# Experiences of Migrant Labourers in Denmark: Narrative Biographic Interviews from Aalborg

# Abstract

The following thesis explores the mental health, work experiences and life situations of Eastern European migrant labourers in Aalborg, Denmark. Focus will be on the intricate processes and how these influence this group. The research field is of significant importance, as there is much literature to be found on several other relating issues to migration and labour market policies. However, there is possibilities for more in-depth research of the experiences shared by many migrant labourers, which today is understudied, compared to other issues, such as physical health. Migrant labour is essential to the Danish economy, particularly in the construction sector and agriculture. Therefore, the author finds it important to expose the processes taking place within migration, housing, work, and their impacts on mental health.

Considering this, the thesis seeks to unveil the benefits of migration versus non-migration, if any, and whether these have had serious or irreparable consequences for the participants. Through a qualitative approach grounded within interpretivism and qualitative data inquiry and analysis, here, thematic analysis. The data presented in this thesis derives solely from semi-structured biographic narrative interviews, where the participants are the impetus behind the conversations. The participants were aged between 20 – 60 years, currently frequenting a Church Army Shelter, a facility for vulnerable groups. The participants originate from Poland and the Czech Republic.

The study finds that the impact of migration processes as part of globalisation processes, has had severe impacts in the lived experiences of the participants. These were visible in the themes found across participant testaments as transcribed. The impacts however differing, involve uncertainty, irregular employment, weakened familial support, language as barrier, addiction, and general decline in mental health, and deprivation of physical mobility and liberty.

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## Introduction

There are narratives to be found in all the corners of the world, on international levels, on national levels and on individual levels. Narratives provide possibilities for unique insights into all groups which one could think of. In particularly relevant to this thesis, is the group of migrant labourers. Other approaches to this subject, will not provide the ability of gaining access to the biographies and understandings of life, as seen from an individual from within that group. When a narrative is being told in any situation (and within the interview situation) there are several processes going on simultaneously. What subjects are being covered? What is the purpose of certain disclosures? What is there to explore?

As part of Scandinavia, Denmark is one of the wealthiest countries (McKeever, 2021) and one of the least populated. Few people sharing an abundance of wealth. This wealth has through migrant labour climbed its way to one of the safest, wealthiest, and equal nations in the world. Danes assert themselves as being peaceful, accepting, open, social-democratic, and by extension, quite egalitarian, alongside our Nordic neighbours. In Denmark, everything might seem within reach – from the furthest edges of the country to a well-paid and well-balanced work life. With such a beautiful sales-pitch to other nations, it seems only natural for someone to seek new job opportunities or to develop new skills in Denmark, may it be for a brief period or to settle permanently, for work, family or other.

My own introduction into the Danish labour market, was in the mid-to-late 2000's. I was starting my journey to becoming a house painter in the construction industry. My first internship was at a small local painter, a father and daughter. Surviving the first two weeks of internship-work, a sort of 'hazing' period. A period of many hours of exhaustive and repetitive work. I sanded down the deck of a small fishing boat from 6 o'clock in the morning to late in the afternoon, and some days until 6 o'clock at night. I complained to my grandmother, who I knew had been a part of the labour market since she was 9 years old. She encouraged me to 'stick it out' and 'suck it up', and that this was the way to deal with young interns to see if they 'measured up' and would be able to take on larger tasks and work independently without complaint. Months went by, and not one complaint was uttered.

The first interaction with a real jobsite. There was a minivan, one of those for a larger family, stationed right outside the house. I could hear machinery whirring and two men talking indistinctly. On the other side of the house, a trailer had been placed by the electricians working on the house. They came later in the day, and when lunch time came around, they let me in on the whereabouts of the key to the trailer, so that I could let myself in, if I needed to warm up. The trailer was fitted with an electrical heating unit.

The two carpenters I had been hearing all day working since early morning, were migrant workers from Poland. They were not invited into the trailer for lunch and did not have access to the key. They ate in their car, where, after further inspection, I saw the back seats had been taken out, and two thin mattresses had been placed. They lived in this car. They slept in it, and they ate in it. They lived in the car on the site from start to finish. We never interacted.

This thesis is about the processes and lives of migrant workers. Migrant workers are seen and heard about all the time, on the news on the TV, in newspaper debate articles, on the streets, living diasporic lives and experiencing irregularity in almost all aspect of life, and unknowing to themselves, contributed to the rise of wages for the average Danish worker [i]. Furthermore, this thesis will take the reader for a journey through interactions involving mental health, transnational and hybrid identities, and the underbelly of a dual labour market.

## Problem formulation

The project attempts to uncover the experienced mental health challenges and life stories of Eastern European migrant workers frequenting a drop-in centre/shelter for the particularly vulnerable population in Aalborg. Challenges related to migrant workers; social dumping, poor working conditions etc., have been thoroughly exposed in the last decade, furthermore, becoming a respected discipline in research. This public exposure of industries has created possibility of getting closer to issues, previously hidden, as more and more focus is directed towards the repercussions of labour market policies on migrant labourers. One of these issues being mental health and well-being amongst migrant labourers. The study aims to understand how the migrant labourer constructs their experience in a complex landscape of migrant labour policies and public debate.  Based on the following findings, the study seeks to answer the question **how do**

**socially vulnerable migrant labourers in Aalborg experience their situation, mental health, and irregular employment?**

## Ethical and other challenges of studying the lives and mental health in migrant workers

Researching individuals in more exposed situations, such as migrants (no matter the type) besides attaining physical access to places and spaces within where this population lives, ethical considerations are those which have been most present throughout the interviews and subsequently the transcription process. Even now, there are discussions on how to define vulnerable, and if this is applicable to all such respondents which a researcher encounters (I. Van Liempt & Bilger, 2012, p. 452). However, considering that the destination chosen for field work and interviews is made available through an organisation, which allows homeless and other vulnerable groups to have a cheap warm meal, free use of the in-house computer with internet connection, restrooms, showers and laundry service, these groups have limited resources, both financially and socially. In a digital society, these issues can define an individual as vulnerable. This limited amount of individual control and agency is what makes this population particularly 'vulnerable'.

Conducting field research in circumstances vastly different from the norms of the majority of the population, is frequently filled with tragic life histories, violence, and general ruthlessness. Under such circumstances, it further complicates the process of establishing a trusting relationship with those present in the local environment and individuals. This established trust is an invisible man-made factor, which aids in the ensuring of all participants safety, psychologically and physically. The above described factors need to be recognised for the impact these *will* have on the research and on personal lives (Birman, 2011; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; I. Van Liempt & Bilger, 2012).

## Significance

As will be outlined below in the chapter concerning the literature inspiring the subject matter, there will be found to be several significant scholarly voices in the arena of proclaiming the merits of the chosen research methodology and epistemological and ontological stances taken in the preparatory stages of the project. The thesis is found to be situated in the middle of the ongoing debates on these questions. On an international scale, research has been done on the subject of *mental health and well-being of migrants* (Bretones et al., 2020; Doki et al., 2018; Hoppe, 2011;

Idayu et al., 2021; Organista et al., 2019). In their totality, these research efforts have exposed the opportunities within the landscape, i.e., mental health and life stories on a smaller scale. Investigations need to be concise and be of low impact to participants, as these are positioned as a particularly vulnerable group. This study will offer a reliable vantage point in which insight can be gained into patterns, mental health challenges and policy influence. The study attempts to nestle down in between mental health, migration, culture, globalisation, and labour market policy research. This positioning fits well with other peer-reviewed articles, which also employ a mix of methodological approaches to the subject, including the narrative biographical method.

### The power of observation

The study, as the reader will come to find out, is with intention conducted under challenging circumstances. The people and the subject matter at hand are vulnerable topics. Many of the authors referenced in this study have experience within observational studies, themselves referencing such observatory studies – also in critical regard (Jørgensen, 2023; Overgaard et al., 2023; Simkunas & Thomsen, 2018). Using cross-disciplinary approaches and the method of observation is advantageous.

# Literature review

## Themes in literature

The following literature review attempts to clearly describe how the literature has been found and utilised for this thesis. Furthermore, it gives an overview of how the study has been situated within the literature, what the various authors are focusing on and the possible differences these might have in their stances and assessments of which factors are of importance in researching this population, societal impact etc.

## Divided and un-informed

Despite having a potential desirable educational profile in one nation, the transferability of these skills in many cases are however not always straightforward, as different nations' general levels of educational quality differs – also within the EU. This, combined with economic reasons can lead to a migrant worker remaining locked in their skill-level and financial situation compared to their native colleagues with a similar educational profile (Gamito, 2022). The

author argues that the migrant worker is usually uninformed about the validity of e.g., professional, and educational credentials in the receiving nation (Gamito, 2022, p. 64). Furthermore, the correlation between educational level and income differs from the investigated 4 nations, these being Italy, Germany, Denmark, and Cyprus, with Italy showing the highest correlation and Cyprus the lowest (Gamito, 2022, p. 68). Because of this, the author argues that EU-funded vocational programmes etc., will have far more impact in reducing the educational gap in Italy and Germany, whereas the situation is vastly different in Denmark and Cyprus (Gamito, 2022, p. 79). The author concludes that the correlation in general is higher for EU-workers than for non-EU. However, a shift occurs when reaching very highly desired and high-paying professions, where the opposite effect is observed.

In a study on labour force participation, conducted by Felbo-Kolding et al., (2019), there is evidently differences in the participation amongst migrant vs. national labour in varying EU countries after the implementation of the Central and Eastern European countries (CEE) in 2004 and 2007. Along with the enlargement, more European citizens were now able to freely apply their labour in other EU membership states (Felbo-Kolding et al., 2019, p. 1). Returning, however, to the above statement, the right to work, does not necessarily produce the desired outcome of minimising racialisation and discrimination in accessing the labour market in receiving nations. This is evident through the skills to occupation match-ratio (Felbo-Kolding et al., 2019, p. 2). This has led to migrant workers being overrepresented in industries where low-skilled labour is dominant along with low wages. This discrimination between native and non-native labourers is not restricted to this divide, where CEE migrants in general take home lower wages than their EU15 opposites.

Therefore, a valid question is hidden within this; is the ever-closer EU's project to economic growth based on the free and equal labour opportunity, or is the project centred around the competitiveness of businesses? Due to this influx of migration to the North-Western EU member states most research is also focused on these currents. The research is often centred around working conditions and subsequently work-related injuries, and not much on the experienced mental health and challenges possibly connected to this. Furthermore, the notion of this 'new wave' type of racialisation has not yet been "tested in a North-Western welfare setting" (Felbo-Kolding et al., 2019, p. 2).

A thorough comparative investigation as argued by Felbo-Kolding et al. needs to be made across the spectrum of EU-migrants from East to West and South to North, to determine if a discriminatory and racialised, and to some extent, an ethno-hierarchy exists on a fuller scale.

