AALBORG UNIVERSITET

Vulnerable Voices

A qualitative investigation of Ukrainian refugees in a welfare state

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Abstract

Millions of Ukrainians have been displaced as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Hence the Danish government adopted the Special Act, an extraordinary legislation meant to accommodate Ukrainians refugees. This master thesis is a qualitative exploratory research that investigates the lives of Ukrainian refugees residing in Denmark under the Special Act. With a point of departure in symbolic interactionism (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2005) we have conducted eight qualitative semi-structured interviews with six Ukrainian refugees. The accounts are analysed and discussed in relation to their encounters with the Danish welfare system and job centres as well as their transnational connections. Theoretically we rely on Judith Butler (2009a, 2009b) and their understanding on precarity, as well as Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller (2004) and their perspectives on transnationalism. We argue that these theoretical understandings enable us to explore the complexity of both precarity and transnationalism for Ukrainians refugees in Denmark. The objective of the thesis is to explore how Ukrainian refugees experience precarity in a well-meaning welfare state and how transnational ties contribute to their individual experiences of precarity. Our findings indicate that the Danish state is unable to address the needs of those falling outside the group of Ukrainian refugees fitting the norm. A lack of commitment from the municipality to handle mental health issues and a lack of effort from the job centres to assist in finding meaningful labour instead of meaningless internships, is what constitute precarious lives. Precarity can also be constituted for refugees due to the fact of being subject to transnational dynamics. Our respondents have a guilty feeling of being in safety but also of not being able to take control over their new lives, when it comes to mental stability and relevant engagement in the labour market. Their continued connectedness to Ukraine, which they exhibit through various supportive activities for Ukraine, and their difficulties in establishing a fruitful life in Denmark makes an uncertain future and divisiveness of belonging to Ukraine and being in Denmark. Prospects on the future depend on a change of circumstances in both countries. The thesis will draw conclusions on how transnationalism relates to individual experiences of precarity, and how the Danish integration system contributes to feelings of precarity amongst challenged Ukrainian refugees.

Introduction

On the 24th of February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, causing large numbers of Ukrainians to seek refuge across Europe. As of May 2023, more than five million Ukrainians have registered for temporary protection or similar protection schemes in a European country (UNHCR n.d.). More than 30.000 migrated to Denmark (Danmarks Statistik 2023). Contrary to previous situations where large amounts of refugees arrived in Denmark, the narratives from politicians and media differed greatly during this situation (Blauenfeldt & Flex 2023). Legislators took swift action and passed legislation regarding temporary residency for displaced Ukrainians (Lov om midlertidig opholdstilladelse til personer, der er fordrevet fra Ukraine 2022), hereinafter referred to as Special Act, making it possible for Ukrainian nationals to live freely in Denmark, as well as be able to work before completing the process of seeking temporary residence (Tesfaye 2022). Originally, we had an idea of doing a comparative study between the Afghan refugees arriving in Denmark subsequent to the Taliban gaining power in Afghanistan in 2021 and Ukrainians arriving in 2022. Each group shared a somewhat similar foundation for applying for temporary residence and asylum in Denmark, but the experiences amongst each group was vastly different (Bendixen 2022). Through our initial investigation of the subject, we opted for focusing on the Ukrainian refugees and not doing a comparative investigation of the two groups. This choice was made, because we developed a growing curiosity of, whether or not, the presented narratives and discourse regarding Ukrainians as easily integrated into Danish society and labour market was true (Wang 2022; Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet n.d.; Østergaard 2022; Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation 2022). During the fall semester of 2022, Mathias Nygaard underwent an internship in Næstved municipality. The internship consisted of conducting a qualitative evaluation of a project aimed at enabling minority women to participate in the Danish labour market. While the internship in itself had nothing to do with Ukrainians, it was conducted in an office located at Næstved Language school. At this location it was clear that the majority of individuals participating in language classes were Ukrainian nationals. Contrary to news stories published throughout 2022, some Ukrainians had little to no language competencies, nor ability to enter the labour market without extensive aid. The narratives regarding Ukrainian refugees seemed to be a depiction not aligned with reality, and spurred us to ask whether Ukrainian refugees were subject to precarity. We have previously engaged ourselves with labour precarity, and while this is not directly related to refugees receiving economic aid, a different perspective on the concept of precarity is highly relevant to depict the challenges Ukrainian refugees face. We argue that even individuals of the most privileged refugee group experience vulnerability, insecurity and instability.

Obviously because of the physical changes connected with fleeing the homeland and obtaining residence in another country. But also, and maybe even more, because of the indirect consequences of war and flight; how do individuals deal with psychological damage from living in a war zone, leaving their life behind, coping with transnational ties, and uphold their dreams and aspirations. We argue that this thesis is an original contribution to the existing body of literature on refugees and migration, as we elaborate on a contemporary topic that is prone to be overlooked in a sea of more urgent, disastrous, violent, or heart-breaking situations and conflicts. Why should we investigate the lives of privileged Ukrainian refugees in Denmark, when thousands of African migrants drown in the Mediterranean (OHCHR 2023; Bendixen 2023)? After all, Ukrainians, as a refugee group, have had the widest privileges of any refugee group in Denmark this millennium. We are interested in contributing to the understanding of how well-received refugees experienced arrival and life in a welfare state such as Denmark. We argue that this thesis depicts not only Ukrainian refugees' experiences, but also the innate problems in the Danish labour and integration systems. Challenges regarding mental health and Danish labour market, connections with relatives and the homeland in general, all have an impact on the individual wellbeing that, seemingly, are not taken into consideration when structuring individual programmes for refugees, therefore we ask: *How do Ukrainian refugees experience precarity and how is precarity and transnationalism interlinked?*

The process of answering the research question is completed through the thesis' five chapters: Chapter one presents our theoretical framework in a combination with state-of-the-art on the concepts we apply in this thesis. We rely on the theoretical concepts of precarity as perceived by Judith Butler (2009a, 2009b), as well as transnationalism formulated by Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004). In chapter two we present our methodological approach that is reliant on symbolic interactionism (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2005). This chapter includes information regarding exploratory research including conducting and processing interviews and ethical considerations in this regard. The third chapter constitutes our analysis. Our analysis will focus on the various aspects conditioning our respondents as precarious, as well as how transnationalism unfolds in their lives. Chapter four makes up our discussion and will bring our analytical findings into a broader context, emphasising how they relate to our theoretical framework. Chapter five ends our thesis with concluding remarks.

Theoretical framework

Anchored in state-of-the-art this chapter introduces the different theories that are applied in the thesis. The theories are chosen because they work as relevant tools to understand the experiences of Ukrainian refugees residing in Denmark and their actions and thoughts in connection with their future. First we go through an understanding of precarity (Butler 2009a, 2009b) and how it is fitting for our research. We then introduce Levitt's and Schiller's (2004) theoretical and methodological outline underpinning transnational migration and how they redefine methodological nationalism. We pay attention to their notions of being and belonging and argue that their perspectives are relevant when exploring the Ukrainians divided attachment to Ukraine and Denmark.

Precarity

It would have been feasible to investigate precarity amongst Ukrainian refugees within the scope of contemporary migration literature. Bridget Anderson (2010), Guy Standing (2011) and Susan Banki (2013a), agree that for migrants precarity is a state of insecurity, vulnerability and uncertainty. Standing (2010) defines "the precariat" as a growing class experiencing economic insecurity because of low wages, unstable engagement in employment and limited access to ordinary systems of social protection. Standing highlights access to things such as healthcare and housing as types of social protection individuals of the precariat have a disadvantage within. Second, the precariat has a lack of political influence where they reside. According to Standing, this is due to general globalisation and particularly labour market changes. In a similar manner Bridget Anderson (2011) elaborates on how growing, global migration and subsequent political action have created conditions leaving labour migrants vulnerable and precarious. According to Anderson, the mere fact that people cross borders in search of better lives, creates conditions in which migration becomes subject to precarity. Like Standing, Anderson highlights the labour market, emphasising that a demand for cheap and malleable labour plays a pivotal role in the continuation of precarity amongst migrant workers, as they are often the ones engaging in temporary and unstable employment. Likewise, labour migrants are bystanders to ordinary society, due to their legal status, as they are often marginalised and restricted in their access to rights, services and protection. According to Anderson, many of these factors are politically conditioned, and despite migrant workers not being able to participate in political discourse on equal terms, there are examples of migrants taking action and resisting unreasonable requirements by forming labour unions and partaking in collective actions. Susan Banki (2013a) takes point in the experiences of asylum seekers in Australia waiting for their applications to be processed. From these experiences she derives that the uncertainty and insecurity connected with living in this type of

"limbo" creates a sense of precarity that affects both physical and mental health for the individuals in question. In Australia, refugees are placed in detention centres while they await processing of their asylum claim. According to Banki, this can lead to deteriorating mental and physical health for the refugees in question, because of the uncertainty; in turn contributing to experiences of precarity. Limitations regarding employment, economy and policymaking all have great impact on the lives of refugees in Denmark, but such an investigation could leave out valuable perspectives on other realms constituting precarity. To conceptualise precarity in an even more meaningful relation to the subject of this thesis, we rely on Judith Butler (2009a, 2009b). According to Butler, precarity is an inherent feature for all individuals, as everyone is dependable on others for survival and well-being (Butler 2009a, 2). For Butler precarity is not only a result of economic factors, but also cultural, political and discursive circumstances, as precarity is constituted by external and internal factors. The situation for muslims in the United States after 9/11 is a great example of this. Subsequent to the terror attack, muslim individuals and islamic communities were highly stigmatised in the U.S. In an effort to strengthen national security, the government and society ended up targeting and stigmatising muslim individuals. Increased security-measures, discriminating policies and racial profiling led to a climate of fear and insecurity for American muslim. American muslims not only had to face extensive surveillance and profiling in their everyday lives. They also had to endure the psychological and emotional distress created by being considered a threat and they were not able to conform to a multicultural society anymore, because of their religion, skin colour, or ethnic origin. The portrayal of Islam and the cultural heritage of Muslims as fundamentally threatening to American society in public discourses furthered islamophobia and exclusion of Muslims from society. Butler would argue that these external actions not only themselves serve as drivers of precarity, but in turn also impose internal precarious experiences or actions (2009b, 19). Post 9/11, American muslims and Islamic communities self-regulated their religious identity. For some it became important to fit the criteria of "the good muslim" and avoid any connection to the elements of Islam connected with terrorism and violence in public and political discourse. Butler argues that precarity is not only conditioned by external marginalisation, but is also highly affected by the performances of individuals and groups. As we are not dealing with a group of individuals marginalised in a similar manner, some clarification as to how the individuals appearing in this thesis experience precarity is needed. Ukrainian refugees receive social benefits, free education, and healthcare during their stay. The Danish parliament took swift action after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and passed the Special Act. How then are we to consider Ukrainian refugees as experiencing precarity? We argue that elements of Butlers' concept of precarity exist within our scope because the refugees subject to investigation in this thesis experience precarity individually due to personal circumstances arising because of the external and internal

actions they undergo. Butler writes that "social and political institutions are designed in part to minimise conditions of precarity" (2009a, 2), and it can be argued that the Danish system is in fact mitigating the drivers of precarity by providing accommodation and social benefits to refugees. However, as will become clear throughout this thesis, the same system contributes to precarity for some individuals, as the system is designed to accommodate a broadly defined group. Our respondents are precarious because they fall outside the broad definition of the group of refugees that the government actions aim to help. The Special Act was adopted to mitigate the regular waiting period refugees have when applying for asylum. Instead of waiting for their case to be processed, Ukrainians could begin to work immediately after arrival. But this has no value for individuals unable to find meaningful employment on their own. They end up in a system in which there is a strict code of conduct. To receive benefits, and thus sustain the ability to live, one must fulfil the requirements set up by the municipality and job centres as described in the Danish integration legislation (Integrationsloven). To some, these requirements are seemingly easily manageable and of no worry, but to others they appear as insurmountable challenges because of various personal reasons. Some of our respondents' experience precarity because they have to deal with emotional and psychological distress. The causes are many: leaving family and friends in a war-torn country, not being able to manage mental health issues properly due to lacking aid, being unable to participate in meaningful labour relations in Denmark due to a variety of circumstances, that we will elaborate on in our analysis. In other words, Butler's more philosophical perspective on precarity provides us the ability to identify experiences of vulnerability and insecurity outside the economic realm and broaden the definition to accommodate a more intricate description of precarity, in turn enabling us to highlight and discuss how precarity can arise for the individual Ukrainian refugee, despite belonging to a group of refugees seemingly free of stigmatisation and marginalisation.

