

**NARRATIVE POSITIONING OF SUB-SAHARAN
MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE UNITED ARAB
EMIRATES**

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Master's Thesis
Language, Globalisation and
Intercultural Communication
Department of Languages and
Communication
University of Jyväskylä
Spring 2024

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

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Title Narrative positioning of sub-Saharan migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates	
Subject Language, Globalization and Intercultural Communication	Level Master's thesis
Month and year March 2024	Number of pages 46
<p>Abstract</p> <p>This Master's thesis examines the narratives of migrant workers from sub-Saharan Africa working in the United Arab Emirates (the UAE). The data consists of interviews with seven migrants, of whom four narratives are examined in more detail. The interviews were conducted in the UAE in spring 2015. The research aims to shed light to the connections between narrated everyday experiences and larger societal and global phenomena in the lives of migrant workers in the UAE.</p> <p>The analysis of the data was completed in two stages. First, it was analyzed using the concept of chronotope to examine the shared experiences among migrant workers in the specific time-place nodes across the data set. The study examines narratives linked to the past and home, the past in the UAE, and the present in the UAE. Chronotope analysis has been used to outline similarities in the experiences of interviewed migrant workers.</p> <p>In the second stage of the analysis, for each time-place node, two narratives representing the node were selected for closer examination. And, other of these was further analyzed in detail using a three-level positional analysis (Bamberg 1997, De Fina 2013). By the three-level positional analysis the ways participants narrate their identities in relation to the story they are telling, in relation to the person they are telling it to, and to link the positions emerging in the narrative to wider phenomena related to migrant labor in the literature, in the media, and in the responses of other interviewees are described.</p> <p>The results of the study illustrate, on the one hand, the similarities in the experiences of migrant workers and how the events experienced by individuals reflect wider known phenomena, and, on the other hand, how, despite the similarities and wider phenomena, the narratives of individuals, reveal the way in which one person perceives themselves in relation to the events of their life and the people around them.</p>	
Keywords migration, narration, identity, positioning analysis, United Arab Emirates, Africa	
Depository University of Jyväskylä	
Additional information	

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen	Laitos Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä Veera Wusu	
Työn nimi Narrative positioning of sub-Saharan migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates	
Oppiaine Language, Globalization and Intercultural Communication	Työn laji Maisterintutkielma
Aika Maaliskuu 2024	Sivumäärä 46
<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Maisterintutkielma tarkastelee Saharan eteläpuolisesta Afrikasta lähteneiden Yhdistyneissä Arabiemiirikunnissa (UAE) työskentelevien siirtotyöläisten narratiiveja. Aineistona on seitsemän siirtolaisen haastattelut, joista neljän narratiiveja on tarkasteltu yksityiskohtaisemmin. Haastattelut on toteutettu Yhdistyneissä Arabiemiirikunnissa keväällä 2015. Tutkielman tavoitteena on valottaa jokapäiväisistä tapahtumista kerrottujen tarinoiden ja Arabiemiirikunnissa elävien siirtotyöläisten elämään linkittyvien laajojen yhteiskunnallisten ja globaalien ilmiöiden suhdetta.</p> <p>Aineisto on käsitelty kahdessa vaiheessa. Ensin siitä on tarkasteltu chronotope-käsitteen avulla tiettyihin aika-paikka-kiteymiin liittyviä siirtotyöläisten kesken jaettuja kokemuksia koko aineiston osalta. Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan menneisyyteen ja kotiin, menneisyyteen ja Yhdistyneisiin Arabiemiirikuntiin, sekä nykyhetkeen ja Yhdistyneisiin Arabiemiirikuntiin kytkeytyviä narratiiveja. Chronotope-analyysin avulla aineistosta on hahmotettu haastateltujen siirtotyöläisten kokemusten samankaltaisuuksia.</p> <p>Analyysin toisessa vaiheessa jokaiseen aika-paikka -kiteytymään liittyen on valittu lähempää tarkastelua varten kaksi narratiivia, jotka edustavat kyseistä kiteymää. Edelleen näistä toinen on analysoitu kolmitasoisien positioanalyysin (Bamberg 1997, De Fina 2013) avulla yksityiskohtaisesti. Kolmitasoisien positioanalyysin avulla on kuvattu osallistujien tapaa kuvata identiteettejään suhteessa tarinaan, jonka he kertovat, suhteessa henkilöön, jolle he sen kertovat, sekä linkitetty narratiivissa esille tulevia positioita laajempiin kirjallisuudessa, mediassa, sekä muiden haastateltavien vastauksissa ilmeneviin siirtotyöläisyyteen liittyviin ilmiöihin.</p> <p>Tutkielman tulokset kuvaavat yhtäältä siirtotyöläisten kokemuksiin liittyviä samankaltaisuuksia sekä sitä, miten yksittäisen ihmisen kohtaamat tapahtumat heijastavat laajempia tiedossa olevia ilmiöitä, ja toisaalta sitä, miten samankaltaisuuksista ja laajoista ilmiöistä huolimatta yksilöiden narratiivit yksityiskohtaisesti tarkasteltuna kertovat nimenaan yhden ihmisen tavasta hahmottaa itsensä suhteessa elämänsä tapahtumiin ja ympärillä oleviin ihmisiin.</p>	
Asiasanat siirtolaisuus, narratiivisuus, identiteetti, positioanalyysi, Yhdistyneet Arabiemiirikunnat, Afrikka	
Säilytyspaikka Jyväskylän yliopisto	
Muita tietoja	

TABLES

Table 1: Summary of the data.....	13
Table 2: Time-space nodes from the participants, detailed analysis (xx)	17
Table 3: Chronotopes in the data	39

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Migration from the sub-Saharan Africa to the Gulf.....	1
1.2	A short history of slavery in the Gulf area.....	2
1.3	Precarious work in the United Arab Emirates.....	3
1.4	Neoliberal capitalism and race.....	5
1.5	Research aims and research questions.....	6
1.6	Researcher's position.....	7
2	THEORY.....	9
2.1	Narratives.....	9
2.2	Chronotope.....	11
2.3	Positioning and identity in the narratives.....	12
3	DATA AND METHOD.....	13
3.1	Narratives in the data.....	14
3.2	Time-space arrangement of the narratives.....	15
3.3	Three-level positioning analysis.....	15
4	RESULTS OF THE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS.....	17
4.1	Past at home: Narratives about taking future to your own hands.....	18
4.1.1	Mary's narrative: Managing on my own.....	19
4.1.2	Jonathan's narrative: They decided that I should come.....	20
4.1.3	Positioning analysis.....	22
4.1.3.1	Level 1: Mary, "one guy", and the father.....	23
4.1.3.2	Level 2: Mary is both brave and a victim.....	23
4.1.3.3	Level 3: Studying opens up opportunities.....	25
4.2	Past at the UAE: Narratives about the shock at the arrival.....	25
4.2.1	Luke's narrative: Sharing empathy.....	26
4.2.2	Mary's narrative: Getting through it.....	28
4.2.3	Positioning analysis.....	30
4.2.3.1	Level 1: Luke and <i>them</i>	30
4.2.3.2	Level 2: Luke's experience is similar to others'.....	31
4.2.3.3	Level 3: Images of life abroad.....	32
4.3	Present life in the UAE: Narratives about navigating the restrictions.....	33
4.3.1	Eva's narrative: <i>Them</i> against me.....	34
4.3.2	Jonathan's narrative: Struggle at the workplace.....	35
4.3.3	Positioning analysis.....	36
4.3.3.1	Level 1: Eva and her colleagues.....	36

4.3.3.2	Level 2: Eva is sure she is right	37
4.3.3.3	Level 3: Migrants relations with each other	38
4.4	Summary of the results of narrative analysis.....	38
5	IMAGINATION AND POSITIONING IN THE GLOBAL WORLD	41
5.1	Ethnoscapas.....	42
5.2	Mediascapas.....	43
5.3	Skills and self-improvement.....	44
6	DISCUSSION.....	45
	REFERENCES.....	47
	APPENDICES	

1 INTRODUCTION

Studying and understanding migration is a task taken up on many scientific fields. Researchers, politicians, decision-makers, and laypeople all have something to say about those who are moving across borders in the global world.

Migration can be observed from both macro and micro perspectives, and its influences on societies, communities, families, and individuals have been mapped and analysed for decades. This master's thesis is aiming to add one drop into the bowl of knowledge about migration. Its starting point is at individual level, in the stories people tell about their experiences. Through the stories I build a case-study like understanding about the links between individual identity positioning and wider social realities where migrant workers in a specific context live and work.

This is a qualitative study which employs narrative methodology, particularly "Level 3 positioning analysis" (later "Three-level positioning analysis") developed by Bamberg (1997), Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008), and De Fina (2013). Data consists of interviews of seven African migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Data was gathered in April 2015 in the UAE.

Next in this introduction, I will introduce the wider context where people participating in this study migrate and live. I describe the migration from sub-Saharan Africa to the Gulf in general, history of slave trade between Africa and the Gulf, and the working conditions of migrant workers coming mainly from Africa and Asia to the Gulf. I will connect the working conditions in a particular country to the world-wide neoliberal system and highlight the role of the race in the system. After general introduction, I will present the aim of the study and the research questions and conclude the introduction with description of my relationship to the people participating in the study and to the context where they lived and worked during the data collection.

