep on running after him [the colleague in the school], chase him, because I don't know the place. I cannot get used to [...] that he needs to be responsible. It is twisted in a way and I need to stay behind him [...] I'm just like that bodyguard dog "let me help you, what do you need?" and it's weird for me, very weird to work like that (Alicia, 2020).

Like Jennifer's, Alicia's description shows how she experiences a degradation in work status from being in charge of her colleagues in the hotel to being a 'dog' following a colleague in the school. In this sense, we analyse how the hierarchical norm enters the space of work through the comparisons made by our informants. Since the space of work does not enable our informants to become recognisable through the subject position of *the supervisor* or *head supervisor* which they have taken up through years in the space of subcontracting, we argue that the hierarchical norm contaminates the space of work as it makes our informants feel inferior (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 442). This is demonstrated by Jennifer who, when asked if she likes her new job in schools, explains that, albeit "I'm not stressed, I'm not rushing, sweating. I have time to take a coffee if I want. I am relaxed" (Jennifer, 2021a), she does not like it. She further explains that the reason why she does not like working in schools is the fact that it is different from her job in the hotel where "you were more appreciated. Here you are an invisible man" (Jennifer, 2021a) and "in the school, you are a slave going with a mop"

(Jennifer, 2021a). In this way, we see how the hierarchical norm is contaminating the space of work as it is conditioning their possibility to act and think about their position as cleaners in schools in a way in which they come to see themselves as inferior (Butler, 2015: 63).

In conclusion, our informants temporarily moved to schools are provided with working conditions which enable their lives to be sustained. However, we have shown how the interrelation between spaces through the movement of norms from the space of subcontracting to the space of work is conditioning their experience of the new working conditions making them feel inferior and frustrated. Therefore, this relates to Fraser's (2007) principle of parity of participation which depends on both recognition and redistribution. In the case of our informants working in schools, we see how the material resources of time and income enable them to work and live under better mental and physical conditions. On the other hand, the contamination of norms from the space of subcontracting destabilises the process of recognition in the space of work as our informants are recognised through subject positions through which they do not understand themselves. Albeit they are provided with objectively better working conditions, we see how the subjective aspects of these working conditions are related to power relations which influence how these better working conditions are experienced.

The space of domesticity

"She is coming home with that corona"

- Being a mother and wife during the pandemic

In this section, we investigate the interrelation between the space of work and the space of domesticity and how the movement of norms affects the relations within our informants' families. Firstly, we analyse the gender norm which establishes a specific domestic labour division. Secondly, we investigate how the intersection between the norms about COVID-19, namely the socioeconomic norm and health norm, affects the established gender norm. This we will do in the case of our informants cleaning in hospitals as we see that it is changing the social arrangement within their families.

The majority of our informants have partners and children and, then, for this reason they try "to balance working, cleaning [in the home] and the kid" (Sarah, 2021). As Beatrix explains, she has just had a baby and she believes that for the next two years it is her who needs to take

maternity leave to take care of the baby (Beatrix, 2021a). We also see how the central role of the mother in the care of children is explained by Martha who describes how her husband "is trying to help with homework" (Martha, 2021) but, when he gets tired, she needs to take over (Ibid.). Despite both having a full-time job, this demonstrates how through her acts of 'taking over' and utterances of 'trying to help' Martha becomes the one responsible for taking care of their children. This is also evident in the case of Alicia who explains that "I am the second mother [...] for him [her partner]. I am offering everything, not only love. I am taking mature responsibilities and of course I want to be named "ok you are a good wife"" (Alicia, 2021a). This demonstrates how Alicia associates being a good wife with taking care of her partner and acting as his mother. Thus, we argue that our informants' practices of taking care of their kids and partners are performative as they enact a specific gender norm which entails a gendered division of affective labour between men and women (Butler, 2015: 31). This norm embedded within the family has also been emphasised by gender literature which stresses how, throughout the world, women are usually primarily responsible for carrying out affective labour, involving caring and nurturing kids, producing relationships and human contact (Oksala, 2016: 285). In this sense, we see how this gender norm establishes the subject position of *the woman* who is primarily responsible for affective labour (Phillips & Knowles, 2012: 421) and thus creates an inequality within the family as men become unequally responsible for these tasks. In this way, our informants' performative practices bring into being a performative space which we term the space of domesticity where our informants perform specific practices of affective labour in order to be recognised as wives and mothers (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441). However, during the pandemic, we see how the intersecting norms about COVID-19 enter the space of domesticity and affect this established gender norm.

As analysed in the section about cleaning in hospitals, the socioeconomic norm demands that our informants work physically in the hospital during the pandemic, which implies that they become more exposed to COVID-19 than other workers. Despite this, as Sandra explains, cleaning in COVID-19 units in the hospital does not make her feel uncomfortable. However, when she goes home from work, she experiences that "it was different with the family [...] they were a little, you know, they were pulling away from me, because I was working at a hospital" (Sandra, 2021). Emily also explains how, when she coughs, her husband says "go away from me!" (Emily, 2021b). This we also see in the case of Martha who explains that:

> So when you go home, in some way, they look at you and "she is coming home with that corona". It is like if you cough, then no! Also many times I have heard from my

> husband, when I wanted to kiss my kids, he is saying “you have been at work with patients with corona”. [...] And then those at home are afraid “you have been with people with corona, you have been with corona today”. It is like, they don’t want you, “we don’t want you” (Martha, 2021).