It is important to address our obvious exclusion of intersectionality in our theoretical framework. We are aware of the importance social structures such as gender, race and class play in Butler's perspectives, and we agree that they are valuable in many discussions of precarity. However, as this thesis is a qualitative exploration of precarity amongst six individuals, we argue that intersectionality is not a necessity for answering our research question. Had our group of respondents consisted of both men and women, or individuals from very different segments of Ukrainian society, we would have included the aspect of intersectionality in the thesis. Because all our respondents share a common ground in that they are Ukrainian women who arrived in Denmark under the Special Act, the discrepancies they experience are more linked to internal conditions than external.

Transnationalism

Our initial engagement with migration literature and transnationalism stems from Biao Xiang and Johan Lindquist (2014) who introduced the concept of Migration Infrastructure. The concept works as a framework to understand and analyse labour migrants' journey from their home country to the destination, and the complex mediation process that it entails. Xiang and Lindquist argue that migration should be viewed as an infrastructure rather than only through policies, labour market dynamics, and transnational networks. We would be able to apply parts of migration infrastructure in a refugee context, as refugee journeys are also highly mediated, but we decided that other areas were more valuable to give attention concerning Ukrainian refugees. In the early stages of the thesis we wanted to apply Susan Banki (2013b; 2015; 2023) and her work on homeland and transnational activism. Her literature from 2015 and 2023 revolve around Burmese activists pushing to reform their country through various actions, for example through campaigning and solidarity art, taking place both inside and outside Burma. It seemed relevant in our context since we initially were interested in how Ukrainian refugees engaged in activism in solidarity against the war in Ukraine; however, this literature is more focused on activists and does not center on refugees. Therefore, Banki's work on refugees and homeland activism (2013b) had a greater inspiration for this thesis. Banki connects refugees' precarious situation as a condition for homeland activism, or lack of, defining their level of precarity based on various mobilisation elements. According to Banki, the level of precarity, ranging from low to extreme, is defined by access to technology, finances for remittance as well as information regarding human rights violations and international aid (Banki, 2013b, 14). However, Banki focuses on activism related to the refugee's dissatisfaction with homeland policies resulting in a motivation to act in order to reform the homeland. Through our initial research and pilot interviews, we came to understand that homeland activism, as in the context that she explores, is not a relevant point of engagement in this thesis. Our respondents do engage in activism, but contradictory to Banki's concept, the activism is directed towards an ending of the ongoing conflict or an obligation of supporting their country in a situation of war, not political change. The various elements presented by Banki (2013b) are seemingly not affecting our respondents' actions. Her theoretical framework is not specifically relevant in our context but Banki's work serves as an inspiration to the outline of parts of the thesis.

Loretta Baldassar (2008; 2013) also inspired our research. With a point of departure in Italian migrants in Australia and their remaining parents in Italy, Baldassar (2008) looks at how separation of

Italian families is constructing types of co-presence; ways that give a sense of being together in alternative to physical presence and so keeping a strong relationship while dealing with emotions of "missing" and "longing for" (Baldassar 2008, 250). In contrast to Baldassar's research we focus on refugees and not migrants, nevertheless both migrants and refugees deal with the same complications that transnational families can bring, forced or not. Preliminary, we thought that the specific types of co-presence would be more pivotal. We also considered applying Baldassar (2013) and her work on caregiving through the lens of circulation which explores the complex phenomenon of transnational caregiving and in similar terms investigates ways of how care is reciprocated between kin across borders. We argue that the presented "care circulation framework" is not suitable within the scope of our research. Because we conducted pilot interviews it turned out that it was not essential to explore the refugees' co-presences, circulation of care and the emotions attached to these concepts. We are not investigating the *types* of transnational relations, but rather how these interactions *affect* our respondents. We instead apply Baldassar as an inspiration to see how communicating with family back home affects the Ukrainian refugees' situation in Denmark. Thus, the literature is used as an entranceway to see if being connected with relatives back home give reason to engage in supportive actions for Ukraine. Nevertheless we do apply one element from Baldassar's work regarding Italian families' feelings of guilt, either for the migrant or for the one staying behind in Italy (Baldassar, 2008, 254 + 259). She analyses that there is a tendency for family members to conceal information when talking with one another, not to make the other person worry or feel guilty for the lack of presence. We are interested in investigating if the Ukrainian refugees experience a feeling of guilt because of being in safety in Denmark compared to insecurity in Ukraine, and the possible actions attached to this guilt.

We argue that the described migration literature (Xiang and Lindquist 2014; Banki 2013b, 2015, 2021; Baldassar 2008, 2013) would not serve as a theoretical framework for analysing and discussing the situation of our respondents in a way fitting for this thesis. A lot of the literature has worked as an inspiration for our research, and we do include a part of Baldassar's (2008) work in relation to feelings of guilt, but this school of migration literature is not defining for our thesis. Instead we apply perspectives of Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller (2004) on ways *of being* and *ways of belonging* in a transnational social field. Levitt and Schiller (2004) is foundational for our transnational focus in this thesis. They propose a new way of looking at society by moving beyond methodological nationalism. They argue that methodological nationalism, understood by only considering what is happening within national boundaries, is an outdated way to perceive a modern society. To acknowledge individuals outside this understanding, such as labour migrants or refugees, in our case, we need to adopt a transnational social field approach to study the everyday lives of these individuals, those who

move, but also their connectedness with those who stay behind (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, 1003-06). The authors define the social field "*as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organised, and transformed"* and emphasises that the transnational social field *"connect actors through direct and indirect relations across borders."* (Levitt & Schiller, 1004 + 1009). In other words, the social field is constituted through multidimensions where ideas and acts are shared, handled and influenced across borders in various ways. In this connection, being part of the same social field does not mean being equally engaged in transnational relations and activities. For instance, migrants can have strong relational ties to their homeland which reasons their actions, whereas other migrants have little direct ties but take actions based on indirect relations to their homeland, such as online communities. Essential is the fact that migrants are informed and connected due to being part of the same social field, so you can act if an event motivates you to do so (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, 1009). We explore what motivates the refugees to take part in specific transnational activities and why they feel the importance of doing so.

Defining the transnational social field Levitt and Schiller distinguish between *ways of being* and *ways of belonging* in that field (2004, 1003 + 1010). Ways of being is understood as being embedded in a social field, for example in Danish society, but not feeling connected to it in regards to culture and politics. On the contrary, belonging refers to feelings as a conscious connection to a place or a group, demonstrated through food culture, religion or fashion. Belonging also refers to actions that give an awareness of the migrant's identity. This theoretical approach has inspired us to investigate the refugees' connectedness to Denmark and Ukraine and if that influences their actions and thoughts in connection with their future. For example it has become evident that several of the Ukrainian women have become more aware of their Ukrainian identity as a consequence of the war. We will research if it makes the Ukrainians want to engage in transnational activities, such as protests or charities, and what this engagement means for their belonging to both countries. Incorporating migrants, or refugees in our case, *"in a new state and enduring transnational attachments are not binary opposite"* rather they pivot *"between a new land and a transnational incorporation."* (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, 1011). We investigate if pivoting between life in Ukraine and Denmark creates divisiveness related to their future.

Methodology

The purpose with this chapter is to be transparent about our choices and methods taken to complete the thesis which will create liability for our research. The chapter will explain and discuss how we have produced and processed our empirical data. We furthermore account for how we have recruited our respondents, and how we position ourselves in the research process. We then explain ethical considerations taken when engaging with refugees. Finally, we illustrate the connection between our theoretical framework and empirical data material, to give a clear view of how theory relates to reality.

Qualitative exploratory research

Our theoretical framework has a post-structuralist foundation making it natural to have symbolic interactionism as our methodological approach. We apply symbolic interactionism since our empirical data is unstable, fluid and ambiguous (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2005, 10). Essential within symbolic interactionism is to approach our empirical field by applying our theoretical framework and acknowledging that we contribute to the production of meaning in the interviews. Phenomenology, on the contrary, strives to understand the empirical field without interpretation and theoretical "pollution". When applying symbolic interactionism, we acknowledge that our data is created through interpretation and a theoretical pre-understanding. This does not mean that we limit ourselves from approaching the empirical field in an open mindset (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2005, 40-41). We allow the conversation to diverge from the questions we have prepared, as we are more interested in what is important for our respondent than in specific answers to the questions in our interview guide. In a similar manner, we have aimed to avoid ascribing our respondents' concrete definitions and instead let them position themselves as they prefer. As an example, we do not refer to our respondents as refugees unless they themselves highlight this as part of their self-identification. As Goffman (1971) suggests, within symbolic interactionism, we have a role as interviewers to perform "face work" in order for the respondents not to lose face and not to contribute to a negative self-positioning (as written in Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2005, 30). This is reflected in our interviews in that we showed our empathy and understanding for their statements which could often be sensitive and humiliating. Not only do our respondents position themselves as a result of the questions we ask and the interview setting that we have established, but we as interviewers also position ourselves, naturally, as two ethnic Danish, male interviewers, and are probably also perceived as that from our respondents. Applying symbolic interactionism has helped us to eliminate the distance between us and the respondents by

creating an interview practice initiating cultural and social understanding, with an interest in completing an interview that is meaningful for both us and the respondent (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2005, 39). We tried to meet the individual on eye level and be curious about them from the beginning.