1.1 Migration from the sub-Saharan Africa to the Gulf

This thesis focuses on narratives of people who have migrated from sub-Saharan Africa into the United Arab Emirates. In general, migration is often thought to happen

from the global south to the global north or as south-south -migration where people move for example inside the continent of Africa. Concerning Africa, it is often seen as a continent of mass-emigration from where more and more people is willing to move away. However, majority of the migration in Africa takes place inside the continent, and it has not increased but decreased in last decades. (Flahaux and De Haas 2016).

Traditionally people from Africa have emigrated also into global north, especially to the former colonies. Lately the oil-rich Gulf countries have become more attractive option as well. Both the restrictions of immigration policies in many European countries and the growing economies of the Gulf countries can be seen as explanatory factors for this change. (Flahaux and De Haas 2016, 24). There is not much statistical data about the increased migration from Africa to the Gulf per se, but the number of reported cases of maltreatment of African labour migrants in GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries sheds light to the overall situation of migration. (Atong, Mayah, and Odigie 2018, vii).

Migration from African countries (more specifically in the context of this thesis from countries in sub-Saharan Africa such as Kenya, Nigeria, and Cameroon) to the Gulf is hard to describe in terms of south-north or south-south migration. Even though the standard of living for local people in the United Arab Emirates is much higher than in the home countries of the migrants - or even in the Europe in average - the conditions for migrant workers are far from that. In the chapters 1.3. and 1.4 I will describe some of the features of work-based migration in the United Arab Emirates. Since there are claims that some of the working conditions in the UAE reflect features of slavery (see Degorge 2006), I start by looking to the history of slavery in the Gulf and slave trade between Africa and the area.

1.2 A short history of slavery in the Gulf area

In the Middle East region, slavery has recorded history since the time written texts appear (Degorge 2006, 659), and there are mentions about slavery as an institutional part of societies for example in the holy texts of all big religions of the area (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). In the Gulf area, connections with Africa through Zanzibar's slave trade date back to early history but, according to Kelly (1968, cited in Bilkhair 2006, 227), slave trade started to be even more exploitative at the end of 1600s. Slave trade was abolished in 1876, but many slaves remained in Zanzibar, and many were still traded to the Gulf area. (Bilkhair 2006, 227; Zdanowki 2011, 864).

There are varied estimations about the number of slaves trafficked from (Eastern) Africa to the Gulf. According to Zdanowski (2011, 864), most estimations about the number of people traded during 1800-1870 are between 1,25 and 2 million, but some

estimations are that over 20 million people died, were lost, or enslaved to the Gulf area during 1800s. In addition to African slaves, slaves from Arabian Peninsula and Persia were also part of the Gulf's societies. These slaves were often wives or concubines, they worked in domestic sphere, and their children were owned by the master. (Zdanowski 2011, 865).

In the Guld area, slaves have been working in different positions: women as domestic servants or concubines, men mainly as soldiers, farm workers, pearl divers, but also as domestic servants. (Bilkhair 2006, 227; Zdanowski 2011, 864–865). Especially in the pearl diving industry slaves were essential, and slaves were used in Dubai and other coastal cities for that purpose until 1930s. (Bilkhair 2006, 227.)

There are claims that the treatment of slaves was not particularly rude and – unlike in the America – in Guld states there was no strict racial categorization based on the origin of people, and slaves were assimilating into the social system of the host community. (Zdanowski 2011; Bilkhair 2006, 228–229). However, as Zdanowski (2011) writes, one should relate consciously to such claims. Even if, in theory, domestic slavery was an arrangement which benefited both the master and the slave, and if the children from concubine marriages were integrated into the social webs of their father, in practise racial relations and possession rights dictated the affairs more and slaves and their offsprings were treated differently than the free people. (Zdanowski 2011, 879–880).

1.3 Precarious work in the United Arab Emirates

To frame the societal and global context in which the migrant workers in the UAE operate, in the following I will present shortly the history of arrangement of workforce in the UAE, and observations from work life research which has analysed precarious, unstable, and potentially dangerous working conditions.

In the UAE, expatriates constitute about 88,5 % of the population. (Jamal 2015, 602; see also GMI 2024). Workforce migration's history dates to 1960s when oil was discovered in the UAE, and since 1970s UAE's government has been actively and controlling the migration. *Kafala*¹ sponsorship system was established as the main

¹ *kafala* is a system of migrant sponsorship in many Middle East countries. The origins of the system are in the ideas of hospitality and support but nowadays it is required for getting visa and working contract to have a named local "sponsor", either individual or a company. In practice, *kafala* is a system for labor control: migrant worker cannot enter the country without a sponsor of whom they are dependent on (since it is defined that the sponsor, *kafeel*, is financially responsible for the sponsored during their stay in the country). This leads to the situation where the sponsored person's decisions are tied to the sponsors agreement. Often, for example, the passport is in the possession of the sponsor and leaving the country or change of workplace is not possible without the permission of the sponsor.

protocol to manage migration, and later migration and work-related legislations has been reformed in response to international critique and accusations about human trafficking and other human right violations concerning migrant workers. (ILO 2013; ILO 2017; Jamal 2015; MIPEX 2019).

In the UAE, migration policy is defined as “migration without integration” in the MIPEX-categorizations (MIPEX 2019) which means that migrants have no opportunities to truly participate into the society. Majority of the migrant workers do not obtain opportunity to get citizenship (Jamal 2015, 603) or even permanent residence permit (MIPEX 2019). This means, migrant workers cannot access state services like healthcare or education. (Jamal 2015, 606).

“Precarious work” is connected to the freedom of markets, to the thinking which requires that the firms and corporations should be freed from governmental and other monitoring and have ability to be flexible in terms of how much employers they need and for what period. The ideology emphasising the freedom of market is called neoliberalism. (Lambert & Herod 2016, 2)

Precarious work in the context of neoliberal economies has been described by Lambert and Herod (2016, 7) through continuums of four different dimensions: low earnings, low social wages (i.e., poor access to healthcare, pensions, etc.), little regulatory protection, and little choice in shaping the work arrangements. African migrant workers in the UAE can be seen at the maximum of all these continuums: they earn very little if compared to the earnings of local people or to migrant workers from the Global North. They have excessive working hours, no access to their passports which means they have no chance to change the employer, they have uncomfortable accommodation, and they have no trust towards their managers and employers. Some authors have been calling the arrangement in the UAE as “modern day slavery”. (De-George 2006).

Lambert and Herold (2016) see the precarious work springing from the industries need to compete in the global markets and, to do so, cut the costs of the production as much as possible. In the context of the UAE, the migrant workers are not, however, working in industries aiming for global market with competitive prices. Hence there is no need to cut the costs of production to produce affordable items and create maximum financial benefits - quite the contrary: For example, the migrant workers interviewed for this thesis worked on the service sector and produced services for well-off people. The migrant workers I interviewed worked in cleaning, hotels, beauty salons, and on the security sector. Their work takes place in a country whose position in the global market is secured because of oil production. From this perspective, there is no pressure towards neoliberal ideology, and in many societal spheres more traditional values are highly esteemed, but neoliberalism’s exploitative logic towards workers is utilized for the advantage of the UAE employers.

One of the strongest critiques about the neoliberalism's influence in the UEA is written by Kanna (2010). He cites Abdulla (2006) who describes city of Dubai as "the ultimate neoliberal city. This means that Dubai is a city which provides cheap and skilled labour without any state interference. Kanna (2010) refers to the mind-set of Dubai residents which frame them as "flexible citizens to whom taking advantage of others goes without saying". In other words, that is how one must do to produce profit. (Kanna 2010, 109). McPhee (2014) contrasts Dubai's claims of neoliberal approach to economy with the employee's reality: in Dubai there is "no freedom of movement, of labour, of hiring, and no market-led salary structure" (p. 2). In addition, worker unions are forbidden (Buckely 2013), *kafala*-system restricts the length of migrants' stay, and expatriate workers are valued solely as "commodified units". (McPhee 2014, 3).

1.4 Neoliberal capitalism and race

As mentioned in the previous chapter, precarious work is an expression of global neoliberal ideology on the everyday working life. Neoliberal market ideology and capitalism play an important role also in the global migration and the need for people to be mobile beyond the borders of their home countries.

To further connect the global level liberal capitalism and the situation of migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates, I present Fernandez's (2021) observations of how the *kafala* system and capitalism' logic work together to limit the possibilities of migrant workers specially from Asia and Africa in the UAE. Fernandez (2021) claim is that *kafala* itself operates as "a racially stratified occupational hierarchy of migrant workers that is legitimated by a hegemonic ideology and practices of degradation, diffused coercion and state enforcement" and purposefully brings race to the centre of analysis about *kafala*. For Fernandez, *kafala* is a system of institutionalized humiliation. I consider Fernandez (2021) article important for this study because of their focus on the race.

According Melamed (2015, 77; cited in Fernandez 2021) "procedures of racialization and capitalism are ultimately never separable from each other". Fernandez (2021, 4345) claims that it is not an accident that mainly Asian and African migrants are working in the most precarious, dehumanizing, and exploitative situations in the Middle East. The aspect of race has not been typically included in the analyses about the *kafala* system but has been mostly focused on the citizen-non-citizen hierarchy. However, the non-citizens are arranged hierarchically in the system as well: migrants from the Global North (often called as expats) are at the top of the non-citizen hierarchy and don't necessarily experience any limitations regardless of them being in relationship with a sponsor. In the middle there are migrants mainly from other Arab

countries, Philippines, and India, working in professional or semi-professional positions. At the lowest level of the system are construction workers and domestic workers from Asia and Africa. (Fernandez 2021, 4348). Nationality, race, and class play role in the hierarchy of migrant workers in the *kafala* system.