This shows how, when coming home from the hospital, our informants experience being rejected by their families who distance themselves from our informants and limit social interactions in the home. As our informants work in an exposed environment, we see how their families come to associate them with COVID-19. The practices of pulling away from our informants and denying the possibility of being intimate with kids and partners show that their families are afraid of them as they come to understand our informants as a threat to their lives. We analyse this association as a symbolic identification which takes place between our informants and COVID-19 (Butler, 2020: 147). We argue that this symbolic identification happens as the health norm, which establishes COVID-19 as a threat for human lives, intersects with the socioeconomic norm, which makes our informants recognisable as important workers and thus places them close to COVID-19. This implies that, in the reciprocal action between our informants and their families, our informants become recognised as dangerous like the virus itself (Butler, 2016: 5-6). In this way, their families’ practices of saying ‘go away from me’ and ‘you come home with COVID’, are performative as they are conditioned by the symbolic identification shaping our informants as dangerous. In this sense, the intersecting norms about COVID-19 change the social arrangement within the family as we see how our informants are prevented from carrying out affective labour as they normally did before the pandemic. Accordingly, the intersecting norms about COVID-19 create a new inequality as they deny our informants the opportunity to fully participate as mothers and wives within their families (Fraser, 2007: 27). This implies that our informants become excluded and, thus, we argue that through the performative practices of the family members, the intersecting norms about COVID-19 enter and challenge the established gendered power relations within the space of domesticity. In this interrelationality between performative spaces, we see how the space of work threatens the space of domesticity (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 446). Since lives are always dependent and given over to others, the precariousness of our informants is maximised, as they are excluded and not enabled to sustain social relations with their families (Butler, 2016: 34). Accordingly, we argue that the intersecting norms about COVID-19 do not provide the conditions to make our informants’ lives liveable and, thus, induce a condition of precarity (Butler, 2016: 25).

We see how our informants participate in reproducing the norms about COVID-19 within the space of domesticity and, thus, contribute to their own exclusion within their families. In particular, they start performing the intersecting norms operating through the symbolic identification which establishes them as being dangerous within the space of domesticity. As Linda explains, she disinfects and washes her hands before entering her home because she is afraid of infecting her family (Linda, 2021b). She further explains how her twelve-year-old son always wants to hug her after she comes back from work. However, she explains that:

> I tell him just wait a bit because I have to wash my hands so “watch out”. And he says “no, no it does not matter”. I say “hello, stop with that”. And he says “no, no it does not matter. You are my mum” he says (Linda, 2021b).

This demonstrates how, albeit the twelve-year-old child does not reproduce the intersecting norms about COVID-19, our informant comes to associate herself with a danger for her son and her family. Another example is provided by Martha who describes that:

> [Her kids] come running and they miss their mum, but I need to push them away because I need to change my clothes and I need to take my shoes and all my clothes out on the balcony, [...] after that I take a shower and I need to disinfect my keys and the door and then you go to the bathroom and you need to take care that you have washed your hands and disinfected the doors and when you finally come out, even then you should not kiss your children because maybe you have something and you don’t know it (Martha, 2021).

These examples show that our informants try to avoid taking COVID-19 home by paying a lot of attention to make themselves as well as everything they touch clean. Despite these practices of cleaning and disinfecting, our informants still consider themselves dangerous as they push away their kids to protect them. In this sense, we analyse these practices as performative since they are informed by the intersecting norms about COVID-19 which work through the symbolic identification between our informants and COVID-19 (Butler, 2015: 31). We argue that, by performing the practices of pulling away from their kids and of disinfecting themselves and everything they touch when they come home, our informants come to naturalise an understanding of themselves as dangerous and thus a threat for their families. Through their repetitive practices, our informants come to believe in the necessity of distancing themselves from their husbands and children in order to protect their families and, thus, become recognisable as the caring mother and wife (Butler, 1988: 520-522). In this sense, while the

symbolic identification destabilises the subject position of *the woman* who is responsible for affective labour, our informants seek to stabilise the gendered power relations by performing motherhood and wifehood in a different way, i.e. caring through distancing. We argue that, through their performative practices, our informants enforce the symbolic identification establishing them as dangerous and thus excluding them from having intimate relations within their families. In this way, we argue that our informants reproduce and participate in their condition of precarity induced by the intersecting norms about COVID-19. The performativity of both the family members and our informants demonstrate how the space of domesticity is brought into being by multiple and conflicting norms which entails that our informants are not allowed to perform the subject position of *the woman* in the same way as they did before the outbreak of COVID-19 (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 447).

In conclusion, we have demonstrated the interrelational nature of spaces where we see how the intersecting norms move from the space of work to the space of domesticity and by doing so they destabilise the established gendered power relations. In this process, while in the space of work, our informants become recognised as *the essential worker* making them visible and included, our informants become invisible and excluded as mothers and wives in the space of domesticity. In this sense, we see how the space of work threatens the space of domesticity which is creating conflicting emotions and thoughts as Martha explains: "you are happy, you are doing your work, but also very worried, you are proud of yourself, so many things at the same time. You get tired" (Martha, 2021). Although the intersecting norms about COVID-19 challenge the inequality produced by the gender norm, they simultaneously and in a more disruptive way create a new inequality as they change the social arrangements within the family.

"I felt like I had my hands tied"
- Being a migrant during the pandemic

In this section, we analyse the intersection between two norms about COVID-19, namely the health norm and the socioeconomic norm, and the nation-state norm. When analysing this intersection, our informants are affected by having families living abroad. When asked about her family in Romania, Alicia explains that her grandmother "is alone so it's a huge problem if she gets sick. Oh my god, we don't want to think about that!" (Alicia, 2021a). Another example is provided by Emily who explains: "My sister has a business. But now you know,

they shut down and everyone thinks it's bad. Because it’s not the same as before because the people do not have money or any jobs. So that’s hard for them” (Emily, 2021a). This shows how the pandemic has affected the families of our informants, who live in their home countries, and therefore how our informants have extra worries for them. These worries generate strong feelings in Emily who explains: “I’m feeling very bad. I feel very bad” (Emily, 2021a). As a consequence of this, she is sending money to her family every month (Ibid.). These extra worries are also visible in the case of Kate who, when asked about how she has been during the pandemic, explains:

> I have been worried one time and it was in October when my mom, who is in Romania, got sick of COVID-19 [...] and she has been in the hospital for three weeks and we almost lost her. She was really really bad. Twenty-five day on oxygen and we were talking to her on the phone and you could hear this...not having air to breathe and seeing soldiers going in her room [...]. That was really bad. It was the time when I got really scared of what this shitty virus can do. That was the only moment when I felt not worried, scared to fucking death (Kate, 2021a).