Gamito (2022) has investigated drivers behind differences in labour market outcomes among national and foreign workers within return-to-education gaps. The study follows suit in recent research, which has gained traction in several EU nations (Gamito, 2022, p. 64). Gamito identifies the failures of labour markets in the states compared within the study, Denmark, Cyprus, Italy and Germany. The economic disparity between the two groups hinders the "[…] ability to maximize the potential gains of economic integration" (Gamito, 2022, p. 64). These failures, Gamito argues, work counterintuitively, as they do not promote labour migration, which is otherwise considered a cornerstone in the set of EU values as a way of cultivating economic resilience in member states. There seems to be discrepancies, therefore, between the intentions and realities of the internal EU labour market, and returns to education for foreign and national workers, even when controlling for job descriptions and educational qualifications. This is seemingly also the case in e.g., Canada and the USA (Gamito, 2022, p. 64). As previously mentioned by Falbo-Kolding et al., (2019), the root of lack of transferability can be considered as one of the key drivers behind the gap of returns to education. However, this is to a larger extent the tendency detected in the context of EU and non-EU workers. Gamito therefore points to i.e., culture, as a hinderance of knowledge and skill sharing as another possible barrier within the context of intra-EU workers, compared to their respective native counterparts (Gamito, 2022, p. 64). Other literature also explores issues regarding limited knowledge of the hosting nations labour market. However, through work experience, knowledge of language etc., these limitations ought to be diminished over time.

## Xenophobia

Xenophobia, an invisible force, in full capacity of falling through the cracks of an international system of law, in the name of ignorance or genuine dis-interest in trying to 'appraise' the human value on scales, other than which are already made available. This process is prevalent in the worldwide competition of 'how to run a country'. This point of entry, into a field exploring the issue mentioned in the problem statement, asks the questions missing. Arguments can thereby be made for the almost unavoidable yet invisibility of xenophobia. This xenophobia lives well and

prosperously in all human populations on this, our globe. The capability of recognising the very flaw, as almost the only thing, which we all collectively share, is near non-existing. This is not completely unknown, and is a focus found in recent literature (Hansen & McClure, 1998; Kemp, 2004; Simkunas & Thomsen, 2018; Wren, 2001). This variable intensifies the very core of nations, making certain realisations highly unlikely to occur in a nation in its entirety or simultaneously. The amount of propaganda needs to increase intensively, for that to happen. The few levels found in the world today, nearing a point of total impact, are reflected in e.g., Russia and North Korea, North Korea being slightly ahead in such an endeavour.

Atrey (2022) addresses issues connected to this in their article. The preliminary research for this thesis would not have been nearly as reflective without it, and the process of undertaking a project of this magnitude would have been incomplete in its totality. As will be mentioned later in the thesis, the reflections upon the data etc., are simultaneously based on the field observations made in the field, during the retrieval of the data. Traditional grounds for discrimination, ethnic or other are established *xenophobic* expressions. This, however, negates the possibility of all other perspectives on the matter to be validified. On a national level, there might not always appear these clear distinctions, however, on an individual level this can become almost tangible. The effects on this level can be measured physically, mentally, and economically (Hansen & McClure, 1998; Arnholtz & Hansen, 2013; Biering et al., 2017; Simkunas & Thomsen, 2018; Hargreaves et al., 2019;).

These issues were also touched upon by some participants during interviews, however, much reflection on the impacts on them personally was found sparse. These invisible processes can lead to (un)intentional breaks in an authentic and intended life story, as envisioned by the individual experiencing xenophobia in a hosting nation. "[…] the move to make xenophobia fit the mold of racial discrimination belies what is significant about xenophobia (…) (xenophobia) comes entangled with other grounds […]" (Atrey, 2022, p. 1008). Xenophobia is intersectionally reliant, and only in such a context can it be understood. It is not here, a purification of the term is explored, but it is however intended to be argued as more significant than is currently understood within law and cultural understanding.

The United Nations Committee on The Elimination of Racial Discrimination, did not find grounds for condemning lawfully the remarks made by a member of the Progressive Party of Danmark in 2001.

These remarks were general, it was found, as they did not find reference to any *specific* ethnicity, descent etc. In 2007 the Committee further, although considered expanded, drew even un-clearer conclusions on its previous position. This decision impacted a big population, and not just in Denmark, and marked a new era of generalisation of nationalities, ethnicities, and religious belief systems. Again in 2009, a further 'mudding' of terms and definitions was reached. The latest news from this front, stems from 2017, where unfortunate remarks were made and recorded during an assembly in Switzerland, which are found irrelevant to be repeated here  (Atrey, 2022, p. 1010).

Literature touching upon these issues are a testament to the necessity of considering the interdisciplinary nature of these. Xenophobia is thus equal to racial discrimination in its own merit, and should as such be deemed infringing upon the individual and their participation in the non-fringes of society (Atrey, 2022, p. 1015).

## Dimensions of work and health

Going beyond political belongingness, and into one of the most congested areas of a fair and democratically powered workforce, the circumstances regarding employment. Vulnerable members of a society will often experience having severe difficulties in obtaining the 'standard' as set for the native worker (Overgaard et al., 2023). The characteristics of the job types most easily obtainable by this group are often recognised by descriptors such as dangerous, dirty and demanding (3D) (Overgaard et al., 2023, p. 1). This description is a statement to the taxing nature of these occupations, and at least on three distinct levels. There is according to the authors mentioned above limited comprehensive literature on the area of occupational health and safety, and the mental well-being of migrant workers in Denmark. This, despite the knowledge of particularly the construction sector, and the hazards connected to it. In the Danish context, the increase of employment of migrant workers has seen a steady increase since the latest major EU enlargement in 2007. As of 2019, the biggest labour union in Denmark (3F)[ii] estimated that approximately 16% of the total workforce was made up of migrant workers (Overgaard et al., 2023, p. 2).

As described above, work injury frequency and severity is a rather congested area of research in the arena of migration and subsequently migrant labour, indicating, there is a methodological

disagreement between scholars occupying this area in regards to investigatory efforts and the aims. The question is, how do we examine this subject in a fulfilling manner? From the limited method deployed in the study by Biering et al., (2016), it is made clear that it creates a crevice, where further research possibilities lie, hidden in the margins, the *fringes* of this area of interest, which a certain population live their daily lives. The obscurity itself is partly the reason for personal interest in this topic. The authors conclude that, on a general and here-to observable level, work injuries are more frequent in the migrant-based workforce. These do therefore appear to be grossly under-prioritised in certain industries. This observable variable in the grand scheme of industries appears also universal. As Biering et al., (2016) note: "The tasks performed are often hard and unattractive […]" (Biering et al., 2016, p. 235). An attraction must thus be reserved for preferably native workers, or for those of a certain educational background.

The prompting of investigation into this area of research, stems from this 'smokescreen' of all these other variables in the grand puzzle, and acts as the primus motor behind this thesis. Another aspect to the above described, is that of 'integrity'. The push made against labour unions, major players in negotiations and setting the standards of industries in Denmark for the past half a century is under much pressure. If the Danish labour market in this regard had its own Doomsday Clock as of the likes of the one developed by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists[iii], its indicators would perhaps already be a few minutes to midnight. The urgency may not yet have set in, as it has on other matters, as the original Doomsday Clock is a symbolic measurement of. The integrity of an institution is thus merely as strong as the forces surrounding it.

On the topic and understanding of migratory workflow, arguments can be found, stating that socioeconomic reasons between receiving and sending nations on a global scale, do not sufficiently explain the movements, as are currently witnessed today, and in Denmark as well. Arnholtz & Hansen (2012) on Piore (1980), state, factors more dominant and influential are found in receiving nations' economic structure, prevalent in *advanced* economies (Arnholtz & Hansen, 2012, p. 403). These 'advanced' economical systems in themselves are designed with inherent discrimination. As one set of values is included, another is excluded. This nature of a system, and the values provided when entered in-to them, causes certain outcomes and responses on the back of reached conclusions. Here, one of those conclusions, is discrimination in the shape of racialisation and/or xenophobia (Kemp, 2004).

The driving forces behind mental health impacts are plentiful. Here, however, a case investigated in an also 'recently opened' economy, Israel, it provides indirect insights into the processes taking place at a particular time in an economy's history on a multitude of levels, understood only by future cross- and interdisciplinary research. This case is that window, which allows a study like this to be considered. This is illustrated by Kemp (2004) referencing an interviewee: "[…] those that trespass the law are the immoral" (Kemp, 2004, pp. 267–268). Accompanying this reasoning, are considerations made by ongoing critical reflections about the above study's comparability with the subject matter of this thesis. These include regard for the high-tension conflict in the historical relationship between Israel and Palestine, as this aspect naturally has an impact in general on other cultural issues, as compared to other nations. The summarisation of the reflections made by the author are therefore considered validifying to the integrity of this thesis, and aids in situating the work in cross-disciplinary literature.

## Globalisation

In the ever-globalising EU, and in extension, World, growth is the primus motor, and pushes societies and economies from several directions. Three omnipresent forceful factors in play, are, specialisation, free trade and technical progress (Nanfosso & Hadjitchoneva, 2021). As one force takes the lead, the rest are influenced in an equally accelerating manner. Modalities reliant on this growth process are, amongst others, "[…] (i) intensification of trade and increase in the degree of openness of the economies; (ii) massification of capital exchanges, and (iii) increase in international migration" (Nanfosso & Hadjitchoneva, 2021, p. 28). It can therefore be argued that EU members states, will be affected in such a manner, which "[…] opens up worrying transfers of misery and necessity" (Nanfosso & Hadjitchoneva, 2021, p. 28).

These, yet, persistent, outcomes of such a strategy, continuously brings new sets of challenges. These challenges are now also observable in the population which makes up the migrant workforce, on a European level down to the national level of individual member states. Globalisation is popularly recognised as the 'flow of material goods', and this is, therefore, also the metrics on which globalisation is most likely to be measured. Trading regulations, state-based specialisation and technological advances have eased this process, allowing for further and further reach into the void, which, through these optics of understanding, existed before the colonialisation of the worldwide

arena of commerce through globalising efforts. Generally, the 'worlds' GDP has increased considerably since 2008, and one of the concerns mentioned by the authors, is related to an exploding illicit drug trade. – This leads to view globalisation from both ends of the worldwide network and recognising the ripples making their way throughout international waters, amplifying as they roll. This culture of efficiency, a trait, linked to globalisation, has come from the corporate ethos. Without it, no globalisation. Or, at least not in such an accelerated haste.

*Globalisation* as a construct, is under any umbrella of terminology, necessary to be understood, to investigate it. In which capacity are we thinking about globalisation? On the grand stage, front and centre, neo-liberal value systems are steering this uneasy mega-cruise ship we call 'the civilised society' (Zajda & Vissing, 2022, p. 16). The authors explore the possibilities of placing globalisation within literature. How do we approach such a subject. – How can we attempt to, when "[…] these concepts have become dominant in the social sciences […]" (Zajda & Vissing, 2022, p. 16).

The reflections made by the authors, show a concern for the neo-liberal ideology, which has (in)grown strong since the 1980's (Zajda & Vissing, 2022). Today, this agreed-upon vision for a globalised international society, clings to the goal of 'continuous advancement'. Not unlike war situations, where a steady course is set for maximum gain and minimal loss. The only way to engage in the rules of combat, is to agree to the set terms and conditions. By participating, one is likely to lose, as one also is, by declining this invitation. In some economies, this invitation is either forcefully put upon you – or reached out to you with more and more *'potential'* and tempting outcomes. Neo-liberalism in this regard, is full of these ideological uncertainties labelled as 'potential'. This, no doubt, has aided in the distribution of this idea, compared to previous existing societal structures. Thus, the labour market of today is presented. Unless you live a nomadic tribal life in the far Tibetan mountains, this will not be a new insight.