Fernandez (2021, 4357) connects the racialized humiliation in the *kafala* to the capitalist logic by explaining how upholding the system benefits financially both individual actors (individuals and/or companies) and the state: on the workplace level the underpayment, overwork, and other exploitation of the workers benefits the employer directly and at the state level the ability to send “nonproductive” (i.e. ill, injured) workers back to their home countries to receive treatments saves the money of oil rich nations.

1.5 Research aims and research questions

This thesis aims to analyse the connections between individual migrant workers’ stories about everyday experiences, and wider societal structures in an environment where these migrant workers’ freedom is potentially restricted. The analysis was done at two levels: first by observing the recurring time-space connections, *chronotopes*, from the interview data and analysing the features of shared experiences in this node. Second, by extracting shorter narratives from each node, and analysing identity positionings displayed in them. The aim is to first combine similarities between several narratives (with the help of chronotopical analysis), secondly analyse in detail the positionings of individual narratives on each of them, and thirdly connect the findings of the positioning analyses to larger scale phenomena related to migrant workers lives in the UAE.

Migration and migrants’ experiences have been researched on both micro and macro level in different disciplines. Both chronotopical analyses and identity positioning analyses are also plenty in the field of migration studies. By analysing connections between narrated everyday experiences and wider social realities and processes, I am aiming to show how people navigate through narration in the environments where they did not anticipate being, and do not necessarily feel completely comfortable to live in but in where they, for now, have settled.

Research questions of this thesis are:

1. What kind of narratives about past and present participants tell, and what shared experiences are found in them?
2. How do participants position themselves in the narratives?

3. How does the identity display in the narratives reflect wider social processes connected to the lives of migrant workers in the Gulf?

The first question is answered with the help of the concept of chronotope which I used as a hermeneutical tool to form time-space nodes in the narrative data. Regarding to the second question, detailed positioning analysis is offered of the chosen narrative passages. The third question I answer both by offering the third level of the positioning analysis, and by further connecting observations from the data with the Appadurai's concept of *scapes* and with the discourse of skills and self-improvement related to migration in chapter 5.

1.6 Researcher's position

Referring to previously described hierarchy of migrant workers in the UAE, I acknowledge my position at the top of the hierarchy while staying in the UAE from October 2013 to May 2014 and getting to know the participants of the study. I was there as a stay-home-mum for our three children while my husband played as a professional football player in a local team.

We participated to the activities of a congregation which has its origins in Africa, in Nigeria, in the previous home country of my husband. That was a natural way for our family to keep connection to church while away from Finland. People participating in the church services were mainly with African background and that was where I learned to know some of the participants of the study. My husband became more good friend with them since he stayed in the UAE longer and he also helped some of them with the difficulties they encountered after I had already returned home with our children.

One year later we travelled back to the UAE for a family holiday and same time I had planned for data collection. I interviewed seven people who volunteered for participation. They all had migrated from sub-Saharan Africa and had been staying in the UAE varying times: some of them had been there just for few months, someone over two years.

Originally, I was interested about the agency of people in the restricted environment since, regardless of our privileged position as migrants from Global North in the UAE, we as a family had experienced discomfort with the regulations and needs to ask for permission from the "sponsor" for things we would not have asked permission in our home country. I was basically curious on how people, who I had observed been in more restricted position than us, felt living in such circumstances. As I started to listen and transcribe the interviews, it started to make sense to look at the stories

(smaller and bigger ones) and shift the focus from the concept of agency towards construction of identities in the stories. Instead of evaluating the “amount” or quality of agency and its restrictions, I wanted to understand how the turns of life that has taken my participants into UAE are part of the narrative they tell others about their lives. Identity positioning approach offered useful tool with which I could combine the grassroot-level individual experiences to wider social realities. So, the relationship between individuals’ lives and societal realities are at the core of this thesis through the lenses of stories and identities.

2 THEORY

The aim of this thesis is to shed light on how the individual narrated experiences of African migrant workers in the interviews and wider social and global processes and phenomena are connected. In this chapter I will first introduce how I have understood narratives in this study, how concept of *chronotope* is useful in arranging and analysing the data, and finally, how three-level positioning analysis has been used in this thesis.

2.1 Narratives

Narrative research and study of narratives are abundant in relation to study of migration. Narratives are used in several different fields and analysed with different methods. Researchers relate to narratives differently: some are focusing on the structural aspects of the narratives, some on the interactional, performative features of them. (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012; Hyvärinen 2012; Squire et al. 2013). In this thesis, the reasoning to focus on stories and narratives comes from phenomenological understanding about narrative. Marita Eastmond (2007) defines narratives as lived experiences. According to phenomenology, individuals understand the world through experiences which are created in interaction between themselves and the environment. Eastmond (2007, 249) writes: “meaning is ascribed to phenomena through being experienced”. These experiences require narrating to become understandable. One can understand other people’s *experience* through what and how they talk about it. (Eastmond 2007, 249). In addition, following De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012, 18–19), narrative approach states that narrating is a fundamental human way of knowing and sharing, and by choosing narrative approach, researcher is prioritizing knowledge production which is interpretive and subjective.

People recount their experiences both for themselves and for other people. These moments when experiences are communicated often take a form of story or narrative.

Often story and narrative are used interchangeably, and so it is in this thesis as well. However, story, according to William Labov (cited in De Fina & Tseng, 2017, 381) is presentation of past events in time-aligned order, and have a certain structure (abstract, orientation, complication, resolution, coda, evaluation; see Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2019, 91), and a narrative, on the other hand, is a concept which covers also non-canonical telling and narrations without Labovian structure. (De Fina & Tseng 2017).

According to Eastmond (2007, 249), the relationship of experience and expression is reciprocal: the experience gives foundation for the story but telling it further shapes and moulds the “original” experience. While analysing narrative, there is no access to what really happened. A researcher can only analyse how the person chooses to give meaning to what they have experienced in the moment of telling it. Stories in the middle of interaction can be treated as performances (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012, 56–64). Perspective of performance allows to analyse storytelling as an act in the middle of interaction, analyse the choices of the teller and consider the interplay of tradition and innovation. It brings forth the emergent nature of stories. (ibid. 61).

The moment of when the story is told, to whom, and for what purposes, all shapes the form of telling. The current life situation and all that has happened after the event took place, also shape the experience and the way it is communicated. (Eastmond 2007, 249).

Eastmond (2007) offers four viewpoints to the relationship of life’s experiences and what is told and researched about them: She guides to distinguish *life as lived*, *life as experience*, *life as told*, and *life as text*. Life as lived refers to the events which take place in an individual's life to the level where no interpretation or meaning is attached to them. Life as experienced is the individual's explanation for what happens to them. These explanations are informed by previous life experiences and environments. Life as told is the narrative: the way an individual expresses their life events in a certain moment for the certain audience. And life as text is the researcher’s interpretation and production out of the narrative. According to Bauman (1969, cited in De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012, 62) it is also important to separate analytically *narrative event* and *narrated events*. Narrated events may be told in different ways for different audiences.

Based on Eastmond’s (2007) understanding of the function of narrative and De Fina’s and Georgakopoulou’s (2012) descriptions about narrative approach as an epistemology, I find the three-level positioning analysis (presented below in chapter 2.3) fitting well and offering deeper understanding on how the way the narrative is told is meaningful from the perspective of identity positioning. Three-level positioning analysis considers narratives from the aspects of story-internal factors, the moment of narration and the audience to whom it is told, and its link to wider factors influencing individuals’ lives.

2.2 Chronotope

Time and space are present in narrating in different ways. Time and space can be seen as the background for the narrated events and as that, they can be left without detailed analysis. (Baynham 2003). However, according to Baynham (2003), this kind of shallow treatment of time-space is not satisfactory in narrative sociolinguistic research. On the other hand, time-space connections can be put into the core of analysis, for example with focus on *chronotopes*. Chronotope – literally timespace – is a concept originally used by Bakhtin (1930s) in literary theory to analyse narratives.

In sociolinguistics, the concept has been used to overcome distinction of “micro” and “macro” levels in the analysis. (Blommaert 2015). Since chronotope binds together the aspects of place and time, it has been utilized as a concept which connects many theorisations, frameworks, and approaches of contemporary sociolinguistics of migration. (See Karimzad & Catedral 2021).

In their book, Karimzad and Catedral (2021) present different waves of the usage of the concept in sociolinguistics. They claim that the first wave was concentrating on large-scale chronotopes such as progress vs. tradition. The second wave, with the work of Jan Blommaert and Anna De Fina, has concentrated on chronotopic identities which claims that identities are always performed in the constraints of time-space conditions. They argue that both large and small scale chronotopes need to be considered in examination of identities. (Karimzad & Catedral 2021, 19–20).

Often especially nationality or ethnolinguistically related identifications are relevant in the context of transnational migration. (Castells 2011, cited in Karimzad & Catedral 2021, 9). However, these large scale chronotopes are not discussed in this thesis. In contrast, following the work of Blommaert and De Fina (2016), small scale chronotopes are seen equally relevant in connection with identities. In their paper, Blommaert and De Fina (2016, 3) point out, based on a work of Bourdieu and Passeron about student life, that shared time-spaces create shared experiences which, in turn, become part of autobiographical memories later in life. In relation to narratives, I aim to discover references to these shared time-space experiences in the stories of participants of this study. In addition to the small scale chronotopes, large scale chronotopes play a role in the identity constructions and displays as well, but as mentioned, they are outside the scope of the analysis in this thesis.