This shows how Kate became extremely worried when her mum in Romania got hospitalised and, thus, how her life in Denmark has been deeply affected since the outbreak of COVID-19. In this sense, we argue that the life of Emily, Alicia and Kate are not limited to Denmark, but are constituted by transnational belongings which transcends Danish borders (Yuval-Davis, 2011: 10-11). This we also see in the case of Rosie who is worried about her mother, because she lives alone in Thailand. Rosie explains her response to these worries: “From time to time, I sent one of my adopted children to visit her and check up on her. I always call my mom” (Rosie, 2021). This demonstrates how she takes care of the mother from her home in Denmark by organising visitors to be with her mother. We analyse how these worries and practices of calling their families and sending money and people to check on them, are constituted by the hindered possibilities to travel and visit their families.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Danish government has implemented restrictions of crossing borders for all non-necessary travels (PMO, 2020d) as well as two weeks of quarantine upon return to Denmark in order to break the chain of infections (MFA, 2020a). As the Minister of Justice, Nick Hækkerup, explains about travel restrictions: “we are doing the necessary. We do it to contain the spread of corona in Denmark and to ensure that the security measures that we have taken in Denmark are not undermined by infection coming from the outside” (PMO,

2020d). This demonstrates how the Danish authorities are concerned with preventing the spread of the virus and in this way reproducing the understanding of COVID-19 as a threat for Denmark. This is also shown by the Minister's utterances, such as 'ensuring', 'security' and 'undermining', which reproduce this understanding of COVID-19 (Butler, 2015: 63). Therefore, we argue that these new regulations reproduce the intersecting norms about COVID-19. However, we argue that these new practices also reproduce a nation-state norm which establishes the subject position of *the Danish population* as sedentary and with belongings within the national borders of Denmark (Malkki, 1992: 31). This we analyse in the Minister's formulations of the 'inside' and 'outside' of Denmark as well as in the practices of hindering the possibility to move across borders, which demonstrate the naturalised understanding of a segmented world of mutually exclusive units of nation-states (Ibid.). In this sense, the management of COVID-19 through these norms is reinforcing "a normalisation - once again - of national borders and ethnic boundaries, even as the crisis itself reveals the degree to which the world is intricately networked and interdependent" (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013 :184).

However, as we have shown above, our informants live lives which are constituted by transnational belongings and, thus, we see how the travel restrictions affect our informants in specific ways. One example is provided by Sarah who explains that she planned to visit her mum in Bangladesh before the first lockdown but her flight "was cancelled because of the borders and they lockdown totally" (Sarah, 2021). This we also see in the case of Helen who, despite missing her mum in Thailand, cannot visit her now due to COVID-19 restrictions. This, consequently, makes her feel "stressful and sad. Even though you try to be positive, then sometimes it is just sad" (Helen, 2021). Another example is provided by Kate who could not travel back to Romania, despite having her mum hospitalised in critical conditions. As she explains, travelling "would have taken me a month just for the time of waiting in quarantine, and it was useless to do it" (Kate, 2021a). Because of these restrictions, she further explains that "I felt like I had my hands tied. Even if you want to [...] you have your hands tied so you can't do" (Ibid.). These quotes show how our informants are prevented from visiting their families during the pandemic and how this deeply affects them. As we have analysed in the previous sections, our informants are required to work physically since the socioeconomic norm establishes cleaning as essential during the pandemic. In this sense, if they had chosen to travel anyway, it could have affected either their employment or salary since they would have had to be off from work for at least two weeks of quarantine. The travel restrictions are not accompanied by supportive measures which counter the potential negative effects on

employment and salary of the compulsory two weeks of quarantine. Thus, we see how the intersection between norms about COVID-19 and the nation-state norm recognises our informants as *the Danish population* who has national belongings within the borders of Denmark. In this way, we argue that these norms do not acknowledge our informants' differences and, consequently, they deny them the possibility to interact fully with their families abroad as well as equally in broader society. In particular, we see that while our informants are prevented from having interactions with their families, those people with national belongings within Denmark are not prevented from doing so (Fraser, 2007: 27). This demonstrates that our informants become excluded and are not supported in their needs related to having family abroad by the state (Ibid.: 31). Another example of this is provided by Sandra who explains: "I visited them [her family] in September. I had three weeks of summer holiday, so I spent one week in Turkey and then two weeks in isolation at home. So after that I didn't go again" (Sandra, 2021). Her travel in September was due to her mother being terminally ill with tuberculosis and she, therefore, used her last three weeks of holiday to visit her mother. The reason why she did not go back when her mother died a few months later is explained with: "we were not allowed, you know, we got a letter from the company that we were not allowed to travel" (Sandra, 2021). By sending this letter, we see how her employer reproduces the intersecting norms informing the travel restrictions which are not acknowledging her difference of having transnational belongings. When we interviewed her about this, she became sad and explained: "that was hard. We just forget that period" (Sandra, 2021). Her emotional reaction demonstrates how the performative act of her employer places her in a difficult situation since she was not allowed to travel to attend her mother's funeral due to travel restrictions from her employer. In this sense, we argue that neither the state nor the employer in the case of Sandra provide our informants with basic support to make their lives liveable in terms of social relations and family bonds (Butler, 2016: 21). We argue that this differential allocation of liveability is produced by the intersection between the norms about COVID-19 and the nation-state norm. This intersection in turn induces a condition of precarity in which our informants' precariousness is maximised as they come to suffer from not being able to sustain social relations with their families (Ibid.: 25). In this sense, we see how the management of COVID-19 produces a new inequality in terms of mobility as, for our informants, the pandemic is differentially allocating the possibilities to travel as well as the repercussions of doing so. This we see as people with other professions not requiring their physical presence are enabled to travel and then work from home during the two-week quarantine, while our informants are prevented from doing so because of their type of employment. This

demonstrates how the ‘closure’ of borders is not completely closed but constituted by power relations enabling the privileged movements of some and the forbidden movement of others (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013: 188). Thus, the intersection between the norms about COVID-19 and the nation-state norm makes our informants immobile in their home in Denmark. They perform and reproduce this immobility through their practices of ‘it is useless to travel’ and ‘I didn’t go’. Thus, we argue that these norms infiltrate the space of domesticity and, by informing the practices of our informants, bring into being a space of domesticity where our informants feel stuck and worried (Gregson & Rose, 2000: 441).