Human rights as promoted by The United Nations, describes it "[…] rights inherent to all human beings […]" (Zajda & Vissing, 2022, p. 16). The following listed 'rights' or 'attributes' given, is by the authors criticised, and argued to be ideologically based and in coherence with neo-liberalism, due to the inherent quality of conventions and acts on this issue. However, this can be counter-argued a falsity. Human rights are not based within a neo-liberal economy, but off the back of a human-caused disastrous situation in Europe in the mid-20th century, WW2. The fact that these have arisen

in the following years, where the world indeed opened from East to West in the late 80's, is from this perspective not directly linked to the globalised labour market, or the culture, now prevalent. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1979), concluded that "[…] right to work in just and favourable conditions; the right to social protection (…) an adequate standard of living and highest attainable standards of physical and mental well-being […]" (*Global Issues - Human Rights*, n.d.) should be established as un-restricting rights.

International scholars referenced in this chapter, declining the validity of conventions on human rights, are attempting to undermine the age-old human behaviour across ancient societies - that of *'coming to terms',* as a cultural practice. These are in most developed globalised parts of the World, deemed binding, and if found with merit, will equally be reinforced by the judicial system. These also hold the character of being immune to any shifting political alliance. The argument of human rights conventions being without merit is thus, invalid. International law is furthermore argued as 'law purporting to regulate' any-and-all behaviour of citizens. However, law seeks to maintain and keep societies at peace – and the form in which it may appear, is not solely reliant on the growing recognition of the human rights-concept. The need reflected in the chapter, of complete sovereignty is portrayable as scary writing. This replacement of *self-reliance, self-awareness, and critical thought*, with not only *partly self-governing abilities* but also *divine, immortal and self-righteous beings* ruled over by a particular vengeful entity does not bode well for international convention ratification of human agreement. 'Effective' human rights education as suggested by the authors, has its merits, since it advocates for the implementation of this, throughout an individual's life. However, they conclude that the concepts of human rights need to undergo a similar rigorous alongside unspecified forces of globalisation. The desire to critique practices, hindering the ratification of human rights to their fullest extent are surely justified on behalf of the authors. However, the possibility of human rights, as recognized today, are in this thesis already justifiable and valid by mere congruence, like that of the ICESCR.

## Social policy and paradigms

Investigating mental health, migration, and identity in an international setting, issues such as welfare chauvinism arise. This excessive support to a political or personal cause fosters the sentiments and needs, which need incubation to become full-blown xenophobia, or just plain old

recognisable racial discrimination (Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2016). The political notion of this not being recognised for its ability to do long-term damage to the perception of specific selected immigrant or migrant groups is baffling. This due to, now being able to retrieve measurable data supporting this exact impact. Findings on discrimination, racialisation, xenophobia, and its connection to welfare chauvinism is well-established, although in need of further research to be able to communicate these variables and discern their significance on a larger scale, like that of within the EU and the global stage.

The case of Denmark in the above article investigates a period in Danish political history, where the former governing establishment did exactly that: defining welfare chauvinism further. *Venstre* (The Liberal Party, LP) at the time, was under the leadership of Lars Løkke Rasmussen (L.L.R).. The policies leading to this cultural and ideological shift in paradigms, otherwise governing the majority's opinion (Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2016, pp. 2–3). This exposes the neoliberal paradigm as ideologically willingly to assert economic growth and competitive abilities above individual well-being, which it so proclaims to have at its core, freedom. However, at mercy and in direct competition with its own fundamental imperatives.  Chauvinism can thus be divided into categories or perhaps even more appropriately on a spectrum, displaying the degrees at which we can measure the levels, the inflation in chauvinism within sectors, across industries and in the public domain. For this to be developed as a future tool of valid measuring capacity, a wide range of disciplines need to cross-examine the issue of chauvinism in this, but also other areas of societal importance.

Political functions, are today, the interpreting of the desires expressed by second, third and fourth parties. Under much circumstance, the expressed desires of a public of *all those "[…] who can and will […]"* (Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2016, p. 2)*,* lose from the beginning, as the collective conscience is not represented equally. The authors see Denmark as an appropriate case for studying the above-mentioned mechanisms in action. There have, since this case as of reported on in 2016, been several developments just within the Liberal Party. No longer under the leadership of L.L.R., the party has elected new leadership, and L.L.R has established an entirely new party. This is supposedly more middle-leaning than right-leaning, as the LP has been criticised of becoming during times of much influence from *Dansk Folkeparti* (The Danish People's Party, DPP). These developments need to be considered, as they are indicative of the political currents emerging and developing over time throughout the political scene.

The articles, as it may have occurred to the reader by now, are largely occupied with refugees and the issues often addressed in this field. However, this does not negate the probability of many of the same processes taking place within the integration of migrant workers in the Danish labour market. The process in and of itself contains three vital steps; supply, demand, and matching qualities against one another (Bredgaard & Thomsen, 2018, p. 8). This process is equally experienced amongst the foreign labour force, as they are engaged with the receiving states' national labour market policies (Bredgaard & Thomsen, 2018). The chosen literature as grounds for this research project are thus valid and add value to the reflections made on the subject within literature, and this project. However, as also mentioned by Bredgaard & Thomsen, a reversal of this position would not be possible, as research focusing solely on refugees, in the Danish context, does not allow for pure such empirical comparisons (Bredgaard & Thomsen, 2018, p. 9).

It has been found to be quite tiring reaping through previous evidence and general research into this subject matter, due to the sheer number of categories, variables, and research methods.

## Possibilities and limitations of literature

The subject has been vastly broken down, as to offer any chance of getting some strain of valid data to a particular field and a local perspective. The experiment relied upon a framework, closely related to narrative research. The framework was considered reliably legitimate, as its origins are in the realm of narrative and biographical methods. These, have since the 1920s both, been criticised and recognised for their capabilities reaching further than classical interviewing methods (Nilsen, 2008), bringing the circle of areas of research down to the minority and individually based level. The information interpreted in each researchers' dive into the possibilities of these, the methods, are particularly strong in their respective potential of retrieving extremely detailed and complex data - in both certain instances and in historical perspective(s). Debates surrounding the methods and methodology have evolved, as legitimisation has steadily increased over time. This epistemological and ontological development has led to an implementation of these considerations in sociological (and other) research (Nilsen, 2008, p. 2). The methods as we find them today are often in combination with other methods, both qualitative and quantitative (Roseneil, 2012). However, as the author notes in their reflections and critiques of biographical narratives and life stories as methods: "[…] the focus on biographies and narratives was particularly appropriate and

generative for researching intimate life and citizenship" (Roseneil, 2012, p. 4). The three identified categories as analysed by the authors above:

| | Supply-side approach | Matching approach | Demand-side approach |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Target group** | Refugees | Employment services | Employers |
| **Key problem** | Refugees lack adequate skills, qualifications, and motivation to integrate on the labor market | Lack of credible information and contacts between refugees and employers | Employers discriminate refugees in recruitment processes |
| **Policy objective** | Make refugees ready for the labor market | Match refugees and employers | Make employers ready for refugees |
| **Policy solution** | Improve skills, qualifications, and motivation of refugees | Break down information asymmetries and facilitate contact between refugees and employers | Encourage and incentivize employers to recruit refugees |

*Table 1  Conceptual approaches to labor market integration of refugees (Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2013, p. 9)*

represent the ways in which lives within the labour force, migrant or native is possible to be divided into. The chosen objectives for this calculation displayed on the table, do not include any human-based variables. Solutions are based off the key problem and policy objective. Such a piece of calculation will inevitably fail regarding communicating sentiments and intentions without an offensive and xenophobic perception among the *'target group'*, whether these be refugees or migrant workers. Within these two groups, more and deep issues of course also are present. This being e.g., gender and identity. These issues will not thoroughly be investigated in this project. It will, however, be noted as a valid influence on policy and policymaking, and on an individual level. These factors play a part in the overall justifiability of this project as participants have been predominantly male.

The dimension of time is also of importance as indications from a previous comparative study (Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2013) shows. This study analysed the differences before, during and after economic crises respectively in the 1970s and 2000s. The authors conclude that it is "[…] therefore also rather striking that many of the mistakes made during the 1960s and 1970s seems to be repeated in the 2000s (Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2013, p. 245). This astoundment from the authors seems rather misplaced, as the goal visible in Table 1 seems clear in its intentions; improve

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motivation. Quantifying motivation is no easy task, as all refugees and migrant workers are motivated by a generous mix of all factors, bringing them to flee/migrate in the first place, and furthermore, with, yet unknown, factors thrown in. These include *push and pull factors*. Push and pull factors attempt to cover the differences in motivation for labour migrants and individuals with refugee status.

| Area | Push Factors | Pull Factors |
|---|---|---|
| Economic | Poverty<br>Unemployment<br>Low wages<br>Lack of basic health<br>High fertility rates<br>Lack of basic education | Prospects for higher wages<br>Improved living standards<br>Personal development<br>Job opportunities<br>Good welfare standards<br>Labor demands |
| Social | Discrimination<br>Poor medical care<br>Social insecurity<br>Inadequate education systems<br>Population growth | Family reunification<br>Ethnic homeland<br>Freedom from discrimination<br>Better Medicare<br>Welfare state benefits |
| Political | Conflicts<br>Corruptions<br>Poor governance<br>Human rights abuse<br>Bad governance<br>Terrorism | Safety and security<br>Political freedom<br>Democracy<br>Political stability<br>Human civil rights |

*Table 2 Push and pull factors (Urbanski, 2022, p. 4)*

These variables contribute to undermining the way in which the process functions, but also highly undermines the overarching goal of the process, integration. Improving the "skills of motivation" is thus invalid as a solution to the issues. One might wish to add that free will and critical thought is not as pliable as all that.

Already being positioned in society as an either 'will' or 'will not' type of individual, the lack of social networks and proper lines of communications with the job market in the receiving nation can lead to a worsening in the ability to withstand potential impacts of current or future recessions (Jørgensen & Thomsen, 2013, p. 246). Adding to this, lack of local or even a second language and limited education, perhaps not further recognised within the receiving state, a disturbing and overwhelming Pandora's Box of juxtapositions within one system appears. Migrant workers predominantly working the heavy industries, such as construction, and with documented lesser

ability to remain safe during task performing, is in stark contrast to the 'intentions of integration'. It does, however, expose the lack of guiding principles in order to become a fully encompassing process on societal issues pertaining not only to labour market participation.  Denmark is after all known worldwide by its minimised distance between the professional and personal life of its population. When such contrary hard lines are drawn, boundaries become near tangible and in-congruent with the initial motivations driving the forces behind these policies. These concluding thoughts, lead this project to investigate the mental health and well-being among migrant workers situated in Aalborg temporary or permanently, with whichever motivations.