I have observed the chronotopes from the larger interview data than the narrative excerpts presented in the chapter 4. In the chronotopic analysis I have been utilizing the whole interview data (see table 1 in chapter 3) from seven participants. While analysing the narratives through the frame, I looked for combinations of time (past, present, and the future) and place (home, the UAE, somewhere else), and the behaviours, subjectivities and discourses which reveal shared experiences attached to them.

2.3 Positioning and identity in the narratives

Narrators position themselves, according to Bamberg (1997), on three different levels in narratives: firstly, the characters in the story are positioned in relation to each other. If the narrator themselves is in the story they are telling, they are positioning themselves in relation to others presented in the story. In different stories the same person (the narrator) can position themselves differently.

Secondly, the narrator is positioning themselves in relation to the audience of the story. In the moment of data gathering, the interview, migrant workers were answering to me, bachelor's degree student naively interested about their experiences as African migrant workers in a country where I had seen with my own eyes that the environment was not friendly. We shared some understanding about the context but of course we were in completely different situations in there: at the time of the interviews, I had come to visit the UAE as a tourist with my family after leaving from there one year earlier. The interviewees were friends with my husband, and I had met most of them during our stay as well. They told the stories for me as specialists of the side of the UAE I did not know. They told me about their life before UAE – something which I did not know either. They went through the details of difficulties of working with the agencies, getting cheated in their contracts with them, and about the harshness of their current working conditions. They positioned themselves as informants who assumed they told something I was not able to know without them. And they were completely right about it.

Thirdly, according to Bamberg (1997), narrators position themselves and their narratives to wider discourses and connections. According to De Fina (2013), the level three positioning analysis requires ethnographic data to which the narratives can be connected and compared to. De Fina suggests that in situations where ethnographic data is difficult to access – as it would have been in the case of my interviewees: I could not have got access to follow them in their daily lives, in their work or housing etc. – the data gathered from people with similar experiences, media sources, reports, and research publications can serve as an ethnographic background.

3 DATA AND METHOD

The data of this study consists of interviews of seven migrant workers from Sub-Saharan Africa working and living in the United Arab Emirates at the time of the interview (in spring 2015). Four of the interviews were chosen for the more detailed analysis. Two of these participants are women and two are men and they had been living in the UAE at the time of the interviews from few months to a bit over one year. Names are pseudonyms, most of them chosen by the participants themselves.

Table 1: Summary of the data.

Name of the participant	Date of the interview	Time spent in the UAE at the time of the interview (*)	Part of the detailed analysis yes/no
Luke	6.4.2015	between one and two years	yes
Mary	10.4.2015	about one year	yes
Jonathan	9.4.2015	between one and two years	yes
Eva	12.4.2015	less than a year	yes
Jakob	6.4.2015	unknown	no
Mark	9.4.2015	between two and three years	no
Matthew	9.4.2015	between one and two years	no

(* approximation)

3.1 Narratives in the data

In this thesis, I am approaching my data through the small narratives in it. The data was originally gathered as semi-structured interviews in 2015 in the UAE for my bachelor's thesis. I have informed consent from the participants and got the permission to use the interviews for master's thesis as well. The data has been fully anonymized, the pseudonyms were invented together with the participant during the interview. During the data collection, GDPR was not yet in effect. The length of the interviews varied from 25 minutes to 1,5 hours.

The interview questions (appendix 1) were designed to guide the conversation into topics related to the experienced agency of the migrant workers in restricted environment which was in line with my research aim in the bachelor thesis. While I was reading the transcripts for the master's thesis, it became obvious that participants had often chosen the narrative as the method to deliver answers to my questions. Many of the questions were invitations to tell a story (e.g. "How did you end up in the UAE?" or "How has the life been in here?") even though I had not realised it when planning for the interviews.

The narratives presented in this thesis were picked and organized through several rounds of analyses. I started the analysis by familiarizing myself with the whole data. I read through the transcriptions several times and tried to understand them broadly. After that I started to draw excerpts of stories from the data focusing on one participant's interview at a time. I arranged the data according to time-frame of past, current, and the future. Soon I noticed that spaces (home, the UAE, somewhere) were quite systematically connected to the narrations of time, so I further arranged the data according to time-space connections. Concept of choronotope has been utilized as a hermeneutical tool to analyse such connections and to find the similarities of experiences described in them, and I have used it in the first level of analysis.

Then I further organized the data by separating the small narratives from the larger data. I chose two stories to represent narratives in each chronotope, and one narrative from each chronotope for more detailed analysis. The chronotopes were connected to past at home, past at the UAE, and the present at the UAE. By presenting the connections of time and place I wish to be able to offer context and similarities of narrated experiences as a background for the more detailed analysis of the small samples of the data.

3.2 Time-space arrangement of the narratives

As mentioned, places like the home country, the UAE, and other places (like London, USA, or Europe, or generally *abroad*) became often connected with time, past and present, in the data. Concept of *chronotope* has been used to analyse space-time connections in this thesis.

In the migrant interviews three distinctive locations are present: the home, the UAE, and in somewhere else. These locations are also quite coherently connected to time dimensions of past and present. Concerning future, many places are mentioned in the interviews especially when participants are talking about their future at home before coming into the UAE. Past is connected to *home*, or *in the UAE* when referring to experiences which the narrator tells as something they have passed through and survived. The present and the UAE are connected and framed as settings where one did not originally intent to be but where they are settling in after often shocking arrival into the UAE. The past and home are connected, but home is referred to in relation to the future as well. Also, the past in the UAE was referred to differently than the UAE at the present.

Narratives about the future that would have been told from the current time of narration were scarce in the data, and I didn't have any of them analysed in this study. This may indicate the insecure situation where the migrant workers whom I interviewed were in. It might be difficult or nearly impossible to talk or plan about the future when one does not experience stability in the current situation.

In the analysis, I first focused on choronotopes past +home, past + UAE, and present + UAE, and I used them to arrange the data. I found similarities especially in the ways how participants described the flow of events that eventually lead to the situation where they found themselves in the UAE, and in the ways how past in the UAE was set into comparison with the present in the UAE. For the chronotopic analysis I went through all the interview data from all seven participants and aimed to find references specifically to shared time-space related experiences.

I chose excerpts from these for further analysis, and during the detailed positioning analysis I reminded myself of what other participants had talked about their experiences in similar situations.

3.3 Three-level positioning analysis

From each time-space node I chose one short excerpt for the detailed analysis. I analysed them by using Bamberg's three-level positioning analysis (Bamberg 1997;

Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; De Fina 2013). In the positioning analysis, identities are treated as results of language use in a specific situation. Narratives are not seen as presentations of pre-existing identity, but identity is seen as constructed for the specific purposes through the narrative told in a certain moment. (De Fina 2019). Narratives are seen as tools to present oneself or membership of certain social category, or as a tool to contest assumptions about these. (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012, 166–176.)

In the process of analysis, I went through the three levels in their numerical order: I separated the characters in the narrative and described the speaker's relations to them. Second, I analysed how, through the narrative, the speaker positions themselves towards me in the moment of the interview. At this stage I paid attention to both context of the interview (what was told before and after the narrative or what was discussed about the same topic in other parts of the interview), and the stance the speaker took towards me while telling the narrative. At the third level, I observed reference done for wider processes and phenomena which I had recognized from the literature, through my short experience as a migrant in the UAE, or in the interviews of other participants of the study.

De Fina points out that positioning analysis (Bamberg 1997) on the level three – local interaction positioned in relation to wider societal discourses and processes – requires ethnographically gathered data. However, as traditional ethnography is not always possible (De Fina 2013, 46) as is the case of this study among migrant workers in low-paid work in the UAE, the researcher can treat their interview data, other studies, and media texts as object of ethnographic investigation. The aim is to recognize reoccurring patterns and from them draw observations about wider social processes, discourses, shared understandings, and presuppositions. (De Fina 2013, 46–47). In this study, I did not gather ethnographic data. Third level positioning analysis is based on reports and research concerning migrant workers situation in the UAE in general (see Keane, McGeehan 2008; Jamal 2015) African migrant workers circumstances in the UAE and in the Gulf area (see Ali 2018; Atong, Mayah, Odigie 2018), neoliberal ideologies in the UAE (see Kanna 2010; Buckley 2013), kafala system in the UAE (Dito 2015; ILO 2017) which is connected to forced labour and human trafficking in the area (Degorge 2006; ECHR 2012; ILO 2013).

4 RESULTS OF THE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

This chapter is organized according to time-space connections of the data. Narratives about past are connected to home and to the time of arrival into the UAE. Present is connected to the current situation in the UAE. In each sub-chapter, first there is a short overview of the chronotope, and after that, the narratives are presented. From each chronotope, only other of the narrative excerpts was chosen for detailed three-level positioning analysis. In the table below are the time-space node narratives presented from participants. Double x refers to those chosen for the detailed analysis.

Table 2: Time-space nodes from the participants, detailed analysis (xx)

	Past at home	Past in the UAE	Present in UAE
Luke		xx	
Mary	xx	x	
Jonathan	x		x
Eva			xx

Next, I will present the narratives about the past. These narratives about are connected to the location of the home - the time before moving abroad - and the UAE, the time before the moment of narration and especially at the beginning of the stay, immediately after the arrival. Then, I will present narratives about the present in the UAE and, lastly, I shortly summarise the finding of the narrative analysis.