In conclusion, we have shown how the management of COVID-19 puts into practice specific travel restrictions which recognise our informants as part of *the Danish population* and thus as lives constituted by national belongings. Since the lives of our informants are constituted by transnational belongings, the travel restrictions fail to acknowledge this difference and consequently, exclude them from interacting with family members. Accordingly, the management of COVID-19 is producing immobility in a way which is more disruptive in the lives of our informants compared to those living with national belongings. In this sense, we see how the management of COVID-19, by failing to recognise the needs of our informants, produces an inequality in terms of sustaining family relations within the people living in Denmark.

DISCUSSION

As we have engaged with the relation between COVID-19 and precarity in two projects since the spring of 2020, we have gained a deeper understanding of the theoretical concept of precarity and the different implications within the various ways scholars have investigated people's life through a precarity lens. The findings of our previous project became the stepping stone of inspiration to this thesis and the development of our theoretical framework. As we adopt a theoretical framework investigating precarity through power relations, we seek to confront established ways of thinking about precarity and, therefore, with the application of the theoretical framework of this thesis, we have not only had new empirical discoveries of people's life during the pandemic, but these empirical findings have also contributed to a possible elaboration on the concept of precarity. We have investigated precarity with Butler's theory and, although Butler defines precarity as a condition, we argue through the findings of our analysis that her arguments in doing so also support a conceptualisation of precarity as a normative process. In this section, we will therefore elaborate on a theoretical understanding of precarity as a process, which some scholars within precarity research have termed *precarisation*. We will therefore discuss already established conceptualisations of precarisation in relation to the findings of our analysis in order to propose an elaboration of precarity as a normative process.

Precarity as a process - Precarisation

Newer contributions within precarity research argue for the concept of precarisation – a conceptualisation of precarity approached as a process rather than a condition or class (Della Porta et al., 2015; Hirslund et al., 2020; Alberti et al, 2018). So, how does this change the investigation of precarity? According to a newly published Danish anthology edited by Hirslund et al. (2020), the concept of precarisation emphasises "a movement, a shift, a transition from one situation to another" (Hirslund et al., 2020: 13) where precarisation refers to a transition towards deterioration. In this sense, understanding precarity as a process entails temporality – a transition from what was to what is now – as well as the dynamic between the deteriorated and the cause of this deterioration (Ibid.). In this sense, their understanding of precarisation takes a turn from investigating precarity in terms of, for instance, contractual arrangements or institutional settings in a specific time and space (Jayaweera & Anderson, 2008; Arnholtz & Hansen, 2012), and rather seeks to understand the movement or shift across

temporal and spatial scales which lead to these arrangements and settings. To investigate the transitions towards deterioration, the editors argue strongly for a humanist approach making human life the central object of study in the investigation. Consequently, they argue that precarisation must be understood with a point of departure in the individual instead of specific institutions like the workplace, the trade union and the labour market or economic systems such as Fordism, post-Fordism, and neoliberalism (Ibid.: 12). Thus, they seek to contribute with an approach where societal, political and global transformations are investigated through an analytical gaze towards the human as a life form. Thereby studies of precarisation must focus on its effects on human life or "where it 'hits' and vulnerability is generated and experienced" (Hirslund et al., 2020: 12). Following Hirslund et al. (2020), we can understand the management of COVID-19 as causing a shift or a movement from one situation to another in both the working life and private life of our informants. Nonetheless, as we see in our analysis, the shift is not always a transition towards deterioration as it is highly connected to spatiality. For instance, we have investigated how the management of COVID-19 is indeed causing a shift in terms of working conditions in hospitals. While the management of COVID-19 is demanding our informants to work in a highly exposed working environment, we see how this is not a transition towards deterioration as practices of protection are simultaneously put into place and our informants are provided with both enough and accessible equipment. However, as these dominant norms move across spatial scales, we see how the shift becomes a transition towards deterioration as our informants become excluded and recognised as dangerous within their homes. Moreover, as we have analysed, precarity is highly related to temporality. In the case of our informants temporarily displaced to schools, we see how the shift caused by the management of COVID-19 becomes a transition towards deterioration as they have come to understand themselves in a specific way throughout many years of cleaning in hotels. In this sense, precarity 'hits' differently depending on the workings of norms within spaces and across time.

The necessity to understand this transition in terms of power relations is further emphasised by Hirslund et al. (2020) who argue that the chapters of the anthology are investigating precarisation in relation to how "power is used and systematized in new ways as well as how it enables influence on people in ways where they lose or change room for acting and experience themselves in new roles and with new identities" (Hirslund et al., 2020: 10). This entails an understanding of precarisation as not always visible in, for instance, employment and labour statistics but rather as a process in which individuals participate to maintain a specific