# Theory

## Globalisation theory

Before globalisation theory emerged in the 1990's, theories considering the intricate nature of these (thought at the time) independent processes and their potential interconnectedness, were not included. As such, globalisation theory, and globalisation itself, can be thought of as "[…] widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life" (de Haas et al., 2020, p. 50). This increase in globalised processes is most often associated with economic growth and expansion. However, a great deal of proprietary efforts precedes this globalised economy. Access to labour and individual motivations, being two. These processes, de Haas et al., (2020) write, cannot be considered to have sprung into being, without political ideological forces driving these, considering the Westernised capitalist societies as dominating these processes on a global scale. Under the flag of globalisation, these other categories *or* processes gives opportunity to explore the levels of said categories. On a macro-level, migration is an undeniable part of globalisation and not a passing phenomenon. On a micro-level, it is about "[…] (1) capabilities and (2) aspirations to migrate within a given set of constraints […]" (de Haas et al., 2020, p. 43). Here, the authors dismiss the simplification of push and pull factors. However, such a model is valuable in a context of reviewing or mediation.
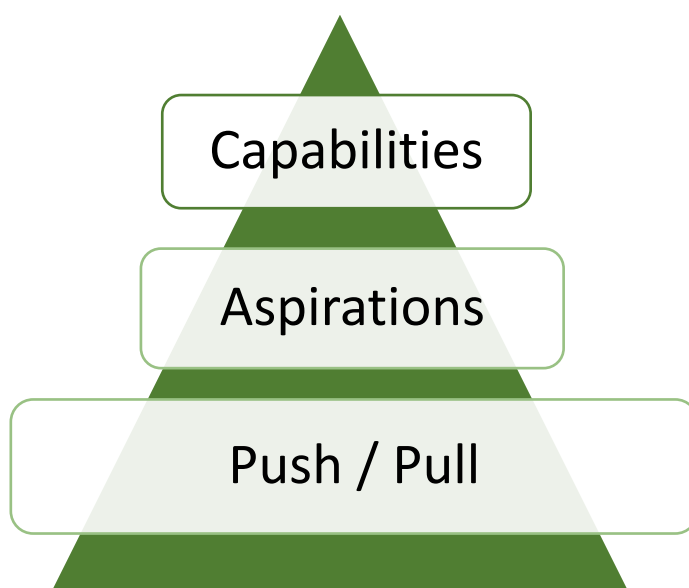
*Figure 1 Migration hierarchy on the micro-level. Inspired by Maslow (1943).*

The figure above is inspired by Maslow's pyramid of needs, or the Theory of Human Motivation, where fundamental issues are found at the bottom of the pyramid, and the individualistic goals at the top (Abraham H. Maslow, 1943). This figure layers the processes taking place within the individual migrant. This incorporates the push and pull factors, which are often intertwined, and layers these, so that these can be evaluated as part of a hierarchy.

## Migration and its participants

Looking into the micro-level of individual parts of these processes, such as migrant workers, complex aspects can be exposed.  These include, e.g., the continuing long-term process of migration itself, and the other factors, either put into play or heightened via migration. de Haas et al., (2020) also point out, that migration often can be considered a collective action (de Haas et al.,

2020, p. 42), meaning that this is prompted by a variety of changes in everyday lives, such as political impacts. As every action has a re-action, this alters the sending destination on areas concerning e.g., population, as its receiving counterpart also is affected in this manner. Many factors which affect these migration movements, are often not easily distinguishable from one another (see Table 2). One individual's desire to migrate may be a cross-concoction of all the above, or maybe none. A migrant may not be capable of predicting the process of establishing themselves elsewhere – in a new culture. It is therefore to be expected, that plans and intentions must undergo continuous alterations to accommodate shifting circumstances. Despite no significant increase in international migration the past few decades, the Western capitalism-based globalisation has reached some sort of limit (de Haas et al., 2020, pp. 42–43). However, the same processes keep on churning, assimilating the global South into the North.

Living and working across borders thus brings specific sets of challenges to individuals as they thus engage in transnational practices, either embracing their transnational identity or experience diaspora (de Haas et al., 2020, p. 82). Transnationalism and transnational identities refers to the tying together of people and organisations across borders of nation-states (de Haas et al., 2020, pp. 82–83). The ideology of migrants assimilating purely to the receiving nations culture is through this lens, illogical. The mobility of ideas, values etc., need therefore also to be included in the final accounting of new integration frameworks. Today's available technology is omni-present and is a major factor to include. There are, however, issues to take up with this non-migratory mobility. The idea of the 'multiple transnational identity'. Of course, within the layer of society in which one migrated to/from this theory has its merit. However, within diasporic spheres, the creation of multiple transnational identities is further challenged. For example, transnational activities is defined as: "[…] those that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and commitment of time by participants" (de Haas et al., 2020, p. 82). The existing mechanisms found within the dual labour market complicates the mobility of particularly one kind of participant, those located in the inflexible second sector, as opposed to the higher-paid and more flexible primary sector (Dickens & Lang, 1985). These factors then influence a long list of other variables, such as citizenship, narratives within society, segregation, residency etc.

Thus, existing frameworks need further development. This, to be able to continuously keep adjusting to the labour market as it is developing more and more rapidly, but without capability.

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The Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions (2020), presented 3 years ago its new pact for the Common European Asylum System. Lastly in 2016, where it published its last report. This focused its attention on streamlining procedures. However, the multi-dualities inherent within the European Union and member states make it difficult to streamline any measure and surely not policies. The forces at play here are too great and too counterproductive in their nature, as there are several interests being compromised upon through every stage in legislation.

### A little on systems

These issues are further displayed in Alan Bryman's theory of *Disneyization* (Bryman, 2004) a systems theory approach. The arguments laid out by Bryman are amongst others, the disneyization of e.g., descriptors in describing phenomena or functions; 'swift', 'harmonise' and 'streamline' are examples of this and are references to the frameworks which Disney's theme parks are built around. However great the temptation might be to compare the phenomena of '*Americanisation*' with '*Disneyization*', Bryman argues this to be a beta-version of what can be witnessed now. Disneyisation being a progressed version (Bryman, 2004, p. 161). As mentioned, globalisation is here always viewed as contradictory forces at play and on all levels, where it infiltrates the processes of systematisation. Disneyisation is not about adaptation, but about principles concerning goods and services (Bryman, 2004, p. 165). This understanding brings the theory closer yet to the migrant worker, and their journey from beginning to end. As migrant labour is presented as a *service* by the European Union within the intra-European labour market, this, the essence of Disneyisation, reveals itself. The streamlining to increase flow in this systematic sense clash in their origins with globalisation.

## Identity theory

In the 1980s, research efforts into how individuals present themselves. Identity became more and more central to social sciences (La Barbera et al., 2015). The authors here, discuss how the certain elements and aspects can become determinant in the way in which an identity is constructed for migrants. Furthermore, the authors consider "[…] how these elements can be categorized; and how multiple identities are compounded and negotiated when they conflict" (La Barbera et al., 2015, p. 1). There is however still less research available on the specific impacts of migration on identity development. Du to the multilayered processes taking place in migration, one

single understanding of identity will not be sufficient in addressing these. Along so many other aspects of migration, multidisciplinary methods are required to undertake yet another issue in this field of research.

To retain some theoretical background within the subject of identity, several theorists have made these known throughout history. In this thesis, it is also important to note that the outlook on identity will have its foundation settled within the following theory. Identity, is understood here in context with psychosocial development as laid out by Erik Erikson in the 1960s (Munley, 1977). At its core, Erikson lays out eight stages in the individual psychosocial development in a full life cycle, "[…] basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus identity confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and ego integrity versus despair" (Munley, 1977, p. 262). As they are laid out above, these follow some logical intuition, a meaningful and an almost *ascending* kind of development, as light at the end of a tunnel. However, in a globalised transnational society these stages are now influenced by an array of unpredictable outside variables, compared to the time of this theory's emergence in the late 50s and 60s. These stages are critical, as they all represent a *personal crisis.* These in return, determine how the individuals' progression from one stage to the next will unfold, strengthened, or weakened (Munley, 1977, p. 262). Despite this theory's emergence nearly 70 years ago, and the globalising developments have since sped up, this theory realizes and emphasises the significance of social and cultural processes. Extending to migration.

## Identities in motion

Beginning in the industrial revolution, identity underwent major shifts in its understanding. The anonymity of a more global world replaced values attached to societies of solidarity (La Barbera et al., 2015, p. 77). Migrants are subject to such a division, as identities must take on more virtual positions, as the navigation through a transnational existence unfolds. Besides personal circumstances for the individual migrant, other aspects must be considered equally influential, as these appear in the migratory process. Different norms, formal or informal, cultural, or legal presenting as some of them. These differing circumstances, which also undergo revision, e.g., social policies, enters the migrant identity into a continuous re-negotiation of e.g., social belonging(s). This, according to La Barbera et al., (2015) leads to a collection of Selves, each with their own distinctions, as they are negotiated to fit certain places, spaces and norms (La Barbera et

al., 2015, p. 78). This in turn affects a multitude of identity aspects. An aspect to consider is the projected image of self, and if this is congruent with the subject (La Barbera et al., 2015, p. 79). The notion of self is also explored by Fernandes (2022) about sameness and ipseity, and the question of "[…] what characteristics or criteria define me in particular? […]" (Fernandes, 2022, p. 192).

Frameworks for the understanding of the self has undergone discussions, and emphasis has been made on what such a framework should and should not entail. In this thesis it is not the history of a moral cultural identity, but a moral framework of the choices of *selves* which is considered.

# Methodology

In the following chapter, the methodology behind this thesis is outlined. The chapter will firstly, introduce the reader to the interpretivist paradigm and epistemological considerations. Secondly, it will discuss the study of reality, alongside deductive and abductive theory in practice, and ontological considerations are acknowledged. Thirdly, a research strategy is implemented, which is followed by data collection and reflection upon these. Fourthly, interviews and ethnographic incidents are discussed. Finally, the reader is introduced to the participants. These considerations on their own are important elements into building the framework of the study, however, collectively they support and guide each other. This, due to the specific *logic* on which the study relies (Bryman, 2016, p. 26).

## The interpretivist paradigm

### Epistemological considerations

The epistemology of interpretivism is considered the contrast to positivism, and the positions of authors behind these conceptions and frameworks, have been critical in their approaches to a model or theory. Moreover, they have that in common which is the influence of "[…] various intellectual traditions […]" (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). Naturally, from these differences in approaches to logical research, considerations on the degree of *human distinctiveness* (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). In this thesis, it has been found appropriate, to acknowledge the influences it has been exposed to during its conception. Types of interpretivism are in plural form. E.g., *interactionism* and *ethnomethodology* are two different species of investigative questionings and aims. Shared

meaning and where they come from are a priority in the latter. *Grounded theory* on the other hand, also has its share of advocates within the disciplines in social sciences. In the grounded theory method, ideas emerge in connection with data collection.

The following data analysis and discussion section will therefore display the principles applied within this thesis, their functions and aims, and "[...] without relying on earlier assumptions" (Hewitt et al., 2022, p. 1). It is even argued that symbolic interactionism is constraining to the aims of grounded theory, whilst others believe it can deepen and expand grounded theory methodology (Hewitt et al., 2022). So, the questions appear to have no succinct answer, and questions as to what is known, and what are the pertinent theoretical ideas to deduce an hypothesis (Bryman, 2016, p. 21)? The idea here being it will guide the empirical inquiries in a plausible and solidified direction.