4.1 Past at home: Narratives about taking future to your own hands

In the narratives of most of the interviewees, *the home* is depicted first as a place where everything was going on well but then a distraction came – someone died, business collapsed, workplace or opportunities to study were not available. This caused the need to start to plan something and to find the life somewhere else. Narratives about home include the process of decision-making and descriptions of who were initiative in suggesting moving abroad, how did migrants themselves relate to the initiation, and what was the role of family and outside forces in the decision-making. In addition, the plans and dreams and the meanings attached to location *abroad* were discussed, as well as the migrants' reflections about ending up moving to UAE. It is noteworthy that the UAE was not the primary aim for any of them. In relation to the meaning of abroad, migrants narrate different locations as being abroad but attach different meanings to them depending on where the location is.

When narrating about the past at home, participants mention their family members and/or relatives and their relationship to them. They depict themselves as equal members of their small communities and as active and productive individuals (like students, workers, small business owners, etc.). When referring to home, there is a disruption in the narrative at some point: Time is split between time when everything going on as planned and time when something happened and there was a (sometimes urgent) need for a new plan.

From the choronotopical analysis' point of view, the people who inhabit the chronotope and the descriptions about the narrator's activeness and belonging were similar in the interviews. Similarly, regardless of did they have to plan to move abroad because of unfortunate events or because of their own willingness to leave, they depicted themselves as the ones who had the final say about the matter. I named the chronotope related to past at home as *taking future to your own hands*.

The question of why people migrate and in what conditions the migration decision is done, is one of the key questions of migration theories (Castles, de Haas & Miller 2014, 25). In the narratives of the migrant workers I interviewed, events that happened at home before the migration took place, play an important role. They offer the backdrop against which the current situation is easier to explain and understand. The narratives about the migration decision-making were based on reasoning related either to a sudden tragedy that changed the course of life, or to the willingness to try-out something else.

In the following there are Mary's and Jonathan's narratives about the past at home and about the process of decision making.

4.1.1 Mary's narrative: Managing on my own

In Mary's narrative, both the sudden tragedy and the willingness to try out something are present. She describes herself as the one who had the initiative for moving abroad as she was willing to try something different. However, soon in her narrative things fall into flow where she didn't feel she had control over them anymore. As a result, she found herself in the UAE.

Mary / Past at home:

1. Actually... how I find myself here is always like... sometimes I always like...
2. [...] you always say that God can work in ways beyond our understanding.
3. When I think... like finding myself here, I always feel bad because... like...
4. In my plan I wasn't planning to come and work or... because I...
5. Actually, I finished from school, I went to university, and I did bachelor,
6. my plan was to do masters.
7. So, I was... at first, I was looking for if there was schools in my country
8. but I wanted something to do different.
9. So, I was like looking for schools, and then I learnt of this...
10. There is one guy who said like... he helps people to find admissions in schools abroad,
11. stuff like that.
12. So, now I had to convince my father: "it is easy, he will help me".
13. So, I want my father to give money.
14. So, I had to give him the money to look for schools.
15. So, when he took the money, he could not find a school, and I cannot continue
16. [studies at the home country] because my father has already used much money.
17. I cannot be asking again for the different money; he is not willing to spend again after
18. he is giving money and nothing happened.
19. So, with this guy, it was like urgency because he had so many people, I don't know he
20. is just playing with people.
21. He had many people he lied; he makes you...
22. You just find, you see yourself already in a school abroad. You just get excited...
23. but after months are passing, nearly year and your money is with him and nothing.
24. So, finally he told me, after almost getting to two years...
25. because I cannot go to school, I cannot buy any school because there is no money
26. again. And he said: "now if you come and work and you can go to school."
27. Like... I just...
28. I had no choice because if I stay at home my dad will be sad because he has used his
29. money and I'm still at home, the school is not there.
30. So, he like said: "If you come and work you can go to school."
31. So, he convinced me: if I come here, I will... I can work and go to school.
32. So, like...
33. You always have countries in your mind, but I have never thought that I will come to
34. Dubai. I have never imagined that. Because like I have never thought I would like to
35. come to Dubai, really.
36. But I...
37. Because of what he said: "You can come and work here".
38. So, I just had to... because I had nothing to do.

39. Like... what else to do.

40. I just had to come.

Mary's narrative is about how she ended up in the UAE and about the two big influencing factors: money and education. In the beginning of the narrative, she frames the story to be about something she never thought would have happened. She does that by referring to a religious saying: "God can work in ways beyond our understanding" (line 2.). This saying is probably meant to be a comfort or encouragement in religious settings, so maybe Mary is comforting herself by saying it. Simultaneously she, however, orientates the listener to expect something (potentially positively) miraculous or special that has happened to her. But immediately after this she offers another point of view for the orientation (line 3): Thinking about finding herself in the UAE, she always feels bad. And that is because she did not intend to work nor to be in the UAE. Mary goes on by offering the background information for the conditions where she was in (lines 4.-8.). She continues the narrative by introducing a character with whom she got in touch: "one guy" who helps people to get admissions abroad (lines 9.-11.) and about convincing her father to give money for the plan (lines 12.-13.). The narrative is complicated by the statements that things did not turn out as planned (lines 14.-18.). Then Mary takes us back to the moment of narration by offering an evaluation about "the guy" (lines 19.-21.) and how it felt to imagine life abroad based on the promises he had done (line 22.) Then Mary continues towards the narrative's resolution by concluding that after time had passed, she finally let herself be convinced that she could both work and study (lines 24.-31.). Mary further evaluates her decision and the promise that was made by stating that she had never thought she would come to place like Dubai (she was not living in Dubai at the time of the interview, so I assume she is referring to the UAE but calls it Dubai) (lines 33.-35.). At the end (lines 36.-40.) Mary summarises that there was a promise, and she had no other options, so she ended up in where she is.

4.1.2 Jonathan's narrative: They decided that I should come

Jonathan's narrative is also a narrative of how he ended up in the UAE regardless of the interview question about his plans at home before decision to move abroad. Jonathan had already earlier in the interview referred to his father passing away and that being the reason why he is working in the UAE. He had also told that he would have rather studied but unlike Mary, he did not think about studying in the UAE but knew since the beginning that he is coming there to work. Jonathan told he was 20 years old, but it would not be a surprise if he would have been several years younger.

Jonathan / Past at home:

1. Okay. You know, before, when my dad was still alive, like...
2. Let me start a little bit back.
3. Before when they were still all alive, my mum passed away in 2009, 2009... 2009.
4. So when she passed away, my dad made a promise.
5. Because it was only me and my younger sister that were still going to school.
6. So he made a promise that he will teach us, he will pay our school fees, maybe
7. university. So I had that hope, I believed that my dad is there he will pay fee.
8. So my work was just to work hard in school and at least attend.
9. But it didn't go well..
10. Because when I was remaining like one month to do my final exam, my dad passed
11. away. That one was a 2012.
12. So I had to also leave studying, to go to funeral.
13. I only came to sit for my exam, which also... to me.. it affected me because I didn't
14. have that time to revise and.. so I didn't do so well in my final exam also.
15. And after that...
16. The person who had promised to take me to school, had passed away.
17. So there was no money. There was no because the..
18. I was not to depend on my brother or my sister.
19. By that time my brother also was in university, he was taking his degree, his wife
20. also. There was expenses to go, he had a family.
21. And my sister, she had to support us both. Me and my other two sisters.
22. So it was quite challenging.
23. So I told there is no that money to pay for my college.
24. Yea.
25. So that's why when they came out with the idea of coming here,
26. there was no choice,
27. I said: "Yea, ok".
28. Because when I look back, my background, family.
29. It was better for me to come here.
30. So at least I can work. If I keep money, I can always study.
31. But to me, I never wanted to..
32. I wanted to go to school first.
33. Yea, but now I'm here working.
34. Yea.

Jonathan starts his story by referring to the time when his father was still alive (line 1.) but decides quickly that it is better to start even earlier (line 2.). Since he had referred to his late father already earlier, maybe the decision to start still earlier in time was to make sure that me, as an interviewer and interlocutor, understand how events happening in time sequentially relate to each other. And since Jonathan had not mentioned his mother earlier, maybe he wanted to present her as a person influencing his life as well (line 3.). He tells then how his future at that time was based on the plan and promise his father had for him and his sister (lines 4.-6.) and his own part was to work hard (line 8.). The referring to this time is done shortly and after that Jonathan presents how the events were complicated since everything did not go as was planned

(lines 9.-18.). At first, he talks about the emotional shock of the death of his father and how it influenced on his performance in the final exams (lines 12.-14.) and then the material, financial aspect of the loss (lines 16.-18.).

After this Jonathan tells how intertwined the situations of the family members are to each other: since his brother and his wife were both still studying and had their own family, they could not help, and the older sister did not have means to provide for all of them (lines 19.-21.). Jonathan refers to himself as the one who concludes that he can't continue studies at this point (line 23.) but presents his family members as the ones ("they") who came out with the idea to travel abroad to work (line 25.). And he agrees (line 27.) but mentions shortly just before that: "There was no choice" (line 26.).

In summary, in Jonathan's narrative, family members play important roles. He does not refer to agent at this point, but, instead, openly talks about the tragedy of his father passing away and him and his siblings struggling financially after that. As the second youngest of the family, Jonathan accepts the request of his older siblings to arrange him to work abroad and explains that also from his point of view "It was better for me to come here" (line 29.).