identity (Ibid.). Accordingly, we can see the management of COVID-19 as highly influencing the way our informants are enabled to act and understand themselves and their work. This we see in how our informants find themselves in new roles in schools as they are moved from hotels. As we have analysed, the management of COVID-19 is temporally displacing our informants to schools where different normative powers influence the ways in which our informants come to understand themselves. In particular, while they maintain the roles through which they understand themselves in hotels, they simultaneously come to think of themselves in new ways due to the changes in normative power. In this sense, we see how our investigation of precarity supports an understanding of precarity as a process which is argued to take its point of departure in power and subject formation (Hirslund et al, 2020: 10). Thus, this implies an understanding of *becoming precarised* through the workings of normative power across time and space rather than being precarious. However, as we engage deeper with the arguments and conclusions of the anthology, we find a lack of analysis on these normative aspects of precarity as a process. In the chapters analysing standardisation and certification (Mannov, 2020; Salamon, 2020; Stampe Lovelady, 2020), individuals are argued to become precarised due to a changing internationalised labour market. Nonetheless, these changes are not investigated as normative changes which establish the very conditions for practices of standardisation and certification. We do find chapters connecting the transition towards deterioration - precarisation - with changes in ideologies or norms about work and unemployment (Görlich, 2020; Lautrup Sørensen, 2020; Vaaben, 2020b). However, since the editors argue to adopt a humanist approach analysing 'from beneath', we find it problematic that only one of the chapters demonstrate how not only are norms enacted 'from above', but also how individuals act and perform those norms conditioning the deterioration of their work and life conditions (Lautrup Sørensen, 2020). In our analysis we have shown how our informants working in hospitals start performing the norms establishing them as dangerous at home and thus participate in their exclusion. In this sense, norms are not only working from above but people also act in a way where they come to contribute to the deterioration of their conditions. Therefore, approaching precarity as only posed upon people from above is problematic as it does not consider how people are part of maintaining and challenging these power relations.

In the special issue of Work, Employment and Society *In, against and beyond precarity: Work in insecure times* (Alberti et al., 2018), the editors join the argument of conceptualising precarity as a process. They emphasise a simultaneous focus on objective aspects such as contractual arrangements, labour market structures and regulations as well as subjective

experiences and perceptions of precarity (Ibid.: 447) as they argue that precarisation can be used to describe “increasing insecurity in both subjective and objective respects” (Alberti et al., 2018: 449). Accordingly, the editors of the issue also acknowledge the importance of investigating precarisation ‘from beneath’ and through the acts and thoughts of the individuals who experience precarisation. In order to investigate these processes of increasing insecurity in both aspects, the editors argue for “*drivers and patterns of precarisation* as a more useful object of study than ‘precarity’” (Alberti et al., 2018: 450). The different contributions identify the state and workplace management as two of the key players in the drivers and patterns of precarisation. This is demonstrated in investigating the objective aspects of precarisation in terms of contractual arrangements imposed by managers (Moore & Newsome, 2018) and legal or work status imposed by state regulation and social policies (Rubery, Grimshaw, Keizer & Johnson, 2018; Simola, 2018; Jaerhling, Johnson, Larsen, Refslund & Grimshaw, 2018). Two contributions investigate the more subjective aspects of precarisation in, for instance, the intersection of work and gender identities (Choi, 2018) or how specific management strategies make individuals *feel* precarious despite working under what is deemed secure working conditions (Hassard & Morris, 2018). An example of this is also demonstrated in our analysis where we see how, albeit our informants have ‘objectively’ better working conditions of higher salary and more time to do cleaning tasks, the practices of the schools are making our informants feel excluded and invisible. However, where the contribution of John Hassard and Jonathan Morris (2018) is emphasising the subjective experience of specific management strategies, they leave out the normative power conditioning and enabling those strategies. As we have demonstrated throughout our analysis, norms about life and work are highly embedded in how both our informants and the people around them come to understand, talk and act in specific ways. In this sense, we see in our analysis how norms function as drivers of precarity - if not *the* driver - and we therefore find a gap in the existing literature of understanding precarisation in terms of normative power. Furthemore, although both contributions emphasise the importance of investigating precarisation with a point of departure in individuals, in where it ‘hits’ human life, we argue that the contributions maintain a view from above in the conduct of research. In this sense, we see how the performativity of individuals is underinvestigated in existing conceptualisations of precarisation.

Precarisation as a normative process

As we have analysed the everyday life of our informants during the last year, we have demonstrated how their lives and experiences cannot be referred to outside operations of power but rather understood as produced and reproduced by them (Butler, 2016: 1). Through Butler's theory on precarity, we have linked these operations of power to an understanding of precarity as a condition which is politically induced by norms. We have further seen how these norms function through their continuous production and reproduction in new spaces. Thus, they are always in movement, always in a process of possible change or 'break out' as people perform or challenge them within different spaces. Accordingly, we see how it is in the process of producing and reproducing norms about life and work that people become precarised, and in this sense it is not a condition in which they find themselves or are 'placed' but rather a constantly changing process they live through and participate in. Therefore, we argue for a conceptualisation of precarity as a process but importantly a normative process in which we all take part and which is continuously changing the way we all come to understand, talk about as well as experience becoming precarised. With the conceptualisation of precarity as a normative process we contribute to the literature on precarisation.

So, how does it change the investigation of precarisation when it is conceptualised in these terms? We propose that with such a conceptualisation researchers investigate the transition towards deterioration described as precarisation by Hirslund et al (2020) as a process induced by the transition or change of norms. This implies adding a normative aspect to the objective and subjective aspects of precarisation. In relation to the objective aspect, this addition enables an investigation of how specific contractual arrangements, institutional settings and policies are structures of a specific logic which is not 'fixed' but always in the process of change. Thus, it enables us to see how people become precarised through a constant and changing flow of production and reproduction of norms about work and life. This is similar to Bridget Anderson (2010) who analyses how immigration controls are not neutral filters regulating the movement of people in and out of a country, but rather a set of discursive practices producing status (Ibid.: 306). However, where Anderson (2010) is looking at the relationship between power and legal status in 'fashioning precarious workers', we find it highly relevant to also include the subjective aspect, the individual experiences. In relation to the subjective aspect, the addition of the normative emphasises a focus on performativity which enables us to move a step behind the experience of our informants. This provides three important perspectives on precarisation. Firstly, it enables an investigation of not only *what* our informants experience, but also how

their experience is related to norms about life and work and, consequently, how they take part in the production and reproduction of those norms and thus, in becoming precarised. This perspective is lacking in the existing precarity research where individuals are most often argued to *be placed* in precarious positions by, among other, staffing agencies (Andrijasevic & Sacchetto, 2017), employers (Ollus, 2016; Refslund, 2016, 2018) and trade unions (Ford, 2015) and in which they have no influence or agency. Secondly, it provides a conceptual openness towards how similar precarious arrangements can be experienced and acted upon by individuals in various ways. Thirdly, it encourages an investigation of spatial and temporal dimensions as the performative practices of individuals are never bound within a specific time and space but, as we have seen in our analysis, are interrelated across space and time. A focus on spatiality and temporality opens up for an understanding of how individuals become precarised in different ways across space and time rather than understandings of accumulated precarity. These perspectives are important as they enable confrontations with already established notions of precarity.