### Creating and executing in- and deductive theory

Creating and executing deductive and abductive theory is another consideration to make, when researching the phenomena which often occur within the social sciences. The above mentioned method of qualitative research is argued to be suitable for *middle range theory* (Bryman, 2016)*.* Middle range theory here, describes many of the branches found within sociology. It also describes the basic nature of this thesis, as its research field is based in the realms of organizational politics, globalisation, cultural issues and so on. These middle range explorations help in creating the bases on which new theory can be established within inductive/abductive approaches. Not unlike our ever-expanding Universe which we call home.

As a link between the realms, as displayed in the paragraph above, the process identified with *induction*, is present within the workings of deduction (Bryman, 2016, pp. 22–23). These cross-theoretical branches underpin the ability for ideas to emerge. Thus, this thesis takes on its own distinct characteristic approach, where theory and hypothesis are not the only driving forces. Early empirical searches were prompted in the acquiring of knowledge of the field of question. This was decided based on attempting to acquire intimate knowledge, at a level of difficulty previously unknown.

### The study of reality

How does one go about studying *a* reality? The answer may be surprising, as this thesis leans on both traditions buried in empirical knowledge. Within the inductive approach, the aim is to generate theory whereas the abductive approach, has footing within empirical knowledge and

applies relevant to it. The term *knowledge* is furthermore a debated issue as to what constitutes knowledge. Here, it is to be understood as the testing of ideas, until the admittance to the construct of knowledge (Bryman, 2016). However, "[...] a belief that the accumulation of 'facts' is a legitimate goal in its own right [...]" (Bryman, 2016, p. 20) is also subject to critical discussion; *naive empiricism* - to what extent can it inform research? Here it is considered valuable to the extent of informing the basis on which the question has been formulated **how do migrant labourers in Aalborg's shelters experience their situation, irregular employment, and mental health?**

This study has throughout its creation, found elements at the furthermost edges of empiricism to be of value. Gathered and the sense-based experiences have been of crucial significance to the data collection process and are indeed also given the properties of true knowledge. As described above, a 'pure' empirical approach is often portrayed as the only reliable knowledge. However, this project prescribes to both empirical beliefs. In the literature review process, facts presented themselves through other authors, exposing other possible areas, where further empirical studies could be carried out. This constant back and forth in the writing process between in- and deductive and empirical approaches has led to an inductive study with deductive elements.
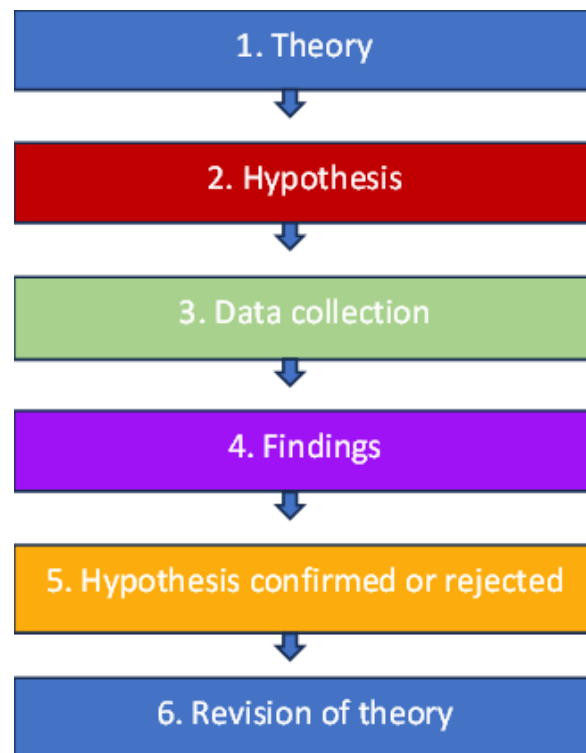
*Figure 2  The process of deduction (Bryman, 2016, p. 21)*

In Bryman's model visualised above, theory needs to be revised at the concluding stage of the ladder. This implication of own theory is visible in the way in which the study, or general curiosity, manifests into a subject. At the crux of this study, is the unknowing inductive journey, which started and was set within the construction sector, as shared in the introduction. Generally, for the inductive approach, the aim is to create basic framework to generate theoretical foundation (Bryman, 2016, p. 23). Moreover, this means, the more illuminating and off-shoot findings are included, whereas in other approaches they would be discarded of, due to their inappropriateness and insignificance to the method(s).

The discussion of acceptable knowledge within a discipline surrounds principles imitated from the natural sciences. This is referred to as positivism. Is it possible to study the social world guided by these principles? This type of epistemological questioning is by della Porta & Keating (2008) referred to as questions on "[…] nature, sources and limits of knowledge" (della Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 22). Shared standards of logical systems of thinking which are prevalent throughout the natural sciences do not apply directly to those of the social sciences. There have, however, over time been

developed critical theories to contrast the positive theories within social sciences, pointed out by della Porta & Keating. These have not necessarily been developed to directly contradict the positive branches of social science but to take critical stances. Certain disciplines, however, consider e.g., myths and cultural belief systems as valid as any other 'hard' data. This stance does not presume an objectified universal reality, and other phenomena as merely deviations from that reality (della Porta & Keating, 2008, pp. 22–23). Despite this discussion, Bryman (2016) argues that there seems to be more *status* in observation than theory on an epistemological plane (Bryman, 2016, p. 25).

## Ontological considerations

Within the social sciences, whether it is to some extent physically existing or not, the social ontology concerns itself with questions regarding the nature of *social entities.* Such as, are they independent entities or do these stem from purely social constructions, are the main questions regarding ontological stances (Bryman, 2016, p. 28). Investigating and evaluating the worlds of social entities are both congested concerns, as discussed by other authors, as there are differences between the social entity constituting e.g., a hospital or other "[…] human collective intentions […]" (Jansen, 2015, p. 1). However, the resemblances are significantly telling of these ontologies as compared to those of the natural sciences, because these are phenomena reliant on human interference and participation alongside co-creation of studied phenomena. These creations can be of low or high status within society, i.e., to which degree a member of society engages and subscribes to any given social entity of a cultural group. Ontologically, this study finds its influence originating in ontological belief of *constructionism*. An aspect to ponder on in this regard, is my own influences and construction of the studied social reality.

To keep in mind the influence of own interpretation of the data of the thesis, reflections, and the use of this process by Bernd-Carsten Stahl (2003), are found helpful to keeping the steps of the interpretation-process in mind. The author argues that constructionist and positivist starting points are often found in the same initial data collection efforts (empirical research), "[…] taking constructionism serious also means that empiricism's value neutrality does not exist and that IS researchers must face their social responsibilities" (Stahl, 2003, p. 2878).

The author here refers to IS research (Information Systems) as these relate to i.e., organisational construction. Finally, the author finds that further research through the metaphysical

constructionist outset, leads to major social restructuring of information systems (Stahl, 2003). In a nation state setting these implications and considerations must then be applied to policy as well the systems automated and enforcing those policies. As described in the previous section, these reflections will be accounted for throughout the analysis process, where ontological suggestions meet and are engaged with the data. For example, the constructionist striving force will be found in the attention to interviewees, the occasions and interactions, which they themselves find pivotal and/or crucial (Bryman, 2016, pp. 31–487).
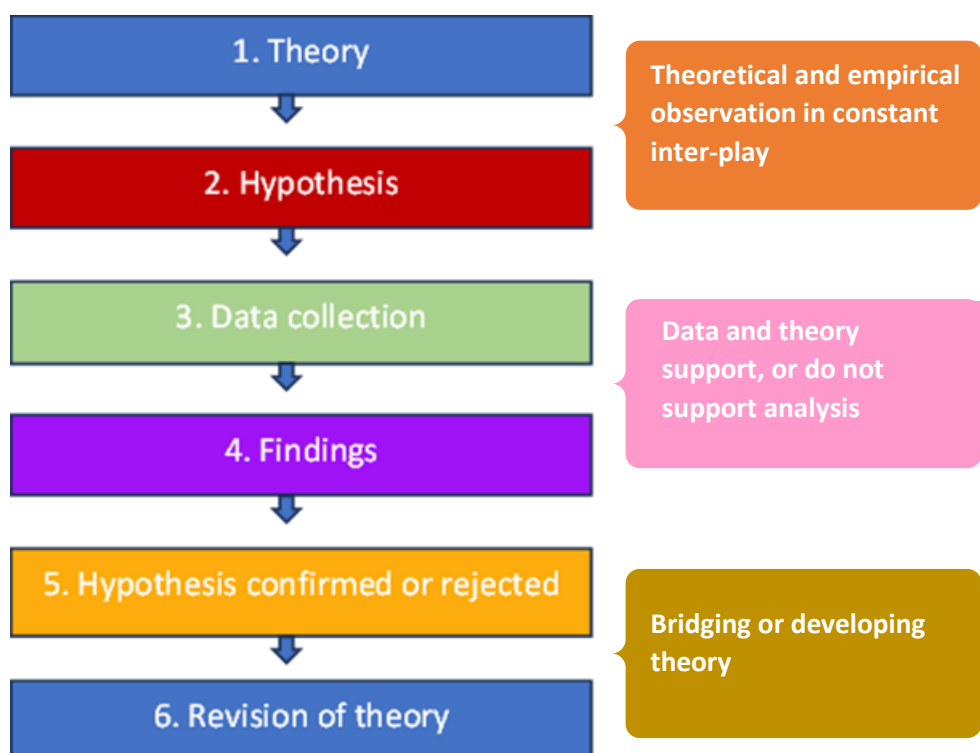


*Figure 3 Abductive approach applied to Bryman's deductive process (2016, p. 21)*

## Research strategy

As previously mentioned above; there are overlaps to be found within quantitative and qualitive research and approaches. These include philosophical, and methodological considerations, data reduction, answering questions and relating data to research literature (Bryman, 2016, p. 402). For example, it is denoted that the most common and characteristics of both quantitative and qualitative are today even under scrutiny by some authors, as these are, by those, considered of no use in the modern research (Bryman, 2016, p. 31). This is not the prevalent attitude found in the

research community. However, the appearance of such a notion is not discarded so easily and has also been a consideration which has found its way into this thesis. A distinction, however, will be made, to establish a basic guiding principle in the data and analysis process, and furthermore to categorise topics and subject matters as disclosed by interview participants. Finally, the research strategy employed will therefore orient itself towards qualitative research. The focus on, and knowledge of the 'reality' as presented by interview participants will form the basis of data collection and analysis.

## Data collection and reflections

From the considerations described above, data collection follows. This section will therefore re-visit the research question as part of connecting the ontology with the former. As presented in the introduction the problem question has been formulated with specific intent. At this point reached within the thesis, the problem statement has changed character, as the progression of the study has continued. The problem statement, considered the main aim of the study has now been found to have reached a stage of omnipresence. When investigating migrant workers' mental health and well-being in such environment, this being at a local shelter in Aalborg, an investigation into the approaches to narratives is necessary. This is due to the nature of the study, and understanding the question of what it is, which is being investigated, and what is the objective of uncovering this information?