Before his narration, Jonathan had already referred many times to how he had to leave from home and come to work in the UAE. Maybe he felt that I had not understood him and the whole picture earlier, so he decided to tell me longer story, which is revealed in the way how he starts his narration: "Let me start a little bit back." (line 2) and in the way how he refers to what he had told earlier when telling me that it was more of his siblings' idea than his own that he should come to work abroad: "So that's why [when] they came out with the idea of coming here, there was no choice." (lines 25-26). The aim of telling this narrative might be that Jonathan wants to make sure I understand him: Jonathan might assume that me, as an European person, find it difficult to understand, how someone's family can make decisions like this on behalf of the individual, and Jonathan wants to help me to understand the context of the decision and remind me that even if his family made the decision, he allowed it to become reality.

4.1.3 Positioning analysis

In the following the narrative excerpt of Mary related to the past at home is analysed with the three-level positioning analysis framework. The first level depicts how the characters in the story are positioned in relation to each other. The second level refers to positioning between the teller (Mary) and the listener (me as an interviewer). At the third level, narrative's positionings are related to wider societal phenomena. This chapter's observations concerning the third level are further elaborated in the chapter 5.

4.1.3.1 Level 1: Mary, “one guy”, and the father

In Mary’s narrative, three characters are present: Mary herself, “one guy”, and Mary’s father. Mary is the one who has relationship with both “guy” and father, but “guy” and father do not interact directly with each other in Mary’s narrative.

Mary positions herself in the beginning of the narrative as an active and brave person who has studied in the university and who had plans to further her studies. She did not only want to get her masters in the local university but, instead, she “wanted to do something different” (line 8.). From where this willingness to do something different comes from is not visible in the narrative but Mary has a vision, and she also finds out a way to progress towards it. She finds “one guy [...] [who] helps people to find admissions in school abroad” (line 10.) and pursues her father to give her money to buy the services of this person.

In Mary’s narrative, her relationship with her father is rather distant, for example there is no expressions of warmth or no indication that her father would have wanted to advise her somehow with the matter. Mary’s interaction with her father in this narrative is related only to money. She explains that her inability to continue her studies while waiting was also related to the fact that she could not ask more money for school from her father, since father already paid much for the arrangements for the school abroad (lines 15.-18.). Later Mary refers to her father’s emotions by reasoning that she had to leave otherwise her father would have been sad (line 28.). Later during the interview Mary is also referring to tensions inside the family since she pressured her father to give her money even though there was no money to give. So, her father ended up taking a loan to finance her plans and he got upset later when Mary was still at home even though she had said that the money is used to find a study place abroad for her.

Mary’s relationship with the agent – “one guy” is later in the interview named as an agent who had companion in Dubai where Mary first arrived – is, at first, customer/agent relationship where Mary contacts the agent aiming to fulfil her plan through his services. Mary is determined that he does what he is supposed to do and manages to convince her father to give the money needed. Soon it becomes evident that the agent was not trustworthy, and that Mary was not the only one who he had cheated (lines 15., 19.-20.).

4.1.3.2 Level 2: Mary is both brave and a victim

During the interview, Mary continues after this narrative about the realities where she ended up being: She came to the UAE with two months tourist visa which meant that she had to look for job in such a short time to avoid deportation after the visa expires. In such a situation, a person has a high risk of being exploited since there is strong pressure to accept work with any kind of conditions. Mary got job outside Dubai, in a

hotel's spa which, compared to some other work options such as sex work or domestic work, can be deemed as rather secure and comfortable.

However, Mary recalls her time in the beginning at the spa as very lonely and boring. Description of that period precedes the narrative excerpt analysed here. The reasons for loneliness are connected in experiences of being different. Mary tells:

But before was not easy, really. I was really... I should go home. When I sit down I'm thinking, maybe if I'm home at least I'd be with my parents, with my friends, my family. But here I just...

Especially at the hotel, when I came, I was the only African. So, it's like everybody is looking at you, you cannot feel comfortable with everybody because you are the only African and they look at you like: "this person is just so different from us" and you don't feel comfortable.

Sometimes it was like segregation and so... I was like... It was really so challenging.

Even though, at least my manager, we would sometimes like talk, and he is the only one who sometimes would make me laugh but apart from that I'm always at spa.

I don't go down, even sometimes when staff have to go to cafeteria to eat, I don't always go, because I feel when I go everybody is looking at me. Like "who is this?" and you don't know anybody there to talk with.

Other new staff they always at least try to talk, the Indians, the boys. Because the girls are actually the worst case. The like... they see you as if you not yet up to their level. So at least only the boys they were there, and they talk. So, you'll feel comfortable with them. (Mary 10.4.2015)

In relation to me, as an interviewer, Mary positions herself as both as a person who is courageous and willing to try something new, and as a victim of fraud who was forced to act certain way because of the circumstances. She explains her being in the UAE as if she assumes me to think that it is not the best place for her to be, or as if I would have wondered why she is there. Maybe my question ("Well, you have been now soon two years here. How did you end up coming here?") was formulated that way. On the other hand, throughout the interview, Mary pointed out her disappointment since she did not have chance to study but only to work. So, as she is explaining her situation as something that happened without her planning, she is simultaneously positioning herself as someone who would have choose to study and develop her skills if she would have had chance to do so.

During the narrative, Mary's positioning changes rather dramatically: in the beginning she is a young lady full of determination to study and proceed with her career abroad and in the end of the narrative she has been forced to stay and work in a place where she never imagined to be. The main influencer in this change is money and the pressure Mary adapts when she knows that her father has used a lot of money to make

her travel possible. She believes and explains to me that she is expected to pay it back and that is why she must be ready to sacrifice.

4.1.3.3 Level 3: Studying opens up opportunities

Mary is telling about the conditions and process of how an active, purpose-driven person with aim to develop herself through education becomes a person in situation where she had no other choice than doing something she did not want to do. In Mary's narrative the determining power moving her life into direction where she did not want to go, is money, and how it tangles her and her father to an untrustworthy agent.

The starting point is Mary's wish for studying abroad. She seems to have in her mind an idea that studying abroad would be "something different". Later in the interview she refers to education as a mean of improving her chances to start something of her own in her home country. Mary is oriented towards future at home but studying abroad seems to promise for Mary better opportunities than studying in the home country. Mary's perception about studying abroad and its benefits relates to the global flow of information. Images and perceptions about the quality of education in different parts of the globe are dispersed and some destinations are painted as more favourable than others.

However, Mary narrates the past at home from the point where she already has almost one year of experience living in the UAE. If, at first, she had believed the agent's promises about both working and studying at the UAE, at the point of narration she knew it was not possible. In this way Mary's narrative also points out the different pressures migrant workers abroad are facing. In the country like UAE, society and workplace arrangements sets restrictions which migrants have no tools to oppose. Working days which are 12 to 15 hours long do not allow any time nor energy for additional activities like studying. In addition, pressure coming from home might be strong as well. Expectation laid on a person who has managed to travel out and find a job might be unrealistic and heavy to bear.

4.2 Past at the UAE: Narratives about the shock at the arrival

The other aspect of the past is located to the UAE: the arrival to the country which the participants had only heard something in the media or from other people who have worked in the UAE before. The role of work mediation agencies and agents are mentioned as they were mentioned in relation to *home* and in the decision-making process. The conflict of expectations – created upon the promises done by the agents – and the reality in the arrival is visible in the narratives. Exploitative living and working conditions of the migrant workers becomes evident immediately at the arrival, and

migrant workers reactions and attitudes towards them are discussed at this point. The past, the time of arrival, is characterized by uncertainty, disappointment, shock, abandonment, and the feeling of hurry: in the time of two- or three-months tourist visa migrants need to find employment to avoid being sent back home.

Through the chronotopic analysis, while the participants narrate about the time-space past + UAE, they describe how they are in a network or system controlled by others to whom they do not have contact. The role of agents was mentioned already while narrating the past at home and the decision making about leaving, but in here, agents have disappeared as real, physical human beings but their influence is still there. Characters inhabiting this chronotope are scarce, sometimes only the narrator themselves and others who (later) experience the same, sometimes there is someone else who is sharing the same experience at the same time. Some of the participants depict themselves as victims and express their powerlessness and their wish to return home immediately, some narrate themselves as being so determined that nothing they face cannot stop them from achieving their goals. The chronotope connected to past at the UAE is called *shock at the arrival*.

4.2.1 Luke's narrative: Sharing empathy

Luke's short narratives about everyday incidents reflect wider processes of both personal and societal levels. In his story several aspects of lives of migrant workers in precarious conditions are summarised. Luke positions himself as the one who has taken the initiative to leave: He has made contracts, he has counted the pros and cons and decided to leave, and his aim is to live abroad and work. Luke is migrating for work and his stories are reflections of migrant worker's lived experiences.

In Luke's narrative, the disappointment and disbelief of the moment of arrival is clearly seen. He is referring to "them" when he blames people who have arranged his coming for delivering false information. In Luke's story the accommodation serves as an example for things that were not right and as expected when he arrived. This does not mean that it was the only thing that created disappointment, but it is a concrete and simple example to which he and other refer when describing their shock.