We thereby find inspiration from scholars who criticise precarity research for not questioning prevalent norms about work and life in the investigation of precarity (Nielson & Rossiter, 2006; Millar, 2017). By not doing so, there is a risk that scholars reproduce prevalent norms and thus become blind to precarious or non-precarious conditions outside those norms as well as become contributors to the process of deteriorated human life conditions. Where the concept of precarity originated in a progressive and radical context of social struggle, "the emergence of precarity as an object of academic analysis corresponds with its decline as a political concept motivating social movement activity" (Neilson & Rossiter, 2008: 53). By understanding precarity as a normative process, we seek to avoid a conceptualisation which characterises precarity as all-pervasive and inescapable. Such a conceptualisation risks becoming a political tool or disciplinary power rendering people powerless in the face of global capital. Instead we propose the conceptualisation of precarity which is always on the move, always open for change, and thus joining the optimism of Neilson and Rossiter (2006) in using the concept as the precondition for new forms of life building on other norms about work and life (Ibid.: 13).

The pandemic as exposing the normative process

In this section we will discuss the pandemic as a strong empirical case of changes in normative power. We have seen this throughout our analysis, but these changes in normative powers in

relation to cleaning and cleaners can also be seen on different levels, such as on an institutional level. On the 17th of March 2021, 3F launched the campaign "Cleaning is the new black" whose purpose is to create awareness and inform about the socioeconomic benefits in investing in professional cleaning (3F, 2021). The campaign is, inter alia, building on a report investigating the enhanced cleaning efforts in the public sector during the pandemic. The results in the report show how cleaning is both mitigating the transmission of bacteria and viruses and leading to, among others, fewer sick days among personnel, decreased sick leave among parents due to their children being sick, increased concentration and learning outcome for school children and better working environment among both cleaners and other personnel (Implement, 2020: 2). The press release of the campaign states about these results: "Overall, there is a very clear coherence between enhanced professional cleaning efforts in public areas and general socioeconomic improvements" (3F, 2021). In this sense, we see how the results of the report are linking cleaning with both health and socioeconomic issues and, thus, the management of COVID-19 has contributed to new understandings of cleaning as a profession. We argue that the dominant norms throughout the pandemic make cleaning become recognisable through new relations of power. Accordingly, the normative changes during the pandemic provide legitimacy to new understandings and practices which challenge already established understandings of cleaning as a low-skilled, low-paid and insecure job (Lewis et al., 2015: 583; Ollus, 2016: 26; Rasmussen et al., 2016: 73). One example of this is found in the 3F campaign which aims to stop many years of austerity measures within cleaning budgets. As Lydia Callesen, the front person for the public group in 3F, states: "It is obvious today that when we cut in budgets for cleaning, we actually increase the total expenses. And the other way around, when we enhance the professional cleaning effort, we will see a total economic improvement" (3F, 2021). Her statement demonstrates how it is 'obvious today' that there is a connection between cleaning and socioeconomic expenses. Based on these arguments, the public group and the group for private service, hotel and restaurants within 3F have launched the campaign emphasising a stronger focus on both budgeting as well as education and skills of cleaners (Ibid.). We see this opening towards a professionalisation of the cleaning industry as not only challenging practices of cutting in budgets for cleaning but also enhancing the perception about cleaning as a profession. This is stressed in the report about cleaning during the pandemic where a professor in clinical microbiology at the University of Southern Denmark argues:

> It is tantamount for the quality of cleaning to have well-educated personnel. The idea that you can take in people from the street to do hygienic cleaning is completely wrong

> […] the cleaning personnel must be trained in removing bacteria and viruses instead of just making it look nice (Implement, 2020: 19).

This shows how new understandings of cleaning as something related to health are challenging norms about cleaning being unskilled. This is also supported by UK microbiologist, Stephanie Dancer, who has done research in hospital cleaning for twenty years and who pleads "for a stratified training system, so that more experienced cleaners [...] have a career framework as so many other occupations have" (Implement, 2020: 19). This further emphasises a perception of cleaners as professionals rather than as unskilled workers. Accordingly, we see how the health norm and the socioeconomic norm are reproduced in the context of cleaning on an institutional level of both the union as well as within academia. In this normative process, we see how dominant norms throughout the pandemic make cleaning visible in a way which enables space for challenging already established norms about cleaning and cleaners. Rather than being something to cut away in budgets, an understanding of cleaning as essential for the health and socio-economy is in its becoming. Furthermore, rather than being someone 'taken in from the street', an understanding of cleaners as skilled and doing an essential work is in its becoming.

These normative changes due to the management of COVID-19 further occur on a managerial level in cleaning companies. In our analysis, we have demonstrated contrasting pictures of the management of cleaning in hospitals and schools. However, in the case of one of our informants we see another picture within private cleaning services subcontracted to schools. Danielle explains how she and her colleagues were instructed to follow the new cleaning procedures related to COVID-19 and how her employer provided all the equipment needed, both disinfections materials and protective equipment (Danielle, 2021a). Besides being instructed and equipped to do the demanded cleaning procedures, the cleaning company in which Danielle works is also paying for doing so:

> They pay extra. […] Like, I work from 6 to 14 and if I disinfect something, maybe it takes one hour, they count from 6-15 and then extra 40 kr. So, one hour they give us extra plus 40 kr. for the extra tasks (Danielle, 2021a).