Interview guide

The thesis is based on primary, qualitative interviews with a semi-structured approach. We have chosen to conduct the interviews as individual interviews as we believe they serve as the best way to get insights into the individuals' thoughts, feelings and view (Guest et al., 2017) on the Danish welfare system and transnational connections and actions. With the exception that we interviewed two Ukrainians at the same time, because they are married. In order to make them as comfortable as possible, we accommodated their wishes of being interviewed together and conducted two interviews with both of them present. All interviews follow a semi-structured interview guide that enables us to derive answers within specific topics relevant to our research whilst allowing us to deviate from the guide and explore what is important to our sample. As mentioned, the interview guide is informed by our theoretical framework. We decided on applying precarity (Butler 2009a, 2009b), transnationalism (Baldassar, 2008), and Homeland Activism (Banki 2013b) to inform our interview guide. Simultaneously, it was important not to restrict ourselves on our research question and the theories and accordingly, we decided to do two pilot interviews with some Ukrinians. The pilot interviews were conducted to explore what is important to the respondents and to lock us in on the theories that should condition the interview guide. In this process we interviewed three women and made a few changes in the chosen theoretical concepts. We confirmed the application of Butler but removed the focus on Baldassar's types of co-presences and narrowed down the focus as described in the theoretical framework. Furthermore, we disregarded the theory of homeland activism by Banki. Moreover, we noticed how identity and community engagement - rather than homeland activism - and questions of being and belonging played a big role for the women, making us look for relevant literature. We discovered the theoretical and methodological approach to transnationalism (Levitt & Schiller, 2004) which fitted the interview guide in order to explore that area.

Due to our area of study, we are naturally marked by bias because of knowledge of trends and patterns concerning migrants and refugees. We have approached the interviews with open structured questions allowing our respondents to elaborate on topics they considered important, instead of requesting concise answers to specific questions. On the other hand, our theoretical and social science

pre-understanding on the area, can also be seen as valuable in order for us and the Ukrainians to relate to each other better, thereby creating a good setting for producing empirical data in line with what we discussed about symbolic interactionism.

Due to our qualitative approach we have decided to interview 5-7 individuals. This quantity will be enough to be able to analyse our data and search for patterns and because we are not seeking to conclude anything general about refugees in Denmark. While a qualitative approach will not enable us to make general assumptions, it will serve as a foundation on which we can depict and shed light on tendencies within the field we engage in. Our pilot interviews served as a way of delimitation, however, the pilot interview-respondents are part of the total respondents and the derived data is applied in the analytical discussion due to valuable responses.

Ethical considerations

It is crucial to be ethical when working with human beings and their real life experiences. We follow a number of ethical codes presented in the Statement of Ethics by the American Anthropological Association, AAA, (2012), but we also include the argument by Catriona Mackenzie et al. (2007) on how the principle "do no harm" is not sufficient for conducting ethical research with refugees. That being said, this principle is fundamental and also appears as AAA's first ethical code. To avoid contributing negatively to any of our respondents it implies to make sure that the Ukrainians participating will not be exposed to loss of dignity. Fleeing can already bring along undignified situations. Thus, we treat our respondents as humans with agency instead of seeing them as vulnerable refugees. However, we have touched upon experiences that are sensitive to our respondents due to their journeys as refugees. To mitigate uncomfortable situations or emotional harm we have informed our respondents that they can decide to skip any given question or topic if not feeling comfortable discussing it. Beyond doing no harm, Mackenzie et al. suggest researchers to bring reciprocal benefits for the research participants (moving beyond "do no harm"), ideally responsive to their needs and values, as a way to gain participants' trust (2007, 301). It is important because refugees often experience mistrust in the refugee/migration infrastructure with various actors, such as agency workers or translators, hence creating scepticism towards researchers (Mackenzie et al., 2007, 303). Researchers should therefore engage in refugee communities to obstruct the power structure between researcher and participant, which though can be a time-consuming and demanding task. Due to the limited time and resources we have, we are not able to engage in longer relationships, but we should not neglect its importance. As we do not have any natural angle of entrance to Ukraine or its people, it is challenging from the beginning. Nevertheless, our mindset has been to be open-minded and signalling

that we are interested in listening to other people's stories, not only from a standpoint of our own interest but in areas that are important to them themselves too. Further, it has been important to conduct each interview in an informal setting which has either taken place at our own apartment, the respondents' place of residence, or a café, whichever was most comfortable for each individual. We made it up to them to decide. No participants have shown concern but rather, everyone has shown their willingness in helping us. Further, we offered to stay in contact and for them to reach out if needed. As an example, one of the Ukrainians acted upon it and asked to meet to chat over a cup of coffee, which we agreed to do. Mackenzie et al. acknowledge the difficulties in creating strong and long term relationships but point out that the research should at least be reciprocal in one way or the other such as *"[...] guiding policy, influencing governments or changing social attitudes."* (2007, 316). Even though we are not engaging in the lives of the research participants as such, we do believe that we provide reciprocal benefits. This thesis is giving voice to Ukrainians and showcasing their experiences. This is meant to provide new perspectives on the situation for Ukrainian refugees in Denmark which ultimately can work as a way to influence decision makers.

Relating to the Statement of Ethics by the American Anthropology Association we are also involving the second ethical code *Be Open and Honest Regarding Your Work*. In this case we have informed our respondents what the interviews will be used for and who the thesis itself will benefit. The third ethical code *Informed Consent and Necessary Permissions* is essential too. It implies gaining voluntary consent and to inform each respondent on what impact their participation has. With these two ethical considerations, we will tell our respondents that they are valuable for us to produce the data of the thesis and that their participation helps us to show what tendencies apply to Ukrainians in their situation. Additionally, we inform the women that the thesis will be shared with our supervisor and the sensor but will also be uploaded to the University's digital library, for us to reach a wider ordinance. For this reason, anonymity is an all-important criteria which is also part of AAA' second ethical code, and obviously important when working with refugees due to their safety. In this regard pseudonyms will cover the refugees' real names, their occupation will either be changed or specific information about their job or internship will be concealed, and we will not reveal their place of residence. We have now accounted for the ethics that we have considered when working with our research respondents and in the following we will present the process of how we recruited the respondents.

Recruitment

Geared toward finding our respondents we created a few criteria. Our contact in Næstved municipality made us aware that most refugees connected to their integration programs are women less than 40 years old. Initially we decided that our sample must be women, also with the argument that the majority of refugees from Ukraine in Denmark are women (Danmarks Statistik 2023). Second, we decided the women must be less than 40 years old as a result of a preliminary with our contact in Næstved municipality. Last, the women must reside in Denmark under the Special Act (Lov om midlertidig opholdstilladelse til personer, der er fordrevet fra Ukraine 2022), meaning that our respondents are defined as refugees whereas Ukrainians residing in Denmark before the Special Act are not defined this way.

The pilot interviews showed no signs that gender played a role in their individual situations; their precarious conditions were connected to the interaction with the municipality and the job centre and not to them being women. Likewise, when we began to search for respondents, we realised that it was challenging to establish contact. This stems from having no natural angle of entrance to refugees - only having an international contact area of labour and student migrants - as well as a language barrier between us and the Ukrainians. Thus, we also left behind the age criteria to not limit ourselves in the search for respondents and because it showed to be insignificant to our research. This means that our only criteria for gathering respondents ended up being that they must reside in Denmark under the Special Act.

In methodological terms, we discussed different strategies to reach our respondents. Our position as two male researchers put us in a negative position from the beginning. We knew it could make it challenging to establish direct contact with Ukrainian refugees, especially because the majority of the refugees are women. The language barrier was also a hindrance. Hence, to start with, **we** had an online approach and created a digital poster asking for Ukrainian refugees residing in Denmark under the Special Act. By searching through Facebook groups concerning Ukrainian refugees in Denmark we located five groups where we shared the poster. Moreover, via our supervisor we got to know about a Ukrainian, a chairwoman in an association for Ukrainians in Odense, whom we shared details with as well. She replied that she was not sure that she could help us because the women she knew did not perceive themselves as refugees. In cooperation with our supervisor, we decided to change the wording of the poster, so it did not include the word ‘refugee’. Consequently, we reshared the poster with the chairwoman and a few of the Facebook groups and found two new groups to

share it in. However, against our expectations we did not receive any inquiries from the chairwoman's network or from Facebook.

We proceeded very practically in hopes for a more fruitful strategy. We made a list of locations in Copenhagen that had potential to bring us in contact with Ukrainians: a language school, Copenhagen citizen service (Københavns Borgerservice), NGOs Refugee Welcome and ActionAid Denmark, the charity organisation Kofoeds Skole, and several municipal housings which as of right now are housing Ukrainian refugees. We spoke to employees at these places and hung up posters at various municipal housings. Finally, we were contacted by a Ukrainian woman living in one of the municipal housings and residing in Denmark under the Special Act. Since it turned out that our sample was not easily accessible, we knew we had to apply the snowball method (Parker et al., 2019) to establish contact with remaining individuals. A week later we were contacted by two Ukrainian women also residing in Denmark under the Special Act. They had heard about us through our first respondent, so the snowball method seemed to work. Nevertheless, these two women were not able to point us in the direction of new contacts.

For a few weeks we had not established new contacts. One day Kasper Lindhardt participated in a Spanish language café where he met another Ukrainian woman. He explained about our thesis and it resulted in a new respondent fitting for the research. She attempted to establish a connection with another person, but we managed to establish contact with someone else ourselves through a study colleague, who knew about a Ukrainian woman working in a factory in Copenhagen. We contacted her and she was willing to partake in our sample. Applying the snowball method she put us in contact with our final respondent, another Ukrainian woman fitting into our research sample.

The following six women are the respondents in our qualitative exploratory research:

Lyudmila (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023)

Lyudmila came to Denmark because of her second cousin, whom she lived with for four months. Hereafter she contacted the municipality and got a room at one of the municipal housings. Lyudmila has been diagnosed with depression and has not been feeling well for most of her stay in Denmark. Lyudmila left an impression of a young, insecure woman struggling to take part in society. She has two unfinished educations from Ukraine but has aspirations and dreams for the future. However, she is not able to act upon the opportunities available and is uncertain what the future will bring.

Anastasiya (Anastasiya, in-person interview, March 14 + April 2, 1023)

Anastasiya is from a town in eastern Ukraine, a couple of hours from Mariupol. She arrived in Denmark with her spouse Kateryna. Anastasiya has been struggling with depression as she experienced the Russian occupation first hand in the early weeks of the war. Denmark seemed like a good place to live, because of the tolerance regarding sexuality and ways of life. She has a profound experience in factory business. However, her limited English linguistic abilities and mental challenges, has made the move to Denmark tough on her. Anastasiya gave us the impression of an introverted woman uncertain of what to plan and hope for.

Kateryna (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14 + April 2, 1023)

Kateryna arrived together with her partner Anastasiya. In Ukraine they lived away from each other and Kateryna did not experience the war first hand. She has a master degree in art and has worked with children with special needs. Like Anastasiya she was excited to go to Denmark because of its tolerance and opportunities. Even though the move has not been as hard for Kateryna as for Anastasiya, she has had to deal with a variety of challenges, especially connected to the labour market. She is the primary aid for Anastasiya helping with translation and other issues. We got the impression of a woman with a positive view on the future and her opportunities, but with difficulties deciding on the future.

Yuliya (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023)

Yuliya came to Denmark because her brother lives in Denmark and she knew about Denmark from several previous vacations. She has a master's in psychology and used to work at a school in Kyiv, Ukraine. Yuliya loves living in Denmark and her dream is to learn Danish and find a relevant job or travel the world. Yuliya gives us an impression of an outgoing person who easily adapts to new surroundings. While she is comfortable living in Denmark, she is frustrated that the language barrier limits her to find a job within her field and continued integration.

Oksana (Oksana, in-person interview, April 23, 2023)

Oksana stayed at a friend's place for two months after arriving in Denmark. After this she moved into municipal housing in Copenhagen. Oksana has a master's within IT and would like to work in this field. During her stay she got in contact with the job centre and through this she got a job working in a small factory. Oksana gave us an impression of a capable, independent woman, but constricted by her situation. While she is happy to have a job, she would like to work within the field she is educated in, but this has not yet been possible.