Narrative in research is not understood as one definitive method, rather, it is an umbrella term which "[…] covers different approaches and methods which are based on text or visual representation of individuals or groups" (Bo et al., 2016, p. 13, own translation). This means, narrative research is the uncovering of and interpretation of the story itself, the *narrative*. Either as personal or shared narratives. What and how this narrative presents itself is the focal point in this type of research. The goal of the study is to develop a rich and detailed understanding of the participant's life experiences and the meaning they have constructed from them. Behind these narratives are people, and the people are therefore considered the source of any given data. From this perspective, it might be tempting to assume that this equals narratives with purely qualitative research, however, as Thomsen, Bo & Christensen (2016) argue: "[…] narrative research is applicable across different disciplines, theoretical frames of understanding, analytical approaches and methods" (Bo et al., 2016, p. 13, own translation).

Elements which can be argued to constitute a narrative are thus i.a., 1) the presence of a plot or some other reductive term, which encompasses the narrative, 2) a propellant of the ongoing narrative, and 3) retrospective creation of meaning. The basis for this process is therefore also inherently dependent on the ability to create and locate logic within a narrative both within the storyteller and researcher. Furthermore, making the distinction between the 'self' and the 'story' presents a series of issues, such as, which, presupposes the existence of the other? Is the self the propellant of the story, or are the events, constituting the story, the basis for the creation of the self? These questions are to some extent impossible to answer, as they can be understood as always in the process of shaping a certain social reality and our own identities (Bo et al., 2016, p. 15).  The importance of 'common narratives' have also been pointed out to have much value, and are integral to being part of shared communities, and to take part in these communities.

In the case of migrant workers, an opportunity to pin-point a 'plot' or other significant events, ideas and interpretations may present itself, which might be shared between the participants – a structure. However, these structures are to be read as typical for a specific period, therefore alterable over time, both in the past and in the future. "These overarching stories are closely related to a certain context and grounded in individuals life stories" (Bo et al., 2016, p. 16, own translation). This shifts the attention to not only the contents of a story is, but also the way in which it is delivered – how is it constructed? This distinction, is also a factor which contributes to the way of telling a narrative interview and a qualitative interview, where the narrative interview focuses on the contents and construction (Bo et al., 2016, p. 19). The way in which a story is told, can therefore also be connected to how 'grand narratives' and 'small narratives' are related. The grand narratives are usually to be understood as generally culturally and/or time period dependent (Bo et al., 2016, p. 21). Through a narrative approach, the grand and small narratives can thereby be connected, giving an insight into possible influences on both micro- and macrolevel of a larger society. "[…] paradoxically, life stories can document social structures, social movements, and institutions. This means, knowledge about both overarching collective processes and subjectivity can be achieved" (Bo et al., on Connell, 2016, p. 23, own translation).

With these considerations and viewpoints of authors in mind, the thesis has been centered around the transitional migrant, which will be investigated through the lens(es) of Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM). This method can be used in different ways, as the aims of a study can

vary. In this case, the BNI method has been adapted to be fit for the study of life stories – an insight into certain people and their current situation (Corbally & O'Neill, 2014). As with the historical development of BNIM as a research method, a focus on life stories emerged from early engagement with, The Church Army shelter[iv], a national aid organisation, focusing on providing and improving social services. These initial visits aided in laying out the empirical foundations for the study, and how to approach employees, volunteers, clerical staff, and users. The term *users,* was presented to me during my initial visits, and was the categorisation of the individuals frequenting the shelter. Headcounts were made at a certain point during the day, usually in connection with mealtimes, which furthermore provided a reasonable expectation as to who was likely to be approached as a possible participant for the study. The possibility of connecting off-site with users, was explained by "Barbara", an experienced long-term employee, as an unlikelihood. Cellular phones, alcohol, drugs, and money were not unusual items to be stolen from the users' persons during the night, as many were found to be sleeping rough on the streets of Aalborg. Furthermore, on a practical level, the shelter would provide amenities such as free coffee and comfortable chairs. Creating this atmosphere oneself, would have been extremely difficult considering the many connecting issues to precarious living in general (Simkunas & Thomsen, 2018).

The setting of the participants' lives is of utmost importance within the BNI method, as it attempts to account for not only one thing, being life stories told, but also by e.g., historical context and the presence of precedence for a phenomenon or not (Corbally & O'Neill, 2014, pp. 34–35). The biographical aspect here, relates to the accounting of life stories. This method was chosen due to its ability to capture these intricate details of a situation as it is still unfolding. In these instances, years of reflection have not set their mark, and do not colour the story, as it would in a study of life history. Therefore, this *snapshot* is well-suited for research "[…] perpetually in transition" (Corbally & O'Neill, 2014, p. 35). However, this instant-like recovery of data at a certain point in time should not be misconstrued as a limit to the potentiality of rich data. On the contrary, it is a great tool for getting access to and document a dynamic process, this being the participants own accounts. Narratives, these are the ways in which the participants relay their stories. In this case, an oral in-person semi-formal interview. Elements of this way of generating narratives is at its core, human interaction (Corbally & O'Neill, 2014, p. 35; Nilsen, 2008; Roseneil, 2012). Moreover, and driving to the method, is the changing and contrasting purposes of participants in their narrative. This also

means, that there will be two distinct realms, wherein narratives operate, in the socio-cultural and personal realm (Ricoeur, 1981).

In total, 5 interviews were conducted. The fifth interview will not be included in the key participant information table or be found within transcribed interviews. This interview was intended as a springboard into the field of cross-section issues related to migration, social policy, and culture. This fifth participant will be referenced as an expert-eyewitness and trained professional in relation to the remaining interview participants. 2 participants had similar cultural backgrounds, and the 2 other participants had completely different backgrounds, both from each other and from the first two participants. Interviews were conducted in the months of May through July, during a heatwave, which undoubtedly has influenced responses and mental disposition (Caspari et al., 2011). The authors investigate the affect and importance, the physical surroundings have on both the interviewer and interviewee in professional care settings. This is relevant to reference as analysis progresses, as these factors cannot be ignored.

These interviews were not designed to act as a therapeutic setting for participants, neither were they designed as a questionnaire to be asked in person. Interruptions and clarifications were attempted avoided, except for clarification and in cases of stronger language barrier. The influence on the interview from these instances can only be speculated on. The settings were also the same when interviewing the professional employee. In the above article, the authors state: "The goal is to create aesthetic environments (…), an environment in which aesthetics can contribute to recovery of health and well-being […]" (Caspari et al., 2011, p. 141). In regards to the expert interview, this was also considered appropriate settings, as it allowed for them to feel comfortable in known surroundings, also still removing most disturbances, particularly those which are under the shelter's care when on the premises.

From this rather small and dispersed group of participants consisting of 3 men in the ages of 30 and 50 years, certain themes began to appear. As only one participant shared his age, this has been entered as a rough estimate for the remaining participants. Below, a table introducing key information of the participants further draws the over all framework for the study, as these inform the problem statement presented in this thesis. The interview-column represents one session in total including breaks.

| Interview | Country of origin | Sex | Age | Number of occupations in DK | Main type of work | Time in DK |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1+2** | Poland | M | 25-35 | Min. 4 | Construction | 3-4 |
| **3** | Poland | M | 20-30 | - | Construction | 4- months |
| **4** | The Czech Republic | M | 45-55 | Min. 2 | Cleaning | 8 |

*Table 4 Key participant information*

The interviews were all conducted in English, a second or even third language to some of the participants, and generally also the case with many of the users encountered in the common areas of the shelter, as visits continued.

*Interviews, incidental ethnographic encounters, and notions on ethics*

This study is supported by observations made during and after visits to the shelter, with or without the purpose of interviewing. These observations and informal interactions with other users, staff, and volunteers. Each were found to have different experiences of the shelter, their role, their presentation outwardly etc. This gives the study a two-dimensional understanding of where the participants, and the general population within the organisation finds themselves being, conflictingly, needed and discriminated. This secondary layer of ethnography provides the possibility of gaining insight in to situations and common daily barriers met by participants, which may not be divulged during interviews (Pinsky, 2015). These varying interactions a researcher can have with individuals outside of the interview situation is by Pinsky described as "[…] studies such as mine (…) include incidental ethnographic encounters" (Pinsky, 2015, p. 283). However, the

potentiality for clearer and broader empirical observations, can also be disrupted in its formation, as there within such encounters are entailed questions on how to consider the observations made. Within this study, the reduction of personal and informal interactions in between the observable schedule has provided this opportunity to consider these differences and particularly, the ethical and moral considerations for entering such a field of blurred lines, diaspora, and the notions of quality criteria (Bryman, 2010, 2016; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

Firstly, the access to participants was in full agreement with members of staff, which where to varying degrees known to the participants beforehand. Varying degrees refers to the total amount of time in which participants frequented the shelter, thus, being in direct contact with staff. Procedural ethics were secondary to this study, due to the procedures already established before the research process even came underway by Aalborg University. Therefore, attention was particularly given to the aspect of practical ethics connected to the actual conduction of the study (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 264). These exposed themselves as the research progressed and evolved. These evolvements led to the project becoming more focused and the questions more particular and precise to the actual reality unfolding, both within interview situations and outside. A stance on the way in which encounters outside the interview situation were grappled needed constant re-evaluation, and both in connection with participants, and members of staff, volunteers etc. An example from one such encounter, was a casual conversation with a priest over coffee. The Church Army has priests present in their shelters.[v] In such a situation, ethical risks can expose the intricacy and delicate nature of issues i.e., concerning homelessness, feelings of diaspora and mental health challenges. These can furthermore be argued as innate to any social research effort, as these involve human study. An aspect which was considered, however misjudged in the planning stages of the project, was gaining access to, and securing an appropriate environment for interviewing.

The response for such disclosures is difficult to plan (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, pp. 264–265). The tone of voice found within the interview is near impossible to predict. Therefore, the interviews bare mark of this, the surprise(s) and the unpredictability of the general environment. The participants lived their daily lives in and around the location from approximately 9 o'clock in the morning until 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and most of them being without any other routines, this would sometimes cause disrupts – physically violent or other. Not necessarily from the participants but from below, in the publicly available spaces. These situations could not within a reasonable logic,

be calculated for in advance to a degree, which would accommodate such situations satisfactorily. Questions and responses were often repeated for clarification after shouting nearby as it travelled up through the walls and flooring. Secondly, and another element, unpredictable in the planning and scoping phases, was the noticeable effect on participants, as members of staff prompted other reactions during their sporadic appearances in the office spaces. Returning to interviews was a challenge. In summary, gaining access and furthermore extracting data presented many and unforeseen practical and ethical challenges.

*Introduction to participants*

**Participant 1: Michal**

Michal came to Denmark from Poland in 2018 in the spring. He explains that he has two older brothers, who had worked in Denmark themselves, and that is common for one brother to send for another brother, if there is enough work to be found. Primarily, these have worked within the lumber industry. Michal himself, has worked primarily in construction. At the time of the interview, Michal is homeless and unemployed. Michal has been fired multiple times from different employers, due to e.g., drinking, and smoking marijuana on the jobsite. Michal has been in Aalborg approximately 3 years, mainly homeless with irregular employment, and primary incomes have been government financial assistance and packaging deposits. Michal has furthermore been in contact with the Danish healthcare system and law enforcement. Before arriving in Denmark, Michal was most recently living and working in London, England.