This shows how the management in the cleaning company is acknowledging the extra work performed by its employees which is compensated by paying extra in salary. As the dominant norms throughout the pandemic make cleaning visible, the fact that the new cleaning procedures result in more tasks is also acknowledged in hospitals. Here extra cleaning staff has

been hired in order to prevent the cleaning personnel from finishing outside working hours. However, this is not the case for our informants hired by private cleaning companies working in hotels since they are not provided with additional time, support or payment in relation to their changed working conditions put in place by the management of COVID-19 (Damiani et al., 2020). In this sense, Danielle's experience and her employer's management during the pandemic is an interesting example of differing practices within the private cleaning industry which tap into the ambitions of the 3F campaign of qualifying cleaners and paying them accordingly (3F, 2021).

These openings in relation to cleaning and cleaners are also reflected in the way one of our informants speaks about herself and about cleaning in schools and hotels during the pandemic. When asked about whether people will think differently about cleaners after the pandemic, Alicia explains:

> Pro cleaners or cleaners' life matter or something like that. I think and I want to think that it will last for more years, why not! [...] And I thought also our life matters because we are doing something and not only for us [...] It's for the entire society (Alicia, 2021b).

We see how she has started understanding herself and cleaners as contributing to the wider society. In this sense, she is making an obvious association between cleaning and socioeconomic benefits as she is informed by the dominant norms within the management of COVID-19. Therefore, we see that she has started challenging the norms through which cleaning becomes understood as a low and unskilled job by reproducing dominant norms throughout the pandemic. Accordingly, we argue that the pandemic is a strong empirical case of changes in normative power not only on an institutional and managerial level but also on the individual level in the case of our informant. Simultaneously, however, we see how other informants come to counter these openings enabled by the dominant norms during the pandemic. Kate is sceptical towards these openings since, despite acknowledging that the management of COVID-19 has produced a change in terms of cleaning and cleaners being 'a little more valued', she questions the long lasting nature of such changes (Kate, 2021b). The reason for her scepticism is found in the fact that "everybody knows it's a low job and it's low paid and bad working conditions" (Kate, 2021b). In this sense, Kate is a good example of how existing power relations about cleaning as a low and unskilled job are so strong that they prevent her from being convinced about openings enabled by the management of COVID-19.

While Kate to some extent recognises the positive outcomes produced by the management of COVID-19, Jennifer believes that the situation for cleaners may even worsen:

> Before cleaners were some kind of slaves, sometimes not really visible people. So it’s more or less the same now. [...] I cannot say that I feel more valuable or more grateful or something like this. It’s the same. Just now, they are putting more and it's very easy to blame if there is something, then it’s the cleaners (Jennifer, 2021b).

While the visibility of cleaning enables an acknowledgement of cleaning and cleaners in terms of additional support, time and economic compensation as well as in regards to how we come to perceive them as professionals having a positive impact on the whole society, Jennifer highlights the possible negative implications that it can produce for cleaners. In this sense, we see how there are divergent understandings of cleaning and cleaners depending on the power relations informing people’s thoughts and actions. Accordingly, the management of COVID-19 *can* produce positive and long-term results only if different levels within Danish society start reproducing the dominant norms throughout the pandemic and thus challenge the existing norms about cleaning and cleaners. Therefore, we argue that the pandemic is a strong empirical case of changes in normative power as the management of COVID-19 produces changes in terms of understanding cleaning and cleaners which consequently expose already established norms. In this sense, we claim that the pandemic exposes the normative process in which institutions, workplaces and individuals are actively participating.

CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of the pandemic, COVID-19 has been regarded as a ‘great equaliser’ since no one is immune to the virus as well as to its health and economic consequences. This is also reflected in the data provided by the WHO which has estimated that more than 167 million people have been infected and 3,4 million people have died as a consequence of COVID-19 on a global scale. Moreover, statistics show how unemployment rates have skyrocketed especially in the first months of the pandemic. In this sense, COVID-19 exposes the precariousness of life as there is no amount of wealth or will that can eliminate the possibility of being infected and, eventually, dying. In order to provide the conditions to sustain lives, national governments have implemented different strategies which, however, have produced different outcomes in terms of inequalities and protection. Consequently, the health and socioeconomic implications throughout the pandemic have not been distributed equally across the globe. In the case of Denmark, the government has been implementing various practices, such as lockdowns, travel restrictions, limiting social interactions and enforcing social distance. The implementation of these measures has been legitimised by how COVID-19 has been framed by the government which has shaped how we come to understand and act during the pandemic. Since COVID-19 has been framed as a temporary threat to human lives and Danish socio-economy, our thesis demonstrates how there are specific norms about health, socio-economy and temporality which intersect and regulate what we come to hear, see and know about COVID-19. In this sense, we argue that the management of COVID-19 is informed by these intersecting norms and has, thus, legitimised the practices aimed at saving lives, preventing the healthcare system from being overburdened and hindering the socio-economic consequences in Denmark. However, our thesis shows how norms ‘break out’ from the original context in which they have been created and move across space and time through the practices of our informants, their families, their colleagues and employers. As these norms enter new contexts, the management of COVID-19 produces changes which *can* become a transition towards deterioration in the lives of our informants depending on spatiality and temporality. In this sense, the pandemic provides a strong empirical case of how norms move across spatial and temporal scales and how, by doing so, they disproportionately affect specific categories of people.