Nataliya (Nataliya, in-person interview, April 29, 2023)

Nataliya arrived in Denmark with her son. After staying a few weeks at the apartment of her childhood friend, Nataliya was offered municipal housing. By coincidence, Nataliya was offered a job in the municipality as a translator, helping new arrivals from Ukraine. Nataliya gave us the impression of being a strong, willed, and very engaged woman able to withstand most things. Her primary reason to leave Ukraine was her son, as she wanted him to live in a safe and sound environment. In the year the two of them have been here, they have progressed a lot and now live in their own apartment, the son attends school, and they are active in the local community.

Processing data material

Just like our interview guide is informed by our theoretical framework we have coded our empirical data based on theory (Appendix 8). To begin with we then had two main themes being "precarity" and "transnationalism". Based on reviews of our transcriptions we established the codes within the themes. By the first review of our data material, we looked for recurring topics and patterns resulting in the following codes, first within precarity:

"mental health", "contact with municipality", and "employment / labour",

and then within transnationalism:

"homeland connection", "connections in Denmark", "actions taken" and "guilt".

By the first review we realised that a third main theme was needed to cover the interlink between precarity and transnationalism, thus creating "interlink" as a theme. Within this theme we included:

"future", as well as "guilt" which we then removed from transnationalism in the coding scheme. Our second review of our data material consisted of determining the specific quotes and inserting each quote within the concerned code in our coding scheme. In this step we also had an open mind regarding if any other codes could be relevant. As a consequence, we found it necessary to include "arrival / navigating Danish society" and "previous experience" within the theme of precarity. The coding is meant to give us as researchers a clear view of the accounts given by our respondents. By defining sub-themes within our theoretical framework, we have made the complexity of our empirical data easily accessible for analysis and interpretation.

We have edited the language of quotes in the analysis and discussion when needed. This adaptation has exclusively been due to language deficits and has not affected the meaning of the statement.

Pitfalls within qualitative exploratory research

We learned about symbolic interactionism relatively late in the research process. However, we became aware that this approach was fitting for what we were in progress with. Many of our actions matched symbolic interactionism, especially the fact that we have a theoretical foundation prior to engaging with our empirical field. Also, we carefully engaged with the Ukrainians making sure that we created an accommodating environment for producing the empirical data, but relying on interactionism from the beginning could have enhanced our interaction between us and the refugees. As an example, we would have been aware that essential in this approach is the fact that the interview is a meeting where data is produced together meaning that we as interviewers are seen as co-producers of the data material (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2005, 29). Our interaction did not neglect that data is produced in a cooperation, but with this specific awareness, we would be less careful in bringing in our own opinions and thoughts in the interviews since, by relying on symbolic interactionism, it is still not possible to present an objective truth of the Ukrainians' stories, but the reality is negotiated and created between us and our respondents. By bringing our own thoughts and opinions more into the conversations, we could have developed an even greater understanding of our respondents. In addition, we would have paid more attention to how the women position themselves in their stories, for instance if their narratives are characterised by being a story of suffering or a story of development (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2005, 37-38). By exploring their individual positions we argue that this could contribute to deciding their precarious position and reason for their underlying actions.

Connection between theoretical approach and empirical data

The following table introduces how our theoretical framework is connected to our empirical material:

	Precarity (Butler, 2009a, 2009b)	Transnationalism (Levitt & Schiller, 2004)
Point of focus	● Vulnerability through dependency on external actors ● Manifestation of precarity through practices and experiences ● Connection between external and internal actions towards and away from precarity	● Communication with relatives ● Feelings of guilt ● Being and belonging ● Engagement in transnational relations and activities
Empirical connection	● Mental health ● Internship / labour	● Actions based on feelings of guilt ● Attachments to Ukraine and Denmark ● National identity

Our analysis will provide an overview of how the respondents experience precarity and what transnational engagement they have. After this the discussion will provide a thorough examination of what our interpretation of the analytical findings asserts in relation to our research question.

Analysis

In this analysis, we intend to shed light on the various challenges our six respondents have had. In order to answer our research question, How do Ukrainian refugees experience precarity and how is precarity and transnationalism interlinked?, we will first examine how precarity arises in the lives of our respondents. As we have previously explained, the causes for precarity are individual and vary from person to person. Therefore, we argue that an individual analysis of each respondent provides an overview of the elements important to each respondent's story. Accordingly, the analysis will be partitioned in six parts, one for each respondent, with a somewhat similar structure - depending on their individual situation - in which we will first elaborate on the causes of precarity, secondly analyse how the respondents engage in transnational relations. Lastly, we will analyse the interlink between precarity and transnationalism.

Lyudmila

> In Ukraine, you just need to tell about your problems to the doctor and wait where the doctor sends you. In Denmark, you need to insist. So for me, it's a problem because I'm not a human who will insist. (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023)

We interviewed Lyudmila in early March 2023. At that point she had spent 11 months in Denmark and had had a hard time adapting to her new life away from family and friends. From her arrival, she had a hard time dealing with her mental state:

> The first five months in Denmark, I lived in the flat of my [second] cousin. […] I didn't go out from the flat, only to buy some food. I began to gain weight. I spend all my time in the flat. I tried to learn English. Not Danish, because everyone on Facebook told me it was better to be more fluent in English. To find a job. And also, at first your language is too difficult. Because of depression, I can't go on a course, because one day I have a good mood, one day very bad mood. (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023).

As is clear from this quote, Lyudmila is facing a multitude of challenges in relation to her wellbeing. She is depressed, has gained weight, and spends most of her time in solitude. During the interview,

Lyudmila shared a lot of information regarding her mental health, and to us it was clear that the primary challenges she faced were all connected to this realm. Her inability to attend language classes and find employment are arguably symptoms of shortcomings related to her mental health. Throughout the interview depression and mental health was an underlying theme for our conversation, regardless of what other topic was being discussed. To us it was clear that this was the cause of her inability to *advance* in life. Because of her age, we were interested in her views regarding education and whether she had plans to enroll in an educational program while in Denmark: "*I'm not sure, so if I want to start a new education here I need to improve my English. [...] So, there's a lot of things, you see. And of course, I need to find a job if I want to pay for this. [...] I heard that if I have like fluent Danish, your government will give me the chance to go to university for free. But even if I will do all of this, I don't know what I want to do."* (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023). Because of the implications Ludmila's mental state had on virtually every other aspect of her life, we inquired about the help she was able to receive through the municipality and the consultant she was in contact with: *"She helped me to book my first appointment with the doctor. [...] So at first she said to me, like, you need to go, you need to go [to Danish lessons], and then she asked me how I feel, what I feel, and what I did to solve my psychology problem."* (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023). During the interview, we got a strong impression that the aid Lyudmila had gotten through her consultant in the municipality, was merely focused on the requirements that refugees have to fulfil for receiving social benefits rather than inquiring about Lyudmila's mental well-being. We inquired as to whether or not she was satisfied with the help she had gotten through the municipality, to which she replied: "*Yeah, it could be much worse*" (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023). Subsequent to our questions regarding Ludmila's impression of the Danish welfare system, we moved on to talking about her contact with friends and relatives back in Ukraine and her social network in Denmark. At this point in our conversation Lyudmila revealed that fleeing the war had also impacted her relationships deeply: "*Before the war I had my best friend, her name is Sasha, but now we are not best* [friends], *because her life, she's still in Ukraine, and she found a job, she's busy and she didn't have time for me. I called her, she didn't answer, I sent her some messages, she answered late. Before the war it was different*" (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023). During this part of the interview it became clear that Lyudmila was feeling very lonely in Denmark due to her Ukrainian ties being cut off. When the conversation moved to the topic of Ludmila's relatives back in Ukraine, it became clear that these ties were important, but had changed after Lyudmila left Ukraine. She talked to her mother regularly, but it seemed the connection between them had changed. We got the impression that Lyudmila was feeling guilty because of the situation she was in: "*I'm alive, I'm in a comfortable, convenient place. I have food. I have the possibility to change my life. But I don't do*

this. I still feel this. It's not so easy" (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023). Concurrently struggling with depression and getting used to her new life in Denmark, she also had to justify her decision to remain in Denmark while her mother asked for her to return to Ukraine and get on with her life: *"Three days ago, my mom said to me that maybe I need to return to home. Finish university. And find a job, find a man, get married. [...] She didn't understand my situation. She didn't accept my depression. She thought that I'm just lazy. But it's not true. I know this"* (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023). Aside from balancing personal and familial desires, Lyudmila was actively seeking information about the ongoing conflict: "*I have more than 15 [telegram] groups. About Ukraine. The war and the politics and everything. But sometimes I can't read this news because there is a lot of news [...] and then after I read this news, I also have this feeling that it is sad. Also with my depression, it is not making it better. But I must follow what is going on.* (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023). What can be derived from this quote is the duality of emotions connected to Ludmila's situation. On one hand she feels obligated to actively seek out information and keep herself in the loop regarding the situation at all times, while she knows that these actions are contributing to her deteriorating mental health. We concluded the interview by asking Lyudmila about her perspective on the future. Would she like to be in Denmark or go back to Ukraine? Did she believe she could live a comfortable life in Denmark if she were to stay? While Lyudmila had given this some thought, it was clear that her current struggles and legal status acted as a roadblock for any future plans she might have: *"I would like to go home. But after the war, like two years after the war. From Denmark I can help more financially. [...] I know that when we will win this war your government will send us home. [...] So it's too difficult to build some plans in Denmark because of this. [...] I understand this. It's okay. But I can't create plans. Because I don't know if I will find a job or not. I have no idea.* (Lyudmila, in-person interview, March 10, 2023). In summary, Lyudmila has dealt with untreated mental disorders for a year, which has affected her possibilities in Denmark greatly. Despite living in municipal housing, making the municipality know about her situation, and asking for help, she has not received any until now. Because of this she has developed an inability to follow language classes. Lyudmila's relationship to her family back in Ukraine is contributing negatively to her situation, as she is unable to discuss her own uncertain state with her mother and is met with harsh remarks about being lazy and too sensitive. Ultimately all these factors make it difficult for Lyudmila to aspire for anything and dream of a future.