Luke / Past in the UAE

1. Hmm.. yeah. The best thing and the worst thing.
2. Let me first talk about the ---- hmmm --- the worst things.
3. The worst thing that has ever happened is that when I came in... you know..
4. for the offer like that they gave you that you sign concerning your job contract. The
5. will tell you they are giving you accommodation.
6. But.. this accommodation.. these kind of accommodation they never tell anybody,
7. you'll be staying along with some people.
8. They will be telling you they will give you accommodation.
9. And... inside of you.. when they tell you that kind of thing, accommodation, provision

10. for accommodation, all what you think is accommodation for your own personal self,
11. not in a, you know, larger population where five, six persons stay in a room.
12. Which is very wrong. You know.

Later in the interview, Luke talks about the arrival and accommodation again:

13. If I see someone who come in the UAE, I always feel it within myself, I always fee
14. sorry for the person.
15. It is like, maybe your agent has dubbed you or collected money from you. "UAE is
16. ok, come and work".
17. [voice: "no,no,no"].
18. When you come in you see some other different things.
19. I remember when the first time I came in, that was (month), I first came in (year) to
20. look for job. At the end of the day, you know, I was carrying my heavy bag when the
21. guys who came to take me from the bus station took me inside this accommodation.
22. Even the heavy bag that I was managing to carry; the bag couldn't come down. I just
23. hold on to the bag, looking everywhere. Crazy. 13? Bunk, bunk, bunk, double-deck
24. bunk. Over 13 people staying in this small room.
25. Is this accommodation? And they are paying heavily? Every month they pay heavily.
26. I said, is this life? In the UAE?
27. From there I decided you know....
28. I say, men, I need God, it is the God if I want to stay back here.

The first short narrative Luke tells here starts when he answers question about the best and the worst things in being in the UAE. This is the first time in the interview where Luke talks about when he arrived in the UAE and the first time, he expresses his disappointment when he realizes that what was promised for him is not true. Luke tells a short story in where he orientates the listener by offering background information that the narrative is about the worst things he has experienced, and it is related to the moment of arrival to the UAE and to the accommodation provided. The narrative is about the conflict between what Luke himself thinks has been promised and what the reality is. Luke ends up his short narrative with evaluation which is visible throughout the narrative: this what is happening is wrong. Luke is expressing his shock. He is telling the narrative assuming that the listener is equally shocked since, according to him, nothing else should be expected about the accommodation than what he himself has expected.

Later in the interview he talks about the same topic and orientates the narrative by expressing how he feels sorry for those who are just arriving and who do not know that they will not get what was promised (lines 13.-16.) and continues by referring to the time he first arrived (line 19.). He is emphasizing the situation by telling about his arrival to the accommodation and the shock which prevented him to even put down his heavy travelling bag (line 22.). From this Luke observes that he "needs God" if he is to stay in the UAE (lines 27.-28.). Luke's evaluation about what he has told is an expression of disbelief (line 26.): Is it true that life in the UAE could be like this?

Luke is not telling only his personal narrative but a narrative that is about something that is recurring: the same is happening repeatedly for people who arrive to the UAE. In addition to expressing his own experience he also takes initiative to refine his disappointment as a source of empathy towards others who experience the same.

4.2.2 Mary's narrative: Getting through it

Mary's narrative is an answer to question whether she had plans of going abroad earlier in her life. Just before the chosen excerpt Mary first tells how she had been thinking earlier in her life whether she would survive abroad, and she had comforted herself with the thought that it could be something similar like a first day in a school where you don't yet know anyone. And then she starts talking about the experience in relation to her preparation.

Mary / Past in the UAE:

1. The period I was coming I was like the only girl,
2. they were many and then I am the only girl among the boys.
3. So he [the agent] is telling me: "the other boys, they are staying at hotel but I will be
4. staying in the man's house, the man, the agency, I will be staying in his house".
5. So you think like, actually, a normal house.... (laugh)
6. but when you come here, you see ten people in one room.
7. And, just like, they just mix, they put boys and girls they are living and the...
8. You have this double-deck, up and some people up and some people are down. In one
9. room.
10. You just think how can be so many beds. Like... almost like five, in only one room.
11. And then in that, actually it's like villa.
12. So there, actually one was Pakistani guy, he rented a villa, so he practices it now so.
13. Like the way I was living, that room for us, the other rooms also you see some
14. Africans, they live in there also.
15. Like they are tiny rooms, in all rooms there are many, the other room, they are there.
16. So now in the company who are so many, they are there.
17. The kitchen is big, just like you have different gas stove in different rooms.
18. But just in one kitchen.
19. Like I always talk to my friends when we came like: "You see! It is the life that a
20. ways, like that, the agency back at home was talking fine; you come and live in a
21. good house, you live..." (laugh)
22. Then when you come, from the first days like... what the he...? You don't know what
23. to do.
24. But just like from the stories it look so nice you don't imagine it will be like this.
25. They just talk.
26. And even the guys who are coming here and are working, they can not like... when
27. they go back home, they don't tell the people there.
28. Like. If somebody go back home and the friends are like: "oh, my God, you are living
29. a good life, can I come?", he cannot say they are not living there like that.
30. So... you don't know, you only have to come and experience yourself.

31. It's when you come and you pass through the challenges, you don't want to tell other
 32. person, you want other person to come and experience... (laugh) It's like that.
 33. I did not really know about the life abroad but I just...
 34. Although... even though I was planning to travel but I didn't really know how it is.
 Then I had to come and have experience in Dubai.
 35. Even though was tough but from there at least I can manage. Because the challenges
 36. at least it makes you to know how you can survive. Even though it's tough.

Mary orients her listener by saying that she was the only female arriving with the group (lines 1.-2.). In addition, the agent had made everything sound very simple, so she had probably left home with some confidence. And then she tells the narrative about the housing arrangement. Just like Luke, Mary expresses her shock. At first, she comments on how the conception of “a house” is different in her mind before she sees what it means in this context (line 4.-5.). She expresses her disbelief about having so many people are housed in the same place (lines 6.-9.). In addition, she is confused by the situation where men and women are housed together (line 7.). Mary refers to double-deck beds just as Luke does (line 8.) and other participants mention them explicitly as well. Somehow *double-deck beds* have become a symbol that in this context seems to refer to more than just the beds but refers instead to absurdity of the whole housing arrangement.

In her narrative, Mary also paints a scene about the hierarchical relationships of the migrant workers. She tells how a Pakistani man is getting his living from renting a house for newly arrived African migrants (lines 12.-16.). Mary mention “company” (line 16.) which I interpret meaning the group of people who has arrived through same agency. It could refer to a group who has arrived to work for a certain company in the UAE but since Mary herself arrived with two months tourist visa and did not have workplace in a company waiting for her, I believe she means company which is operating the human mobilisations from Africa to the UAE. This indicates to the complex webs of people and power relations which migrants face immediately in the arrival: both the decisions of the agents in the home country and the landlords and other “service providers” who want to benefit from the newcomers, influence the migrants and they have very little to control that, especially in the beginning.

Mary is making an ironical observation in lines 19.-21. when she is shortly mentioning how they made jokes with her friends about the housing arrangement as if it would be exactly how the agent promised. Maybe with this short laugh she wants to relief the atmosphere in the interview where she might feel that she has been complaining about a lot of different things since her experience in the UAE – and already at home – had been hard.

Another interesting observation about this Mary's excerpts is her reference to migrant workers narratives they tell people at home. In lines 26.-33. Mary openly describes how people who experience the hardship do not want to tell about it to people

at home who admire their life abroad. Mary's explanation can be interpreted as a statement that since one has suffered, they want others to suffer the same. On the other hand, it can be also a reference to the reality Mary had experienced herself as she mentioned that before she arrived, she could not know how life abroad can be. So, the same goes for others: stories about the life abroad do not match what it feels like to live it through yourself. However, later in the interview Mary is telling that she would not want to start to work with the agencies to bring new people into the UAE. She explains this by saying that she would not want others to experience what she had experienced. So, her reference in lines 31.-32. is, in this light, more a comment to the assumed treatment she had received before she left: people did not openly tell her what to expect in the UAE.

Mary is positioning herself in the end of the small narrative as someone who has benefitted from the rough experience. She believes she has gained endurance by going through the shock when realizing that what she expected did and will not happen.

4.2.3 Positioning analysis

In the following, Luke's narrative excerpt is analysed in detail with three-level positioning analysis. The first level depicts how the characters in the story are positioned in relation to each other. The second level refers to positioning between the teller and the listener. At the third level, narrative's positionings are related to wider societal phenomena.

4.2.3.1 Level 1: Luke and *them*

Luke positions himself in the first version of the narrative in the beginning as someone who has made a contract with reasonable expectation: if accommodation is provided, it should be private, not something that is shared with other people (lines 4.-5. and 9.-11.). He is using passive voice which indicates his assumption that this idea is generally shared. In the second version of the narrative, he positions himself as a knower and he does that by telling his own experience (lines 19.-23.). Later in the narrative (lines 22.-25.) Luke's position changes. He realizes that as knowledgeable person he thinks he was, he had been deceived.

In both versions Luke is also positioning himself as the one who has thought reasonable about the accommodation, and as an object of other actors' misbehaviour concerning the contract. In the first excerpt there is only one other character; "they" (lines 4.-6. and 8.). During the interview before this narrative, Luke has been speaking about "them" few times. He has been referring to the actors who create the connection between the UAE and people coming to work there ("They painted UAE outside, they paint it..."), the actors who are in charge to decide about the benefits related to the work ("There are some jobs that you, when you get here, they give you everything!"),

or to the local authorities (“They make crazy laws...”). In this narrative, however, Luke is referring to someone who has been delivering the information about the accommodation during the time when the contract about the job has been signed. This might have happened in his home country or after the arrival in the UAE. Luke himself is mentioning “agent” only once during his interview but based on the information delivered by other participants, it is reasonable to assume that Luke is referring to recruitment agency and/or agent(s) working in the recruitment business.