**Participant 2: Tomasz**

Tomasz has been in Aalborg for approximately 4 months after his longer long stay in Copenhagen. Three of those months living homelessly on the streets. He wants to travel and work around Denmark. Tomasz has family, both in Poland and in Spain. Tomasz explains that he has previously worked in construction, and that he has a specific certification for operating CNC steel-milling machinery. He is in Denmark to look for this specific kind of work. He has previously been in contact with the Danish health care system and law enforcement.

**Participant 3: Radim**

Radim believes he came to Denmark in 2015 from The Czech Republic. Before this, he has had no experience working abroad. Radim had his own clothing-business in The Czech Republic with 2-3 physical venues. Radim explains, that he encountered a crisis, which led to the loss of his company and all financial stability. He had never, until that moment experienced homelessness. For 2 years, Radim lives from, and attempts to save up for a deposit on an apartment, by collecting packaging deposits. In 2017, he has worked in newspaper delivery and cleaning.

## Method of analysis

The approach of analysis on this subject matter, has been found to be appropriately executed by applying narrative analysis in interpreting the stories told by participants. This approach moves beyond the need for answering the first question, which is most asked, that of 'what', to the 'how'. This type of inquiry opens to exploratory studies. Moving further beyond the initial line of questioning, the cycle reverts back, to yet again open up for *what-questions,* i.e., "[…] what happened and to what effect […]" (Bryman, 2016, p. 589). Bryman refers to the *intentions* of the stories told by participants. Is a story told with the aim of garnering sympathy, anger etc.? These intentions can also be influenced by style of questioning, as some questions are more prone in their design to elicit narrative accounts, in the same way in which other styles of questions do not invite to this. As mentioned previously in the above chapter, some direct questions which did not promote further accounting, where asked from time to time, to retain correct information, as language barriers clouded answers.

However, these situations, can unintentionally stimulate the further progression of stories told, as these can aid in the participants' own reflections, memory, and more detailed descriptions otherwise not accessible for the participant. The analysis also needs to be seen in the light of the researcher's elicitation. The stories shared in the interview situation is likely to be unique in their presentation, as such a setting will be impossible to recreate. An inherent trait of people, is that people "[…] perceive their lives in terms of continuity and process […]" (Bryman, 2016, p. 590). This aspect must then be incorporated into analysis, and the full perspective of the participant requires consideration. The facts told within the stories, will then not be considered the main areas of focus,

but rather the telling itself. The telling is thus influenced in equal measures by the presence of the researcher, this in turn will also affect the questions as they follow the story and its constructional process.

These considerations will in summary be interpreted within each their own themes, what constitutes the narratives, and how these are constructed through encounters with their surroundings. This approach is not restricted to the individual level, as it is also being explored and practiced on organisational levels and social movements on group level (Bryman, 2016; Roseneil, 2012).

# Analysis

The analysis will take on the form of thematic analysis types, as this will enlighten both what is said within the transcripts, and what the participants choose to focus on. In the following, a thematic analysis is first applied to the data, where the aim is to create narratives based on themes which in turn are derived from codes (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

## Thematic analysis

In a thematic analysis emphasis is on what is told during an interview by participants, and its foundations are built on the philosophy that language "[…] is a direct and unambiguous route to meaning […]" (Riessman, 2005, p. 2). This type of analysis is thus focused on content-derived themes. These will be discussed as excerpts are pulled from all transcripts. These can be found in Appendix A-D. This analysis will focus exclusively on issues which relate to the problem formulation, as to what themes appear within the transcripts, and how these relate to migrant labourers' experiences on topics such as employment and mental health.

Throughout the coding process, four themes emerged from the transcripts. These were each labelled in either, blue, red, orange, green, yellow, and purple. These were furthermore condensed, and checked for overlaps or inherent features, such as crisis and policy frames and their effect on one another. Transcripts with colour-coding can be found in Appendix E. The four themes deducted from transcripts: working experiences (blue), crisis (red), family (orange), and aspirations (green).

Quotes will refer to the original transcripts and indicate name, page number and timestamps, e.g., *(Thomasz, p. 4: 10:13).* Furthermore, specific names, places (employment agencies, police departments and certain minor cities etc.) have been altered and/or redacted, as to minimise risks of identity exposure of both participants and others mentioned. The quotes used in the analysis are to be analysed in connection with the chosen theory, as previously described in the theoretical section.

*Working experiences*

        The following theme encompasses statements on working life and experiences gained by the participants. The theme was derived from searching for excerpts consisting with the problem formulation. This provides an overview of what occupations have been held in Denmark and participants own narratives. The theme has been settled from codes. Codes, such as work stability, education, networking, personal mobility, travel etc. On asking the participants on their arrival to Denmark, responses were:

> "When I came back from London to Poland, and make some problems, my brother, he came from Denmark and offered me a job, like: "you are not supposed to be in Poland, because too many not good / Too many bad friends in Poland" (Michal: p. 6: 21:57).

> "I ask him something. Why something was going this way, and not the other way, and he just look in my eyes and tell me: "because you are fucking Polish" (Michal, p. 13: 55:53).

> "I can't really remember (…) 2015. Because, in The Czech Republic / Before, I had for 14 years, a big company. We sold *(unclear)* clothes and shoes. 2-3 shops. But after *(unclear)*, there was a big crisis. I wasn't supposed to *(unclear)*. All was finished. All was gone. The *(unclear)* and everything was gone, no money. And then, a friend on Facebook told me: "Come to Denmark, I'll help you. I help you find job" (Radim, p. 2: 01:05).

> "In Denmark I have been in (...) building, you know. I have full papers from Poland. In Denmark, I've only

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Study no. 20211356                                                         September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023
CCG                                                                          Aalborg University

been in building, like (...) construction. Construction for
the element. I've been doing the *(unclear)* for the
concrete. It's very big" (Tomasz, p. 2: 03:13).


The participants have different ways of approaching this inquiry. Michal's entry into the Danish labour market came from the involvement of his brother. At first sight, Radim' statement stands out, and reveals a background as an independent business owner for over a decade. Tomasz does not initially state how he came to Denmark and focuses on the profession he has been occupying. Through the thematic perspective, this is telling of what is in focus for the participants. The means of language here, as used to position each participant in a particular manner.



*Crisis*

The second theme focuses on statements which involve major shifts in every day lives. – Shifts which involve economic uncertainty, residential loss, and general irregularity. These excerpts are meant to illustrate the frequent and often rapid shifts in routines and work opportunities. Codes found within this theme are conflict, mental health challenges, housing issues, incarceration etc.

> "When I'd already been working in Denmark for 2
> years, we were going to do the vacation time in
> Poland, and when we came back, I meet two Danish
> young fellas, and I buy from them the acid, and I take
> too much. Then my brain was fucked. For two months,
> I was walking around in the night with no shoes,
> screaming at the moon (laughs)" (Michal, p. 3: 05:35).


> "So, before, I understand nothing about living on the
> street. So, *(unclear),* I seek help from a friend. He's like:
> "Radim, you have no job, so you need help for an
> apartment." For two years, I collected bottles, every
> day. And I don't know what to do with my life, what I
> can do. I only want to have a doctor, apartment. Every
> day I was collecting bottles" (Radim, p. 2: 02:40).


> "And my mother, she looks at me, like:" oh my god, you
> are drinking beer. You smell. What are you doing?" ~:
> spitting. "Stop it, stop it. Our people are not drinking.

> You must go out." "Okay, no problem mother." One
> number, two numbers. 6 hours, and I get to Denmark.
> 6 hours only" (Tomasz, p. 4: 14:04).

There are significant differences between participants, and their own narrations of crisis-situations. For Michal, a major crisis occurred when he ingested an illicit and strong euphoric substance, acid. From his perspective, the event was of such significance that it altered his mind and made him lose even more:

> "So, I just fucked up my work, fucked up my brother,
> fuck up my apartment, the place where I live. And just
> before Christmas time, they already kicked me out of
> my apartment […]" (Michal, p. 3: 06:25).

For Radim, a crisis which was equally vast and ongoing, was that of being uncapable of surviving in his new situation of being homeless and having no stable income. A hidden crisis within a crisis, is that of unfulfilled aspirations, that of having a home and independence. Radim continues:

> "After two years, somebody tells me / Someone from a
> shelter tells me that I can go there. So, I go, and I got a
> little bit better. But it was a very difficult start.
> But then, in 2017, I had / You know the newspaper?"
> (Radim, p. 2: 03:10).

Tomasz's initial crisis took place in the family home, where he then leaves Poland and after a very short period, arrives in Denmark. He further explains that he has only seen his mother once since the incident. He is at that time, 16 years old:

> "Mothers are careful. Mothers are (…), you know. This
> is my plan, you know?: "Sorry, mother, you don't give
> me a life in your home, no problem. I go" (Tomasz, p.
> 4: 16:30).

### *Family*

Under family as a third theme, focus is on the role of family in an array of different perspectives. As per the guidelines of thematic analysis, the codes are based solely on specific statements which touch upon all references to family. Codes include, relationships, conflict, work related connections through family, distance etc.

> "My brother, he told me, he doesn't want to know me anymore. Because (unclear), and everyone know each other" (Michal, p. 3: 06:25)

> "[…] my father tells me: "you didn't work, you didn't want to school yourself, you go to fucking job now. You didn't use your brain." So, I got the first job doing roofs. I was walking without a line, like in the circus ~, like, no problem. Young guy, 17 years old, no problem" (Michal, p. 9: 33:55).

> "I have, not a biological mother. At 15 years old, my father and biological mother go ~: Gestures with hands and arms. And we have contact on Facebook. This other mother, sometimes, we talk on Facebook, and my father has (unclear). They're living together in a small house, small (unclear). Sometimes, something would break, and I would help a little bit. But I don't want to live there" (Radim, p. 4: 12:58).

> "That's no problem. Just my mother. Mothers are careful. Mothers are (…), you know. This is my plan, you know?" (Tomasz, p. 4: 16:30).

The participants have, to varying degrees contact with their immediate families. For Michal, in his younger years, his father dominated the course of events for him, as he ordered Michal to seek immediate employment, did he not choose to return to his education. He describes how this was his only other option:

> "I have been in school for 11 years, but I have been kicked out, because when I go to (…) / After gymnasium, I meet good friends (…) and then it started, the drugs, the alcohol, you know, parties, fuck the school" (Michal, p. 8: 33:55).

Radim experiences of family are unique to the rest of the comparing participants, as he lived with another woman, to whom he refers to as mother, despite having lived with his biological parents for most of his childhood, in the Czech Republic. On siblings of import to him he replies: "Two half-siblings, with this mother. Also talking on Facebook" (Radim, p. 4: 13:10).

> "I was 16 years old, and I go out from my home.
> Because I had girlfriend for 5 years, and only going
> home for maybe 2 days. *(unclear)* (laughs). I was
> sleeping in my girlfriend's home (laughs) (…) I can
> contact all. No problem, no problem" (Tomasz, p. 5:
> 16:30).

Tomasz is not preoccupied with the connection to his family and expresses little to no conflicting notions in keeping in contact with family members, and from the transcript, there seems to be a connection strong enough for Tomasz's father to provide funds for travels.