Anastasiya and Kateryna

> In Ukraine it's illegal to be a couple [...] it's dishonest [to be homosexual], [here] we could feel free, but not [currently] because our neighbours are Ukrainians. (Anastasiya, in-person interview, March 14, 2023)

Anastasiya and Kateryna got married after their arrival to Denmark. They chose to go here, because they had heard Denmark was a tolerant country and a place where homosexuals could openly be in a relationship without risking marginalisation and discrimination. For the first time in their lives, the two women were able to live together as a couple. After arriving in Denmark, Anastasiya and Kateryna were housed in a small city in the northern part of Denmark. Here, they had no difficulties adapting to their new life and were both happy about their situation:

> We moved to North Jutland, and we were very scared because it's so far [away]. But I want to say it was my best experience in Denmark with people. And I really like this community [...] It's a little town. And people from this town make volunteering teams [...] They make an organisation for children. For example, taking them to the zoo or football. They help us mentally also. And this was our first experience when we say that we are a couple. And [we asked] if it's possible to live together [...] We were scared that they separated us. [...] And we were scared about this and we came to one volunteering and talked about this quietly. And she said, "We will help you". And this was very nice. (Anastasiya, in-person interview, April 2, 2023)

However, things changed when the couple moved to Copenhagen municipality. Here they were housed in municipality accommodation for Ukrainian refugees. At this location, the couple experienced conflicts due to their sexual orientation: "*Now Ukrainians are starting to not be homophobic. Little by little things start to change. But old people are not as open. For example, my grandma doesn't know about this [Kateryna's sexual orientation]. She guessed it, but she doesn't* [approve]. *My mom and my sister and her* [Anastasiya's] *mom says, "it's your life*" (Kateryna, in-person interview, April 2, 2023). Seemingly, the conflicts that arose after the couple moved to municipality accommodation in Copenhagen, was due to the fact that Ukrainian refugees are not one consistent group of people with identical values and beliefs: "*We talked with the administration and said that we have a problem with them [other Ukrainians]. I even showed an SMS chat of what they sent to us [...] and said that it's impossible to cook in the kitchen, because we will meet these people, they talk with us not well and we feel uncomfortable"* (Kateryna, in-person interview, April 2, 2023). Luckily

for the women, the municipality, when made aware of the issue, helped them to find a different location in which they now live. This interaction has of course been a source of much distress for the couple that has contributed to their experiences of precarity but has not been foundational to these experiences. In Ukraine, Anastasiya resided in the east, and was therefore living under Russian military occupation in the early stage after the invasion. Kateryna lived in the western part of the country. Because of this, the two women have diverse challenges and distinct factors constituting their current situation.

Anastasiya

> I lived close to Crimea. It's an occupied territory. […] I spent a lot of time in the basement. So, it's a very dark memory for me. (Anastasiya, in-person interview, March 14, 2023)

Already from arrival in Denmark, Anastasiya was affected by PTSD as a consequence of being very close to the war: *"I have bad sleep and I dream about the war"* (Anastasiya, in-person interview, April 2, 2023). It made us interested in understanding how her mental state was accommodated by her consultant in the municipality. From the interview with Anastasiya and Kateryna we learned that both of them were scared of her consultant. Kateryna assisted Anastasiya on a meeting with the consultant, because of Anastasiya's lack of English, and Kateryna explains one of their first encounters:

> This madam started to pressure her. Like children you should grow up. You must go away from your comfort zone. […] Because when she asked Anastasiya where she wants to work, she said "somewhere when Lydia will be here. And help with English language" And I don't know why. But this was like a red flag for her [the consultant]. And she starts to pressure her again. That you should find a job without her. You can't use a translator. And you will be fast learning… You should be an adult… After this she [Anastasiya] was crying. (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14, 2023).

From this encounter we understand how the municipality approaches her in a harsh tone. Anastasiya is not only struggling with depression but with English too, nevertheless the consultant asks her to leave her comfort zone and be on her own. At another point in the interview Kateryna tells a story about a situation when Anastasiya was approached by a consultant from the job centre while she was negatively affected by her tranquiliser medicine, that she was given by a psychologist to improve her sleep:

> The tranquilliser worked very slowly and started first in the morning. […] She was sitting in the Danish class and I see she starts to do this [imitates how Anastasiya becomes very sleepy]... Her eyes were like this [closing]. [...] And I say, "let's go outside to sit in the corridor." A job consultant, who is in charge of internships, walks by and sees us and says that he needs to talk to Anastasiya about her internship. I say that he can only talk to me because she is not mentally here right now. […] And nothing, nothing. […] he starts to talk with Anastasiya and says that I [Kateryna] will translate. I say that I can translate, but asks if he sees what mental state she is in? I say that she drank tranquilliser so now she can't. It didn't matter and he started to talk with her. I was shocked. It's not a normal situation when he sees which situation she is in and then starts to talk about internships and work. And they even didn't propose, maybe next day or when she will feel better. It's a bad experience for us." (Kateryna, in-person interview, April 2, 2023).

It demonstrates how Anastasiya's personal situation and circumstances are repeatedly neglected, this time by the job centre. Anastasiya is dependent on Kateryna because her mental illness and lack of English skills are challenging her daily chores. Now Anastasiya is an intern in a supermarket, but the social aspect is difficult for her to embrace, and the internship is not related to her previous work experience. On their own they started to look for an internship for Anastasiya within factory work where she possesses 11 years of experience: *"And we found Toms [fabric] and Toms was looking for 15 persons. We sent them an email [...] and we asked our job centre how they can help us to find a place for Anastasiya in Tom's fabric. But they say that it's only for Danish people and she even can't apply. [...] And so they again didn't help with it. They didn't even try to talk with them about an internship.* (Kateryna, in-person interview, April 2, 2023). A combination of the language barrier and a lack of initiative from the job centre causes frustration and makes Anastasiya remain in a difficult work environment in the supermarket: *"It's very hard. She is an introvert and in the job centre a lot of people who work with us say, 'why do you not smile? You must be smiling. For finding a job you must find a smile.' For example in the supermarket a lot of customers, and one time Anastasia's colleague, says 'why you not smile?'"* (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14, 2023). Anastasiya's mental health is neglected from many sides, it being the municipality, the job centre, and the internship.

Moreover, it is hard to keep a focus on life in Denmark due to the situation for her family in Ukraine living in the same occupied region. Her mom supported her to look for safety abroad, but Anastasiya worries: *"Nervous and worried about [the situation]. I tried a lot to connect [with her mom]. I read the news and understand that the [Russian military] is in the town which is why I can't talk"*. Connection issues and uncertainty about her family's safety makes her worried and keeps her

awake at night. It made us question her thoughts on returning to Ukraine in the future or remaining in Denmark: *"My family is in occupation territory. So it's very hard for us now. And if my town will be in occupation territory, I can't come back very often."* (Anastasiya, in-person interview, March 14 + April 2, 2023). Thus, the development of the war contributes to whether her stay in Denmark is temporary or permanent. In summary, the precarious conditions Anastasiya faces is a result of her proximity to the war, mental health challenges, language barriers, and a lack of empathy and understanding from the municipality and the job centre. These factors combined hinder her path toward suitable employment and further integration in Danish society.

Kateryna

> I look for a job every time in this area [area of art], but without language it's impossible. And my English is not good enough for this. So I get a little depression because of this. (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14, 2023)

As an extrovert individual and because Kateryna fled from a territory that is not under Russian occupation, the factors that condition Kateryna to be precarious are different from her partner. Anastasiya also struggles to match her professional experience with a suitable internship, but mental health showed to be the decisive reason for precarity in her case. Challenges with mental health are not as characteristic for Kateryna. She has more surplus and repeatedly emphasises her appreciation for Denmark as a tolerant country. What bothers her is the burden to find a job related to her profession. She explains her experience with the job centre:

> They are looking for internships mostly not in your area. For example, we had three months to find an internship. I was sending letters to different art organisations. But only two or three answered me [...]. And they [the job centre] didn't help me to find something in this area. I imagine they have contracts with supermarkets, with [hair] saloon groups. And just giving all of us these internships. So they didn't spend a lot of time finding something that was in my area, but ended up with a random internship. (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14, 2023)

Kateryna has a master in art with specialisation in kids with special needs, she is not satisfied that the job centre just places her in a random internship in a supermarket as an easy way to create employment. Kateryna explains that it also has to do with her lack of Danish proficiency: *"They even didn't want to give me an internship with children, because I don't know Danish. But an internship with*

children could also be good language practice". (Kateryna, in-person interview, April 2, 2023) Though she is enrolled in a Danish course, language is still a great hindrance in obtaining a relevant job or internship. Her current internship in a supermarket is not only irrelevant to her field of study but is physically demanding and gives her back problems *"[...] because all my life I've had pains. And now I feel it, and I'm sad that I can't continue with my specialty."* (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14, 2023). The internship makes her feel sad and Kateryna is clearly concerned about a professional future:

> *It will be good for me to have an internship with children, because I have a big experience. [...] I understand I need Danish, but I also need practice. [...] But if the job centre will not help me with this, and I can't find it myself, my career on this [field of art] will stop. I will do some simple things and don't use my brain.* (Kateryna, in-person interview, April 2, 2023)

The continued Danish language barrier and lack of effort from the job centre forces her to continue a simple internship where she cannot contribute with knowledge within her speciality. Despite Kateryna's issues with finding suitable labour, she keeps a positive mind-set about life in Denmark: *"We are joyous that we are here in a tolerant country. And here [Copenhagen], is a very beautiful town. I'm an artist. I'm joyous. Beautiful buildings. A lot of interesting places."* (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14, 2023). Apart from her life in Denmark, with everything that it brings, we were curious if she is still in contact with relatives in Ukraine, which she expresses in the following quote: *"I have no big connection with my father. Because I'm scared to say my [sexual] orientation. [...] But I must have a big connection with my grandmother. I grew up with her. [...] So I even pay for roaming to call Ukraine. Because she is old."* (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14, 2023). As mentioned before, it is not uncommon to be alienated towards homosexuality, which applies to her father, making their contact limited. On the other hand, she is closely connected with her ageing grandmother. In any case, we wanted to explore if being subject to transnational family dynamics gave rise to any challenges, relative to Kateryna's safe situation in Denmark compared to her family residing in a country of war. At this time in the interview Kateryna elaborates both on her partner's experience and her own:

> *She [Anastasiya] can't share her happiness with her [mom] because it will not be normal. Not because her mom will not say that it's good. She will say 'it's good, I'm happy that you are safe, but it's not what we have now, it's more than people have in occupation. [...] People in the occupation are limited in many ways. [...] Sometimes I also feel this [guilt], because for example I was talking with*

> *my father and said something like 'today is so cold', just a normal thing to say or 'I feel cold today'. And he said 'why do you say this? You are in safety and you are in Denmark. We are here in Ukraine and some people don't have a warm house, so stop saying this.' I used to share a lot of things, which used to be normal, but now it's a different reality."* (Kateryna, in-person interview, April 2, 2023)

It is clear to understand that the differences between the Danish and Ukrainian situation bring forth a feeling of guilt in Anastasiya and Kateryna which make them consider what they share with their respective families. Prior to conversing about this topic with Kateryna we asked her if she had been involved in activities in support of Ukraine, which is apparent that she had: "*We go in protest. I will show you [self made art poster]. It was the one year anniversary of the start of the war. It was near the Russian embassy."* (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14, 2023). Besides protesting she is also invested in volunteering: *"They didn't need volunteers [in a Danish-Ukrainian community]. But I would like to be a volunteer. I was a volunteer with my sister in Ukraine. [...] If we see that they post on the internet that we can join, we try to join. And we also were in the church."* (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14 + April 2, 2023). It is evident that it is important for her to be involved in supportive activities as for example through volunteering or demonstrations, but it was not clear if these actions had a connection to the transnational relationships. When asked about this Kateryna explains that she would be involved regardless:

> It will be the same. Because I'm Ukrainian and I support Ukraine not because I have family in Ukraine. I'm Ukrainian. It's my country and I want to have independence in my country. I don't want to be Ukrainian without a country. You know, like, in our talking with Ukrainians, we often talk about home, you know? It's home, it's people who don't have their country. (Kateryna, in-person interview, April 2, 2023)

Kateryna's engagement is connected to the love for her country and her Ukrainian identity. We asked her to elaborate on what the flight to Denmark has meant for her Ukrainian identity. She indicates that she has been more aware of who she is:

> But now I feel more Ukrainian than I felt before [the war]. I start to feel this in my blood that I'm Ukrainian and I want independence in my country. When you didn't have this problem [the war], you didn't think about it as much. [...] For example, before when I was a teenager, I didn't read news about refugees. Or I was just aware that there are refugees somewhere in the world. But I didn't think about

> it a lot. But now I have this problem myself. [...] I start to read about Syrian people, about other refugees in the world. Before it didn't touch you. But now it's really important to you. (Kateryna, in-person interview, April 2, 2023)

The fact that she had to flee from war herself makes it easier for her to understand the situation of refugees. It makes her pay attention to where she comes from and that Ukraine is her home, which she also emphasised in the previous quote. At the same time, Kateryna feels divided in regards to where she belongs:

> Very good country [Denmark]. To create a job career. Good salary. But this language is the toughest part. If language will be better. It's good to find a job. And for us [...] it's a very important point that it's a tolerant country. [...] A lot of things here are better than in Ukraine, which we want to take with us to Ukraine. But we have a lot of reasons to stay in Ukraine and important reasons to stay in Denmark. Because I'm feeling open [about sexual orientation] for the first time here in Denmark. [...] Danish people are very friendly, and I feel comfortable here. But bear in mind [...] I lived all my life in Ukraine, and this will not change after one year. But maybe after a few years I will feel at home [in Denmark]. (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14 + April 2, 2023).