When the dominant norms throughout the pandemic enter the hospitals, the management of COVID-19 causes a shift in terms of working conditions. While the management of COVID-19 produces inequality in terms of demanding our informants to work in a highly exposed environment, our thesis demonstrates how this is not necessarily a transition towards

deterioration as the management of COVID-19 simultaneously provides healthcare personnel and our informants with enough and accessible protective equipment. In this sense, the visibility of COVID-19 makes our informants become visible as essential workers and informs the way they come to believe that they are protected and included within their workplaces. However, when these dominant norms move across space, this same visibility of COVID-19 in their workspace makes our informants become visible as dangerous within their home. Consequently, we have shown how their families are informed by the management of COVID-19 and thus reject our informants who become excluded as mothers and wives. The workings of these norms in the home simultaneously affect our informants as they come to naturalise the danger they represent to their family. For this reason, they come to pull away from their families to protect them and, in this way, contribute to their own exclusion. Consequently, the management of COVID-19 destabilises the social arrangements within families and challenges already established gender roles within the home. Therefore, our thesis demonstrates the interrelational nature of spaces and how the shift produced by the management of COVID-19 in hospitals becomes a transition towards deterioration in our informants' homes. In this space, the management of COVID-19 by informing specific practices exposes the inequality created by gendered power relations while simultaneously creating a new inequality within the home.

This relation between the workings of norms and spatiality is also reflected in the shift in working conditions in the case of our informants cleaning in schools. Our thesis demonstrates how the decision to prioritise the reopening of schools is informed by norms about socio-economy. Since schools have been deemed essential for the Danish socio-economy, the management of COVID-19 has demanded our informants to work physically in an environment where they are in close contact with other people. However, as opposed to hospitals, this shift in working conditions becomes a transition towards deterioration since the invisibility of COVID-19 in schools constitutes our informants as invisible in terms of being exposed to the virus. This in turn legitimises practices of not providing adequate protective equipment. In this sense, the management of COVID-19 makes our informants feel unsafe which forces them to take up alternative strategies to feel protected. By privately implementing these alternative strategies such as buying masks and avoiding people, we have shown how our informants do not come to challenge the dominant norm making them invisible. Therefore, they participate in the transition towards deterioration produced by the management of COVID-19 while simultaneously trying to navigate their new working conditions.

However, this transition towards deterioration produced by the management of COVID-19 does not only depend on spatiality but also temporality. Our thesis has shown how the management of COVID-19 has demanded our informants to be temporarily moved to schools to disinfect specific areas. As our informants are temporary cleaners in schools, the management of COVID-19 makes our informants become excluded from the permanent cleaning staff. This exclusion is further reinforced by already established norms within schools as our informants are not able to speak Danish. In this sense, the shift to a new workspace produced by the management of COVID-19 is a transition towards deterioration in which our informants participate as they come to believe in them becoming the extra cleaner. Accordingly, when the norms throughout the pandemic enter the schools, the management of COVID-19 creates new inequalities as our informants become invisible as exposed to the virus and excluded from participating in social interactions with colleagues.

On the other hand, our thesis has shown an interesting case of how our informants, through the temporary displacement to schools, are working under conditions which they believe are 'objectively' better working conditions in terms of time, tasks and income. Nonetheless, we have demonstrated how the possibility to experience their new working conditions is informed by already established norms in hotels which contaminate their new workspace as they start performing practices of the hotel. Having worked for many years in hotels, our informants have come to believe in the necessity to be fast and effective as well as have responsibilities and thus, when temporarily displaced to schools, they feel frustrated and inferior. In this sense, our thesis demonstrates the interrelational nature between spaces and how the possibility to experience and understand 'objectively' better working conditions depends on the workings of norms across time and space.

While the majority of the Danish workforce has been sent home from work, the management of COVID-19 makes our informants become mobile during the pandemic, by demanding our informants to physically work and by displacing them to other workspaces. However, our thesis demonstrates how the management of COVID-19, simultaneously, makes them become immobile in terms of travelling abroad. By not acknowledging our informants' transnational belongings, the travel restrictions as well as lack of supportive measures to counter the potential negative effects of the two-week quarantine, exclude our informants from sustaining social relations with their families living abroad. This, consequently, makes them feel stuck and worried in their homes as well as forces them to find alternative strategies to care for their families from a distance. In this sense, the management of COVID-19 produces a change in the

lives of our informants which is a transition towards deterioration as it does not enable them to sustain social relations with their families. Therefore, the management of COVID-19 creates inequality in terms of immobility.

However, the changes produced by the management of COVID-19 are not necessarily a transition towards deterioration as we have demonstrated that it simultaneously creates openings for challenging already established norms about cleaning being a low and unskilled job. Accordingly, new understandings of cleaning and cleaners have been legitimised by the dominant norms throughout the pandemic, which have further been reproduced on an institutional, managerial and individual level. In this sense, the management of COVID-19 *can* produce a positive change if institutions, workplaces and individuals start reproducing these dominant norms and thus participate in this normative process.

Our thesis demonstrates how the inequalities produced by the management of COVID-19 are highly connected to spatiality and temporality. In particular, the management of COVID-19 produces changes in the work and life conditions of our informants, which are not necessarily a transition towards deterioration since it depends on the movement of norms between different contexts as well as how institutions, workplaces and people engage with these norms. Since the management of COVID-19 legitimises different practices depending on the workings of norms across space and time, these practices are not fixed but are always in a process of change. This enables us to investigate how the management of COVID-19 is precarising our informants through an always changing flow of production and reproduction of norms about work and life. However, as we have demonstrated throughout our thesis, this constantly changing flow of norms also depends on how people act upon these norms by either reproducing or challenging them. In this sense, they participate in the process of becoming precarised rather than being placed in precarious positions by external power relations. Accordingly, as we have analysed the management of COVID-19 as inducing a political condition of precarity, we propose an understanding of precarity as a process induced by changes in normative power. This implies investigating how objective and subjective aspects within precarity are conditioned by these transitions in normative power as well as how people become precarised in different ways through space and time. Therefore, while we reject understandings of precarity as accumulated and as inescapable, we contribute to the precarity literature with a conceptualisation of precarity which is always open for change. Finally, our thesis has shown that the management of COVID-19 is producing changes in normative power and thus the pandemic is an interesting empirical case as it is exposing this normative process.

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