*Aspirations*

Aspirations and capabilities refer to the participants' statements of what they need and wish to achieve. To assemble this theme, codes referring to dreams, personal aspirations, and life philosophies are used to gain insight into the world view of the participants.

> "It was pretty nice. I had an electric bike. Like the ones
> for the tourists. Like the ones when you go around in
> summer / I had electric bike, charger, super laptop and
> also the charger for the laptop (…) I want to be normal.
> To go out on a Sunday to the café and drink some
> coffee and eat some chocolate cake, smoke (…) /
> Smoke some hash, and have an appetite for the
> chocolate cake. But yeah, vodka wins" (Michal, p. 4:
> 11:28).

Michal aspires to achieve what he perceives as 'normal'. Substance use is still part of everyday life and he values technology as an important part of a successful existence. He has ideas of how a Sunday should look, and what to eat at a café. Michal refers both to the past and an ideal future, where the re-gaining of these items and such prospects will place him in the 'normal' category.

> "And I don't know what to do with my life, what I can
> do. I only want to have a doctor, apartment" (Radim, p.
> 2: 02:40)

> "[…] sometimes we're talking / He'll say / I think he
> tried to / He said I work good, but it's difficult, 'cause

the money is so small. But I'm trying to look. I'm
looking" (Radim, p. 5: 17:55).

For Radim, the main aspiration is to have access to stable housing and being able to visit a medical professional. Due to the increase in pressure from clients, Radim's salary has declined in recent months: "[…] the people want the prices, down, down, down, to my boss. So, I get a little less, a little less, a little less money. So, before, it was like 110 crowns, and then 100" (Radim, p. 4: 09:55).

"I love travel. I've stayed in Turkey, in Germany, in Spain and Czech Republic. I work and I travel, you know?" (Tomasz, p. 2: 01:22).

"This situation, this creepy life. I would look / I must give a normal look for their life. Not this, you know. I'm happy that I stopped everything, you know. No crash my brain. It's not a normal beautiful tradition, you know. It's a fucking pathology, you know. Free, yes" (Thomasz, p. 3: 06:37)

Thomasz describes his aspirations as they relate to his personal freedom. He intentions of wishing to free himself from a 'pathology' as he finds it, is present in his family. As he further states: "Pain is normal for me. This the life. And I don't have a *(unclear)* for the pain" (Tomasz, p. 6: 21:25).

## Summary

The participants in this thesis, have many shared challenges, and the study's aim was to explore how do a vulnerable population such as migrant labourers experience their situation and mental health and employment. This research question was asked and to be answered in relating to theory on globalisation, labour market policies and identity. Existing literature furthermore guided the study, as the literature review began revealing fields in which further research was possible to initiate. The thematic analysis approach was chosen due to its ability to condense larger portions of data and revealing patterns and themes. The analysis was employed to pull out information found within the use of language – the individual components to the narrative.

The interviews were conducted under unfamiliar circumstances for both participants and interviewer within the premises of the Church Army Shelter. The interviews were to a lesser degree designed, as these were intended to be open and develop as the participants narrations unfolded.

However, in cases where the conversational flow was interrupted this was attempted restored. The three participants were male, between 20 – 60 years of age, and had all experienced unemployment in other areas of Denmark and Aalborg, housing issues and homelessness and precarious working conditions. Two were from Poland, and one participant was from The Czech Republic. From the interviews four themes emerged: Working experiences, Crisis, Family, and Aspirations. The analysis finds that the participants have all to a high degree of influence have experienced crises which have caused severe rapid changes in the individual life trajectory. Two of the participants have had several residencies since migrating to Denmark, and with around twelve years of total occupation between them, incidents of stereotyping and racialisation show the diminished use and demonstration of professional capabilities. Considering the unpredictability of establishing a new life in another nation and the constant shifts in circumstances and premises make this a hard endeavour, particularly for labour migrants. Many of these processes are known for taking place in 'second sector' of the dual labour market, in which most migrant labour is observed. Being in this sector underpin the issues also described as part of the participants' experiences. These include issues of citizenship status, societal narratives, and others, which have been explored above, e.g., discrimination.

*Other themes in individual narratives*

For two of the participants, there are mentions of situations involving overall severe challenges to their mental health. These are evident throughout their narratives.

> "I have started to be depressed. Luckily, I have been working a little, so I have been getting some kontanthjælp (…) I go to the mental hospital two times for my sickness, because I didn't know what was happening to me" (Michal, p. 3: 06:35).

> "The police catch me, and then I wake up in a police station (laughs). The kick me out at 6 am., only with my t-shirt, and it is cold" (Michal, p. 4: 11:28).

> "Me, for example, I come from job, take a whole bottle of whiskey and then I go to sleep. Then, back in the morning time, and the next evening the same situation is happening" (Michal, p. 5: 14:23).

These frequently reoccurring, which Michal has, experiences are extreme incidents. In this sense, Michal is experiencing an amplified effect of these previously mentioned transnational processes. In that perspective, and speaking of varying levels of impact, Michal appears to be going through several processes and identity re-negotiations repetitively and re-establishing himself. This non-resolution or even a short lived one, will not bring with it resolution, making the life cycle of the stages of crisis continuously presenting themselves once more.

> "The security checks me. I wait for the police, no problem. And I sleep like this ~ (laughs). They wake me up, give me 2 glasses of water, and I sleep on the desk. Then I wake up: "Oh, what's up what's up? (…) Maybe I have a problem for the (…) / In 3 maybe 6 months I go to the prison. I don't know. I don't have opened my e-boks, you know. And I must look to see this, you know" (Tomasz, p. 5: 18:23).

> "I crashed my head. I / A little bit drinking, you know. I was, you know ~. And then boom (…) I'm stressed, you know. And I must stop the stress and give me / I'm / A little bit love pain" (p. 5: 20:29)

> "Maybe I don't like pain. Pain is normal for me. This the life" (Tomasz, p. 6: 21:25).

> "In Copenhagen, I only drink the strong. In Aalborg, I'm only drinking this one, yeah? For the control, for the brain" (Tomasz, p. 6: 25:30).

Thomasz experiences are very similar to Michal's. However, Tomasz states that he is taking 'active measures' to control his behaviour, such as consuming beers with less alcoholic content. He is also states that he is conflicted with his own relationship with pain, where he at first states that he enjoys pain. This statement changes as he progresses, where he 'normalises' physical pain for him. Encounters with police authorities and the restricted access to government official digital services are an issue, with which the participant also directly asks for help within the interview situation: "Can you help me with this?" (Tomasz, p. 5: 20:29).

# Discussion

The research question that was introduced in the introduction will be discussed in this section. This discussion will be founded in the themes and other relevant insights explored in the analysis. Furthermore, the findings will be discussed in relation to a wider perspective of labour market policy, globalisation as a Western phenomenon, and building a transnational identity. The discussion is based on the personal experiences of the participants, and this must be remembered throughout the section.

## Labour market policy, globalisation, and identity

There are several factors and independent processes taking place in global migration processes. On a globalised level, production in the name of economic prosperity, two sectors are found, and here begins the stereotyping of one from the other in a globalised capitalist driven society: "Workers in low-wage jobs are viewed simply as low-productivity workers […]" (Dickens & Lang, 1985, p. 792). This invisible and everyday 'truth' of many people and industries globally is prevalent and is thus shown through the narratives of the participants participated in this thesis. They share experiences of being underpaid, over-worked and discriminated on the basis of nationality. The participants have through the interviews been open about the impacts of these events, how these have made them experience feelings of further diaspora, unappreciation and isolation. In this regard, the participant experience feelings of being 'less-than' than their native counterparts.

On the individual level, that of identity creation and re-negotiation an "[…] individual's resolution of each of the crises is supposedly reflected in the alternative basic senses or attitudes which develop as the outcome of each crisis stage" (Munley, 1977, p. 262). The attitudes towards further engagement from the participants is intrinsic e re-negotiation, and the participants' future psychosocial and personal identity – are they weakened or strengthened? From the narratives and themes found within the transcripts, there are indications of systems being paradoxical in their construction, i.e., labour from one, gains the other.

For a non-migrant labourer, a truth is such, a second sector native worker is more likely to 'advance' into the primary sector compared to the migrant labourer. There are inherent signs for them, which point in the direction of a scarcity of primary wages and positions. – And in a world of those living without, this may spontaneously become an issue daily, weekly, monthly. This paradoxical fight

between what is desired, believed and the restrictive and aggressive parts of the globalised migrant labourer.

With such assumptions, the idea of belonging anywhere and nowhere and being desired but undeserving, resulting in a refutation of an 'inner' identity. Thus, a continuous process of involuntary adjustments of 'who I am' in each event, as there are many. Each narrative presents stages of crises relating to personal identity, including within social contexts. The narratives are here considered as not only narrative expressions of each individual participant but also provides insights into contemporary history and society as vectors for these processes.

## Limitations and new perspectives

First, the purpose of the study's validity is to determine if it has been valid in terms of ability to research the problem formulation which the thesis has its foundation: "The goal of the sampling process in qualitative research is the theoretically sound selection of a set of cases that allows the researcher to best study the problem under examination" (Moreno, 2002, p. 1762). In social research, this validity is among others ensured throughout the study. Through the assessment of validity, is the back and forth between the problem formulation and transcription, analysis, and discussion.

For both researcher and participants, several incidents influenced the interviews as a whole data set. There were frequent disturbances from members of staff, who could access the interview space at any time, as it primarily served as an open office space for staff and outside actors. These events were not the only factor, as the soundproofing was low, and loud conversations between the shelter's 'users' could easily dominate the space. Thus, obstructing a space, which was attempted to uphold a degree of trust between interviewer and participants. However, these efforts may have caused misunderstandings. These considerations are to be noted, as this will then be reflected in the analysis and discussion.

The sample size has its limitations, due to the small number of participants, the likelihood of several more themes to uncover are high, even conflicting ones. However, these participants represent only themselves in this thesis, and their narratives are what are the pillars of the research and analysis. The interviews were conducted under quite poor conditions and were never planned. This may also

have had an influence on what the participants shared, and how their experiences had affected them.

Personal bias may have had an impact on the study, as the researcher in the interview situation co-create the conversation, and furthermore, interprets the data. As explained in the early stages of the thesis, literature and theory aided in guiding this study. Nonetheless, the researcher has made the reader aware of the smaller sample size and the number of complicated and inter-disciplinary processes with which the participants engage every day.

Lastly, and for future interest, an interactional analysis between the interviewer and participants may further the understanding and experiences of participants, as they relate their narratives. Beyond the observations made, an interactional analysis would support these, and further explore, participants interact non-verbally with both researcher and the immediate environment.

## Conclusion

The data for this thesis was derived from transcribed interviews with migrant labourers. Narratives were the base for this study, and they were analysed through thematic analysis. Regarding the problem formulation **how do socially vulnerable migrant labourers in Aalborg experience their situation, mental health, and irregular employment?** The answers are many, depending on the issues with one is researching. In this context, the transcripts will be viewed as a whole data set, and these revealed, that participants with irregular employment are more exposed to homelessness and stealing to be able to feed themselves. Furthermore, they often encounter situations where they are exposed to inhumane conditions, and therefore is their mental health tested and exposed to frequently.

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# Endnotes

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Church Army priests serve as a contact person for people suffering marginalisation, addiction, mental health,

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