This divisiveness entails great uncertainty about the future. On one hand she can see a future in Denmark because of its LGBT-openness and its potential to create a meaningful life, but on the contrary she cannot just let go of her life in Ukraine. In summary, the main challenge for Kateryna is to obtain a relevant internship or job. This has yet not been actualized because she is met with a requirement of better Danish skills. Furthermore, the job centre seemingly prioritises internships outside her area of expertise rather than assisting her in the path to suitable labour. Being in a transnational position has reinforced her Ukrainian identity and contributed and contributes to her uncertainty connected to her plans for the future.

Yuliya

> To be honest, I don't think that they [job centre] help me, because I understand that the main thing is that they need to help us to find a job. But they always use Ukrainians not to find a job, they only want to find an internship for you. And you know, for a month you receive 5,400 [DKK]. I know it's like that for all Ukrainians. And half of this you need to pay for accommodation. And then 3,000 [DKK], is for you (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023)

When we met Yuliya for the interview, she gave the impression of a young woman ready to take on the world. From the onset it was clear that her education and possibilities for employment was of utmost importance to her, and the entirety of the interview revolved around this topic. Two months after Yuliya's arrival to Denmark, she was offered a part time job at a local after school club: "*My consultant, he called me and asked me if I want [the job]. And I understood that [and said], "Yes, I want, okay, when I can start my job". It's really a nice place with good colleagues, with a good salary. And it's a part-time job. I had time to learn Danish or different activities, such as my hobbies or something like that*" (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023). As Yuliya was the fourth person we interviewed, and all our previous respondents had nothing positive to say regarding the job centres, we were very interested in her perspectives on the aid she had gotten through her consultant at the job centre: "*When it started [job centre activity], I thought it's good. But now I can't find a job for three months. And sometimes I want to give up. Because it's really difficult. I understand it's the main thing to learn Danish, but what can I do if I don't know this? I want to work. But not to clean for example hotels, you know, because many Ukrainians have experience of this"* (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023). Contrary to what we assumed, Yuliya was very sceptical about the job centre and the processes she had to undergo as a participant. To her it seemed that the job centre was more interested in finding internships than actual jobs for Ukrainian refugees. Instead of going through the job centre, Yuliya had used her social network to try and find employment, because: "*I think these people know more than the job centre.*" (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023). Striking for Yuliya, compared to our previous respondents, was her seemingly vast network in Denmark. Of course her brother was an easy way for her to get into contact with people living in Denmark, but she also gave the impression that she had attempted to stay in contact with virtually anyone she crossed paths with:

> It's [Yuliya's network] mainly Ukrainians. But when I had work, it's my colleagues. I had one colleague whom I was friends with. And his friends are my friends, too. Like, sometimes we met. My brother's friends, too. Because he had an international team from different countries. And we are always talking about something. And maybe it's Ukrainians who live here. Maybe 10 or more years. But they're Ukrainians and they know the systems and can explain it to us. (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023)

In relation to this, we inquired as to whether or not her Ukrainian nationality had become more important for her to express:

> I bought many Ukrainian [things]. And I always told many Danes about my country what happened. [...] It's my hobby now [making Ukrainian food]. Dishes such as borscht. Vareniki. And tea. [it's important] because it's part of our traditions and I don't want to forget this. Never. I want to tell other people that it's very important. We had a charity weekend one week [ago]. And all Danish and Ukrainians save this money for an ambulance [in Ukraine]. I want to go to these places, or events such as this. To help. (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023)

We probed as to her current relation to Ukraine. Naturally Yuliya had frequent contact with her parents and friends back in Ukraine and we asked if this contact had had any impact on her will to volunteer or contribute in other ways towards Ukraine, to which she replied: "*I think it's for my own sake [that i volunteer]. I want to think about this because it's a difficult topic for me. [...] I think it's a way to be helpful. And I can show it. It's really good I think, because I know that it's not only for me, it's for different people in Ukraine and I understand that I can help."* (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023). We dedicated the last part of the interview to questions regarding Yuliya's perspective on the future. Contrary to our other respondents, Yuliya did not see herself choosing between a life in Denmark or a life in Ukraine, instead she said: "*I think I want to try new things. And I don't want to come back to Ukraine. It's not that I don't love the country. I love and appreciate the attitude of Ukrainians to me, but I think I want to try new things. To travel a lot.* [...] *Maybe I want to stay in Denmark. I think I have options for what I can do. I really like this country*"
It is hard to define Yuliya's situation, but in summary she has experienced hardship because her wish to apply her education on the labour market has not been met. She has had internships with children, but these internships have been far from what she actually wants to do. It appears that the circumstances in Yuliya's life has made it difficult for her to define what she wants to do, as she is torn between staying in Denmark or travelling elsewhere in the future.

Oksana

> [...] it is mandatory for Ukrainians to learn Danish, [...] and we have to work and they push Ukrainian people to work. They give opportunities to us for work, but almost all of this work is within cleaning or hotels, or something like a warehouse, it doesn't matter what experience you have beforehand. (Oksana, In-person interview, April 23, 2023)

In many ways Oksana shares the same story as Yuliya, regarding labour, social network, and volunteering. During Oksana's stay in Denmark, she has had two jobs, respectively in a warehouse and

most recently in a small factory. Both jobs are unrelated to her master of marketing and professional experience in an IT company:

> It is a rule for Ukrainians that if the municipality gives you a chance with some work you can not deny it. [...] Of course I was expecting that they will find some job that is more for me about my experience, but I can understand that some companies come to the municipality, and they say, "ok, we need people for this kind of job", and the municipality just tells people who are unemployed that we should go there. That's how it works. (Oksana, In-person interview, April 23, 2023)

Similarly to all the previous respondents, Oksana indicates the municipality's lack of effort in finding labour that matches their experience and elaborates on how she perceives the current work situation: *"It's a job with my hand not with my brain [...]. If everything was open I would work in an IT company [...], in that case I can have some future."* (Oksana, In-person interview, April 23, 2023). However, at the moment she is happy working at the factory, and to have had the warehouse job, because it has contributed in creating her social network consisting of Ukrainians but also Mexicans, Brits, and Americans. It was also together with her friends that she found relief when she dealt with PTSD at the beginning of her stay, an area that her consultant did not touch upon. Rather, Oksana says about the municipality: *"I think they are focused on our job, our study of Danish [...]"* (Oksana, In-person interview, April 23, 2023), which is why she used her friends for help in this area. Her social involvement is also reflected in voluntary work in honour of Ukraine, which she used to take part in a lot:

> Almost every month I send money and in the first months of the war, even when I was in Denmark, me and my friends tried to find apartments for people who live in different regions in Ukraine. [...] now I can help only with money. [...] I helped in Red Cross at first but now I am working. But we have one place here in Kastrup [...] it is like a free shop for Ukrainian refugees where you can come and take what you need. [...] I came every day and helped these Danish people. [...] I was like a person who talked to Ukrainians or a translator […] (Oksana, In-person interview, April 23, 2023)

We asked Oksana if she experienced it as a general thing for Ukrainians residing outside their country to support financially or by volunteering, to which she replied: *"[...] we feel guilty that we survived when someone else is in a super difficult situation. [...] we are ok, [...] but in that same period some people are dying, [...] that's why I think we had this guilty survival which then inspired you to do something.* (Oksana, In-person interview, April 23, 2023). Seemingly, actions taken in support of

Ukraine are in her opinion connected to a guilty feeling of survival. In this connection we explored if this situation had an impact on Oksana's awareness of identity, seen in the light of the Russian invasion. She confirms and explains that many Ukrainians are rethinking themselves at the moment: *"[...] now of course this situation is horrible, but it doesn't matter how it will finish [the war], all Ukrainian people are now rethinking themselves. We feel more like one nature. We were independent before but now we feel even more independent. We feel stronger. I think it's big, and after that [the war] it will be very big, increasing for the Ukrainian nation."* (Oksana, In-person interview, April 23, 2023). Moreover, Oksana tells us how she stopped listening to Russian music and that many young Ukrainians, herself included, switched from speaking Russian to Ukrainian as a result of the war, to remind themselves of their heritage (Oksana, in-person interview, April 23, 2023). We understood that it was this guilty feeling of survival and her reinforced connection to her homeland that sparked taking part in supportive activities for Ukraine. Though, as questioned in previous interviews, was this also related to her transnational connections? Oksana is in contact with friends from time to time but talks nearly every day with her father, who did not want to leave Ukraine because he is old, and that change is too difficult for him. Apparently, it is not because of her connections in Ukraine that she supports her country, but: *"[...] because of the whole situation and I feel myself like a part of this country and this nature. In my case I'm just not there, but I'm still part of all of this and I couldn't just leave and forget it."*. (Oksana, in-person interview, April 23, 2023). This also speaks into the difficulties for Oksana to decide on the future. If the situation changes she would like to go back, but as she likes Denmark she could also see herself staying in Denmark with her husband, as long as she finds a job related to her experience with IT and if they can change their housing situation (Oksana, in-person interview, April 23, 2023). In conclusion, the most significant factor that makes Oksana precarious is the discrepancy between her job and her professional experience. As mentioned just before, this contributes to uncertainty for the future. Nonetheless, her privilege of being in a safe country in comparison to many Ukrainians gave a feeling of guilt which made her participate in activities in support of Ukraine. Though she feels strongly attached to her homeland, it is difficult for her to make plans for the future as the war continues and because of the uncertainty about life in Denmark.

Nataliya

> In Ukraine, we don't have a culture of mental health things. It's not something we know how to do. And it's not something we talk about. [...] I think many parents don't understand that something is happening with their kids. I know kids, for example, who are afraid to be alone at home now. [...] They don't want to be alone without their parents (Nataliya in-person interview, April 29, 2023)

The story of Nataliya is different from our other respondents in many ways. Her primary reason for leaving Ukraine was her considerations regarding her son. Naturally the majority of our conversation revolved around the topic of children and education. Nataliya arrived in Denmark medio-march 2023 and stayed with an old time friend for the first few weeks:

> My good friend lives here. She lives in Kastrup. I came here, I think, three or four times before the war. [...] And I was like, I better go to a place where I know someone. But at the same time, it was like, I thought it would be a few weeks, you know? So it was a bit different. But now I think it was a very good idea to go to a place where you know someone. And who can support you" (Nataliya in-person interview, April 29, 2023).

Unlike most other Ukrainians, Nataliya had always been used to "living on the fly", as her father was enrolled in the Soviet Army during her childhood and the family lived in several former Soviet countries because of this. Likewise, Nataliya worked for an international business school, before the war and had been used to travelling for work: "*For me, it was not, like, something extraordinary to change a place. I think it helped me a lot. I worked for different companies. Mainly international companies. So I like to work in the international community. I feel rather good being with people from other countries.*" (Nataliya in-person interview, April 29, 2023). It was also Nataliya's friends that helped her get in contact with the municipality and apply for temporary residence. Generally, we got the impression that Nataliya had a strong network and were able to get help in a variety of ways through her social network, thus making it a lot easier for her and her son to adapt to their new situation. Contrary to our other respondents, Nataliya also got a job offer immediately after moving to Denmark, as the municipality in which she lives called her and asked if she would be willing to work as a translator, aiding newly arrived Ukrainians: "*I started working in the municipality very fast, actually, at the end of May. So now we have 250 Ukrainians. People are still now arriving*" (Nataliya in-person interview, April 29, 2023). Because of this employment, Nataliya had a different view,

than our other respondents, on the processes happening with new arrivals: "*To be honest, for me it is difficult to answer this question because I work with these guys now and in my opinion three of them in this municipality are very professional and I see that they do as much as they can.* [...] *What I noticed is that they have responsibilities, they cannot help you with everything. I think they have a few tasks, but people have very different problems*" (Nataliya in-person interview, April 29, 2023). Through the interview, we got the impression that the circumstances constituting precarity for our other respondents, was not as present in Nataliya's situation. She had a strong network consisting of her long-term Ukrainian friend, her colleagues in the municipality as well as neighbours and other encounters. She had been offered a job relatively quickly after she arrived in Denmark and had not experienced the trouble of understanding the system of job centres and internships. For her, the most pressing affair was the wellbeing of her son. Because of her situation, Nataliya seemed to be more capable of planning ahead. We argue that Nataliya, in many ways, stands in contrast to our other respondents; she is happily employed and has moved away from municipal housing. What she has in common is a strong feeling of national belonging:

> I feel very Ukrainian [...] I tell my son every day that if you are Ukrainian you have to be strong [...] I think that even if you are not in Ukraine, if you are Ukrainian you should be active and do what you can do, being in your place. I'm not on the battlefield, but I could be, and some people are, but I also want to contribute to this by something. For example, there are some women here whose sons are in the army and of course I help them as much as I can, even if it's not [within] my work hours [...]. I think if everyone does it, this is the way to victory in a way. (Nataliya in-person interview April 29 2023)

Thus, being well integrated into Danish society, Nataliya has been reminded of her Ukrainian identity and feels an obligation to actively support the Ukrainian cause. In conclusion, Nataliya is not subject to the elements constituting precarity for our other respondents. Because she is employed and not a client in the integration system, it appears she has moved beyond the point of being precarious. The remnants of precarity for Nataliya is her sense of belonging to Ukraine and being obligated to participate in the efforts for Ukraine in whatever way she can.

Discussion

To make sense of our analytical findings, in this chapter we will discuss the findings according to our theoretical framework and contextualise them to reality. We will discuss how the individual conditions for our respondents' precarious experiences are conditioned by the actions taken by the municipality. In relation to this, we will discuss how there is seemingly a dissonance between the current legislature connected with refugees and integration in Denmark and the experiences we have outlined in our analysis. Because many of our respondents express their challenges regarding employment, we will also discuss how the job centres engage refugees in this realm. This will be done with a point of departure in our respondents' experiences but will also rely on previously produced knowledge regarding unemployed individuals in Denmark and their way into the labour market. The last part of the discussion revolves around transnationalism and its interlink with precarity

Mental health

As was made clear in our analysis, mental health issues are one of the main reasons for our respondents experiencing precarity. In our respondents' cases, mental issues, and lacking aid in solving these issues contribute to their unstable mental wellbeing. The most striking examples of mental health contributing to precarity are Lyudmila and Anastasiya. For both women, the lack of swift and easily accessed aid in dealing with trauma and depression has resulted in a number of negative effects on their personal wellbeing and their possibilities to plan and pursue meaningful engagement in their current situation. In the Danish legislation, it is mentioned that all foreigners are entitled to undergo a health assessment conversation with a medical professional, in order to screen the individual's physical and mental condition, within the first six months of residence (Integrationsloven, 2020, §15). Contrary to this, our respondents have given the impression that these conversations do not happen in all cases, and as is evident with the cases of Lyudmila and Anastasiya, it is not happening within the stipulated time frame (Special Act)[1]. Within this lies several factors that are potentially overlooked by the municipality in question.

First, there is the question of how untreated mental issues affect other aspects of life amongst our respondents. For Lyudmila, it is clear that her mental wellbeing has taken a toll on virtually every other aspect of her life. When she relayed one of the first meetings, she had with her consultant she said: *"At first, she asked me why I missed my Danish lesson so much.* [...] *When I have a very,*

[1] Because of the "emergency brake" put in the special act - Municipalities can set aside the rules regarding the time frame for three additional months, whether or not this has impacted our respondents is unclear (Lov om midlertidig opholdstilladelse til personer, der er fordrevet fra Ukraine, 2022, §35, 4)

very bad mood, I just called and said, sorry, I'm sick. I can't do it, I can't go out when I feel bad" (Lyudmila in-person interview, March 10, 2023). The consultant was more focused on getting Lyudmila to participate in language classes, than helping her find a solution to the depressive state she was in: *"So at first she said to me like, you need to go, you need to go, and then she asked me how I feel, what I feel, what I did to solve my psychology problem"* (Lyudmila in-person interview, March 10, 2023). To Lyudmila, it seemed the consultant and municipality was more interested in making sure that she did comply with the given requirements and less in helping her get to a stage where she would be able to participate in the activities in a beneficial way. After all, what is the point of physically being present at language classes, if you are mentally absent? Similarly, Anastasiya's accounts on the subject highlight how the municipality and consultants are seemingly more focused on "the wider picture" and less interested in the effects being mentally unwell has on the individual. The stories Kateryna and Anastasiya spoke of during our interviews with them, give a strong impression of a lacking understanding of what state Anastasiya has been in on several occasions when consultants and counsellors have tried to discuss employment related topics with her.

Second is the question of whether cultural norms are taken into consideration when discussing mental health. As we have highlighted in relation to many of our respondents, there is a cultural discrepancy regarding mental health and psychological treatment between Ukraine and Denmark. Our respondents have a cultural background in which, as Nataliya puts it, "*In Ukraine, we don't have a culture of mental health things.* [...] *It's not something we talk about"* (in-person interview, April 29, 2023). Bearing this in mind, we argue that it is safe to assume that for our respondents to even bring up these topics would be a challenge. The combination of this, and the fact that they are met by a system that seemingly is more focused on the other aspects connected to the respondents' refugee status, such as language and employment, we argue that the state's responsibility towards Ukrainian refugees is not fulfilled. We argue that there must be a lack of either proper health assessment conversations or the required actions subsequent to such a conversation. As it is stated in the legislation "*the health assessment must include 1) a conversation with, and a health examination of, the foreigner, aimed towards getting a medical professional assessment of the foreigners physical and mental condition and 2) a medical professional assessment of, if there is a need for further health related investigation or treatment*"[2] (Integrationsloven 2020, §15, 1). We argue that, with the accounts we have been given, it is safe to assume that our respondents have not been offered health assessment conversations throughout their stay in Denmark. Our arguments for this is that five of our six respondents elaborate on having thoughts regarding their mental health situation. Kateryna, Oksana

[2] Our translation

and Nataliya all give accounts of contemplating whether or not they might have been experiencing PTSD or depression. Lyudmila and Anastasiya have both elaborated in great detail about their efforts to get professional help and how they have waited almost a year to start treatment. If our respondents had had a health assessment, as stated in the legislation, we argue that a medical professional would have detected the signs of mental disorder that the women would have shown. What further consolidates this argument is the fact that both Lyudmila and Anastasiya have subsequently been diagnosed and have started treatment via their primary physician. We were informed in our two last interviews, Oksana and Nataliya, that Statistics Denmark (DST) is currently gathering data regarding this subject. The municipalities are aware of the effects bad mental health has on refugees, but seemingly are not able to fulfil their responsibilities in this area.

Lastly, it is striking how disconnected healthcare and employment appears to be within the current system. It is a well known fact that mental health and successful employability goes hand in hand (Evans & Repper 2001; OECD, 2013; Drake & Wallach 2020), yet it appears to be completely disconnected within the approach adopted by Danish legislators and municipalities. From the accounts given, it is suggested that our respondents see the municipality and the job centre as two separate entities, each with separate responsibilities and areas of concern that are seemingly impossible to combine. For our respondents this separation makes it further difficult to navigate where to direct questions and find help, despite the pivotal interplay between mental health and employment.

Employment

Employment is proven to work preventive to mental health issues (Drake & Wallach 2020). We analysed that the majority of our respondents have challenges with establishing a meaningful connection to the labour market in one way or the other. Finding employment instead of internships as well as working in an area that matches their previous experience, have shown to be a struggle. A telling example of this was found in Kateryna's situation working as an intern in a supermarket despite her master in arts and her challenges with physically demanding labour. Similarly, in Oksana's situation, the analysis shows that she is not able to utilise her master in marketing, instead she has reached simple factory employment. In both examples we understand there is a mismatch between their higher education and their current internship or job. It is stated in Danish legislation (Integrationsloven) that foreigners, including refugees, must be connected to a self-sufficiency and repatriation program or the introduction program[3] which has to be organised in order for the individual to obtain regular employment and full or partial self-support as soon as possible (Integrationsloven, 2020, §16, 6). For

[3] Our translation

Kateryna, quite the opposite seems to be the case at her internship when she says: *"I have to say it's a bad [situation]. It's just an internship. For a future job, another place. [the internship] [...] will help you to find a job in another place."* (Kateryna, in-person interview, March 14, 2023). Thus, the internship will not help her to obtain regular employment as soon as possible. Furthermore, the law states that the program has to be customised to each individual and that the offers provided (internships or jobs in this regard) cannot stand in the way of the person's ability to take care of a job (Integrationsloven, 2020, §16, 6). Contextualising this, Anastasiya and Kateryna are in situations that do not seem to be customised to them. Kateryna has an internship too physical for what she is able to do and Anastasiya has an internship with a work environment that provokes her depression and anxiety. Seemingly, the job centre is not taking into account that these individuals after all still are refugees of war and have difficulties due to mental deficits and health issues (Nielsen Arendt 2022).
Additionally, in Yuliya's situation, she *is* able to take care of the internship that she is offered, as the law requires, but to her it's an unsustainable situation making her want to give up: *"When it started, I think it's good [the job centre]. But now I can't find my a job for three months. And sometimes I want to give up. Because it's really difficult."* (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023). For the majority of our respondents it's a recurring stance that the job centre is more focused on creating internships rather than finding meaningful and relevant employment with the individual in focus. It is well known that there are developed a number of indicators on how to create labour market readiness (our translation), which is grounded in the Employment Indicator Project (BIP) (Rosholm, et al., 2017). The BIP is based on solid research and documentation and provides 11 indicators working as a framework to measure progression in vulnerable citizens' unemployment process (Rosholm et al. 2017, 8). The following indicators have our attention, "the belief in being able to perform a job", "purposefulness", "an ability to make contact", "support from network", "mastering daily life", and "coping with physical and mental health"[4]. From our interviews with the women it is not the impression that the job centre is focused on these indicators in the meetings. One of the most essential indicators for citizens is "the belief in being able to perform a job". All the women show a willingness to work and talk about how they would like to continue work within their specialisation. Similarly with "purposefulness" we analysed that several of the women, for instance Yuliya and Anastasiya, search for jobs on their own to obtain fitting jobs relevant to their career, because they feel they are met with a lack of purposeful engagement from the job centre. This effort from the women also shows "an ability to make contact". Our understanding is that the women fulfil various of the BIP-indicators, however, BIP is directed to both the social workers and the citizens, and thus, labour market

[4] Our translation

readiness should happen in a cooperation. Referring to the framework, the social worker is to ask the given individual if they think their professional skills can be utilised at a workplace (Rosholm 2017, 9), which could relate to the indicator "purposefulness". As aforementioned, the women would like to target their job hunting and ultimately be able to utilise their skills, but as Yuliya says: *"I think it's really good if you don't communicate with job centres, because they give you always social benefits [...]*. (Yuliya, in-person interview, April 6, 2023), which indicates that the job centre only places you in unpaid internships. Through the interviews we are informed that the job centres in many instances do not apply the information about the women's previous professional experience helping them find suitable labour, and we therefore argue that they are either not applying these BIP-indicators and -questions in their meetings or are not taking the women's answers into further consideration. Further, indicators such as "support from network" "mastering daily life" and "coping with physical and mental health"[5] all show to be areas that are challenging for especially Lyudmila, Anastasiya, and Kateryna due to depression and an absence of a Danish social network. It seems that the job centres do not have the available resources to organise a specific, individualised action plan in order to obtain regular employment, despite having a thoroughly developed project available providing specific indicators on how to accommodate people without employment in a meaningful manner. Oksana also addresses the issue of limited resources: *"*[...] *I changed consultants a few times and they are always busy"* (Oksana, in-person interview, April 23, 2023). Though we are not able to define what the reasons are for the job centres' actions, or lack of, we can ascertain that precarity also arises for most of the women in their interaction with the job centres. We argue that this is a defining condition for our respondents as they are unable to receive the necessary aid to achieve meaningful and dignified employment within the current system. Whether it is limited resources in the municipalities, lacking political action or a third different reason is not for us to say, but it is nonetheless an issue that needs to be addressed.

To sum up, we have discussed how mental health issues and challenges regarding meaningful labour can be conditions for precarious experiences for our respondents. The key point is that the two domains are connected and impossible to divide. Ultimately a welfare state is meant to promote economic and personal well-being for all individuals, but from the accounts given in this thesis, this is not the case of our respondents. Because they fall outside the ordinary understanding of the group they are identified as members of, Ukrainian refugees, they do not receive the individual aid they should be granted in order to eliminate being mentally unwell and economically reliant on the state.

[5] Our translation

Transnationalism and its interlink with precarity

When discussing precarity, it is important to note that transnational ties also play a pivotal role in relation to the uncertainty experienced by our respondents. As evident in our analysis transnational ties affect the emotional stability of our respondents as well as their ability to plan and imagine a future. For Lyudmila, the contact she has with her mother manifests in a mainly negative way. Lyudmila recalled conversations with her mother in which the mother was not able to understand how depression affected Lyudmila and also vocalised the idea of Lyudmila returning to Ukraine to "get on with her life". We got a strong impression that this contact actively affected Lyudmila's perception of her situation negatively. The fact that the mother did not understand how Lyudmila could be depressed and be in a difficult situation in Denmark, contributed to Ludmila's feeling of being guilty that she, despite being in a safe environment, did not progress or pursued the *"[...] possibility to change"* (Lyudmila in-person interview, March 10, 2023). Kateryna on the other hand explains how she feels at home when she talks with her grandmother. The conversations they have are of course connected with longing, but unlike Lyudmila, Kateryna and her grandmother seem to have more positive conversations. They talk about their daily lives and everyday experiences, not the war and the difficulties connected with living far apart. Contrary to this, Kateryna's contact with her father is connected with feelings of guilt, displayed in the analysis. When Kateryna shared simple things that she experienced through her daily life in Denmark, such as complaints about cold weather, he asked her to keep it to herself because it was nothing compared to what people in Ukraine experienced through the war. It is easy to understand why Kateryna's father has this reaction, given the situation. Nonetheless it contributes to her feelings of guilt and in turn her uncertainty and indecisiveness. A different example is found in the account of Oksana. She explained to us that her emotions of guilt were not directly related to contact with her relatives, but she was instead feeling guilty merely because she was in safety: *"[...] while someone else is in a super difficult situation"* (Oksana in-person interview, April 23, 2023). We argue that these examples highlight the intricate functions transnational ties can have in relation to precarity. Depending on the contact and relations a person engages in after fleeing, it can constitute positive and negative emotions and experiences concurrently, therefore even the fact of being transnational can be considered an element of experiencing precarity. These stories are also clear examples of "survivor's guilt" (Cherry, 2020). For our respondents it appears that volunteer work and participation in activities such as protests and charities for Ukraine, is a way to cope with these emotions of guilt.

We argue that these examples can also be connected to the aspect of time. The proximity of the war enhances awareness of the women's national identity. We analysed that Kateryna, Oksana, Yuliya, and Nataliya all have become more aware of their Ukrainian heritage and the importance of holding on to where they come from. An amplified feeling of identity combined with a feeling of guilt seemed to be foundational for their supportive actions. Whether or not the guilt will be a continuing emotion for our respondents is hard to tell, but it stands out that over time it has become easier to plan ahead, step by step, yet the future is still connected with great uncertainty, as Oksana recalls *" [...] when the war was starting [...] we tried to go to sleep with a plan to wake up, after that we can have a plan for one day, maybe for one week, then maybe for one month. Now I don't know what will be in 5 years, I don't know even what will be at the end of this year, where I will spend next Christmas: "* (Oksana in-person interview, April 23, 2023). Our analysis shows that several of the women are very divided in relation to where they belong. On one side they feel more Ukrainian than ever before and take actions that uphold their Ukrainian connectedness. On the other side, they could also imagine themselves with a future in Denmark, but for this to be actualised there must be a change in terms of jobs and mental health. Because the women have only resided in Denmark around one year and due to the factors that condition them as being precarious, we argue that our respondents are currently *belonging* to Ukraine while *being* in Denmark, due to their ties to Ukraine. As Yuliya and Oksana address this could shift over time, as they become increasingly connected to Denmark by finding employment, establishing a social network and dealing with all the elements conditioning precarity. We argue that the story of Nataliya is an example of how this could happen. Even though she has also been in Denmark for less than a year, the contrast between her and our other respondents serve as an argument as to how important all these actions are to have in mind when dealing with precarity.

In this chapter we have applied our analytical findings to discuss the elements constituting precarity for our respondents. In relation to Butler's concept of precarity, some clarity is needed to fully understand our arguments as to how precarity arises for individuals belonging to a "privileged" group of refugees in a welfare state such as Denmark. The essence of our discussion is that those of our respondents experiencing precarity do so because they fall outside the norm of the group they are considered as belonging to. From the onset of the conflict in Ukraine, there has been a public narrative (Fahrendorf & Pedersen 2022) of how Ukrainian refugees distinguish themselves from other, non-western, refugees. These other groups of refugees have spurred fierce public debate in Denmark over the last two decades. This narrative, and the view of Ukrainians as more capable and "stronger" than "ordinary" refugees, have certainly contributed to many Ukrainians succeeding with employment

(Bøgevald Hansen 2023), but at the same time it has diminished the debate regarding those individuals unable to succeed. We argue that the combination of contemporary narratives regarding Ukrainian refugees and the lacking coherence between political ambition and actual actions taken within the municipalities and job centres, have made our respondents subject to challenges that have not been properly addressed by the system. Uncertainty due to lacking mental healthcare, possibilities for employment, and the guilt and obligations created through our respondents' transnational ties all contribute to their view of the present and the future. We argue that our respondents as individuals have not been subject to marginalisation and stigmatisation, their individual challenges have. As our analytical findings have shown, the elements constituting precarity for our respondents are centred within the Danish integration process. Why there is a lack of swift aid for mental challenges is uncertain, but presumably it is a combination of a lack of funding, a lack of professionals able to undertake the task and the sheer number of Ukrainians that have arrived in the past year. It has affected our respondents in such a way that they have to rely on the job centres in order to find employment and in this category, there are a multitude of issues. Our respondents experience a dissonance between the requirements set up and their abilities. They are coerced to undergo meaningless internships and their own aspirations are rarely taken into account, despite the vast amount of well-founded research on the area. The things we argue in regards to employment have recently been presented by the “reform commission” (Reformkommissionen 2023) further solidifying the argument that there are many innate problems with the current system concerning unemployment.

Conclusion

In this thesis we have investigated precarity amongst Ukrainian refugees in Denmark, by asking the question, *How do Ukrainian refugees experience precarity and how is precarity and transnationalism interlinked?* Through eight qualitative interviews with six Ukrainian refugees, we have shown how unaddressed mental health challenges and a poor connection to the Danish labour market can condition individuals to precarity. We have highlighted how innate flaws in the Danish approach to refugees and integration processes contribute to experiences of precarity: Due to a lack of aid regarding mental health, our respondents have, in many instances, lived with unaddressed mental health conditions for a prolonged period of time. We have shown how there is a link between mental health and unemployment and how both aspects influence each other. The system in place, meant to provide refugees with the required abilities to engage in the labour market, is not working. There is a great dissonance between the abilities and aspirations of our respondents and the opportunities job centres provide them. Our research shows that regardless of their previous experience, wishes regarding branches of work, and physical and mental capabilities, the job centres have not taken the individual into account in relation to our respondents. This is contrary to the current legislation, stating that all programmes must be individually structured.

We have also provided substantial arguments as to how transnational ties relate to experiences of precarity. Transnational ties are in this context defined as two things: The connection to family and relatives, as well as the sense of belonging to Ukraine. Relational ties play a pivotal role by contributing to our respondents' emotional stability, both positively and negatively, by maintaining their Ukrainian identity. Similarly, the sense of belonging to Ukraine has a great effect on our respondents' ability to imagine their future. It is safe to assume that *had* there been swift and professional aid for the individual mental challenges earlier, as well as a greater focus on quick and meaningful engagement in the Danish labour market for our respondents, their division between *being* in Denmark and *belonging* to Ukraine would have been of less concern. Had all our respondents been as "lucky" as Nataliya in relation to employment, their connection to Denmark would be greater and their inability to picture a foreseeable future would be diminished. Our respondents' transnational relations have contributed to their feelings of merely *being* in Denmark because the responsibilities of Danish authorities have been neglected.

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