However, the relationship between “them” and Luke is equal contract relationship in the beginning. During the narrative this positioning changes and Luke becomes object of fraud, “them” become as someone untrustworthy.

In the second excerpt Luke is telling his story in relation to those people who are just arriving and towards whom he feels sorry (lines 13.-19.). In this version of the narrative “they” refers to other workers who live in similar accommodation to where he was taken (line 25.). Luke is using his own experience which he recounted in the beginning, to reflect the experiences of others who just arrive.

In the first part of the narrative, Luke’s relationship to “them” is accusatory. Luke blames “them” for hiding the true nature of the housing arrangement one should expect. This hiding is not done only for Luke himself but for everyone since Luke is able to claim that “they never tell anybody” (lines 6.-7.). In the second part, Luke’s relationship towards newly arrived is empathetic and he expresses his empathy by acknowledging that he has lived through the same they are now living.

4.2.3.2 Level 2: Luke’s experience is similar to others’

Luke’s first story about the disappointment with the accommodation follows several comments made earlier in the interview about the housing arrangements’ inappropriateness. Luke has explained earlier that he could stay longer time in the UAE if personal accommodation would be arranged, and this, on the other hand, is connected to getting better job. He is also referring to the opportunity to have one’s family with them in the UAE while, at the moment, his family is at his home country. Just before the interview Luke had heard that his annual leave was cancelled, and his long-awaited opportunity to meet his family denied, so the issue is very topical for him.

The second narration about the unpleasant surprise of accommodation is done after he has been telling how he keeps warning his friends in the home country not to believe what is written on the internet about the UAE. In here Luke is referring to assumed shared knowledge between me and him; he believes that I do know how Emirates is pictured in the media. He continues the narration by telling the example of the absurd situation he is in: he has a contract where it is stated that he has right to have 30 days leave but he is denied using it. From there he follows by explaining how there is no channel for the workers to challenge these decisions, and from there he gets

to expression of sorry for those who are just arriving. As he is earlier expressing empathy towards other migrant workers who experience the same as him, he might be referring to this experience in getting empathy from me towards his tough situation. I hope I was able to show sympathy in the interaction for him.

In general, in this narrative Luke is referring to something he does not think is unique and has only happened to him. He is sure – maybe because he has talked with other migrants – that the same has happened for others as well. He is using his narrative to assure me about the generality of his personal experience and that way positions himself as a *knower* in relation to me. There is difference in what he knows and what I know before he tells me. On the other hand, Luke positions himself expectedly similar with me – and with majority of people – when he is assuming that I share the moral understanding that what he and other migrants go through in relation to housing arrangements, is wrong.

4.2.3.3 Level 3: Images of life abroad

At this third level of the analysis the local positionings in the narrative are connected to wider social processes, ideologies, and discourses. As mentioned, while Luke is telling his own experience, he is telling the story of others as well. He is using passive voice to propose that what he expected about the accommodation to be, is shared with others.

The expectation about the accommodation might be seen as an instance where *mediascapes* (Appadurai 1996) are in operation (see more in chapter 5). The similar repertoires of images are visible to large audiences in all over the world. People in sub-Saharan Africa can easily imagine the life in Europe or in the US since the images about it are abundantly available. On the other hand, otherwise unknown location (such as the UAE seems to be for the migrant workers who I interviewed) is somehow familiar through the images of Dubai or oil production seen in the media. As Appadurai comments (1996, 35), people who do not have experience of living in the environment the media images refer to, are likely to produce imagined world that are more at the level of fantasy than “real” life.

In addition, these images spread through the media are utilized by people whose aim is to attract people to travel out from their home countries. When referring to “personal accommodation” which will be provided, the agent elicits images of houses or rooms where privacy is secured. When this is coupled with the idea of travelling to a country which is something similar as the UK or Australia – as, for example Luke during the interview describes on the basis that the language spoken in these places is English – certain kind of expectation of the accommodation is created. And most of the migrant workers then comment in the interviews how disappointing, shocking, or

outraging it was when it turned out that they were housed in the camp or in a room where there might be 6-7 other people living with you.

When Luke formulates accusation against “them” about the false image they give about the housing arrangements, he has courage to claim that “they never tell anybody” (lines 6.-7.). In here he is connecting his experience to other’s experiences. Whether this connection is done based on assumption or on discussions with others, is not clear in the narrative or later in his interview. However, other participants of the study reported similar experiences of deception in relation to what had been agreed on when signing the contract. And larger evidence about the ill-treatment and exploitation of the workers in the Gulf and in the UAE is widely reported in studies, reports, and in the media and they often include the aspect of fraud as well.

Luke’s narrative depicts an example of situation of taking advantage of those who don’t have many options. Those who have paid high amounts of money to be able to travel, are not likely to turn back even when they see shocking or humiliating circumstances where they have been brought to.

4.3 Present life in the UAE: Narratives about navigating the restrictions

From the past, the narratives move towards the current which is depicted as time where circumstances have stabilized after the chaos in the beginning: there is a place to work, and accommodation provided by the employer. Here the working conditions and the restrictions are discussed in more detail: in other sources widely reported possession of the passport and reference to the system of *kafala* are done in the narratives. The restrictions of social and personal life are also shortly mentioned as well as the means to cope with them. Importance of the belief to the better future and better opportunities, the meaning of other people (friends, family, and the congregation, for example) is presented, and the ability to plan and act to achieve personal dreams, plans, and wishes, are there alongside the hardships. For some migrants, the belief in the better future plays an important role in helping to cope with the disappointment of situation in the UAE.

In current + UAE time-space participants describe more hopeful, balanced and even positive narratives about their situation than when referring to past. They have found social networks where to belong to and people with whom reflect the experiences they have had. On the other hand, powerlessness in relation to the system and people who have authority over them, is also expressed. All social relations are also not supportive but have tones of oppression in them especially in the workplaces. We vs. them -divisions are created in the narratives which reveal that participants have

found groups where they feel they belong to. Hierarchy between the migrant workers is also referred to: migrants with different nationalities do not seem to get along in the narratives of participants. This chronotope is called *navigating the restrictions*.

4.3.1 Eva's narrative: *Them against me*

Eva's narrative is description of how she struggles when she wants to act according to her own values in her workplace. Tension between her as the only African worker in her workplace and group of women from another country is visible in her interview also earlier.

Eva / present in the UAE:

1. Okay, for example my colleagues...
2. Yes, since they are people, they don't have any idea about God and...
3. or maybe they care less about God...
4. They will want you like, during the shift like "Let's take this one and eat."
5. I say: "No, it's for us, we can't take it and eat."
6. So, when you say no, it is a problem.
7. And they will say: "Okay, let's do this one against the manager."
8. I say: "No, we can't do it. If you are not comfortable, just tell the manager,
9. they are always open. Just tell them, this one you are not comfortable.
10. Then they will try to see to it."
11. But when you refuse, it's a problem.
12. So, they will like hate you, they will do everything against you, they will try to say....
13. That is what is happening.

Eva positions herself in opposition with other workers and points out clear difference between herself and others by claiming that "they don't have any idea about God" (line 2.). For Eva, this is the explanatory factor for their different behaviour.

Eva tells this short story to explain for me something I did not understand earlier. She had told that if she refuses to do something, it is "like a crime for them". When I ask for clarification and ask "Who?", she tells this story. She positions herself in relation to me in expectation that I agree with her, not with her colleagues, about the decent behaviour at work.

In her narrative the setup where workers, who are oppressed or exploited, try to take advantage if it is possible by taking food which is not meant for them, or doing something against the manager (lines 4. and 7.) is visible. In addition, the tensions between workers from different places are also described when Eva tells how others will act against her in case of disagreement (line 12.).

4.3.2 Jonathan's narrative: Struggle at the workplace

During his interview, Jonathan also mentioned often that there were tensions in his workplace between migrant workers who come from different places. He, like Eva, attributes certain behaviours to the shared background of his colleagues. In Jonathan's narrative below, especially the relations between workers and supervisors (who are not Emiratis but migrant workers as well) is a key factor influencing the wellbeing at the workplace.

Jonathan / Present in the UAE:

1. Because, before, we had so, like, I... I and my friend, before we were working two
2. Africans, three Africans, in fact, but now, at least, we are two Africans,
3. and one Pakistani.
4. So, before, because you [Jonathan and his African workmate] are like brothers, they
5. used to mistreat us so much.
6. They will call our supervisor every time, every time, even when we are not around,
7. we just see this because they want us to be removed from that place,
8. and they want somebody of their kind.
9. The person they will be telling "do this" and he is doing, do this and he is doing.
10. So, it is very hard when you are doing your own duty, and somebody also wants you
11. to do for him his own job, so it's like he wants to rest, you do to work for him.
12. So, it's like you are doing double job.
13. And when... when they see this person, who knows his right...
14. Because here, some people, they don't know their rights totally.
15. They are brought, they use them, seriously. So, when you are weak,
16. I mean, when you don't stand firm as in this you know, you say,
17. this one is wrong, they can really use you.
18. So, like in my situation now: there are some guys in my place, they...
19. before they really used us. When I was still new, I didn't know anything.
20. You know, as time goes by... because, even when they fight amongst themselves,
21. they quarrel, one person will come and say:
22. "My friend, this and this is our work, you should not be doing this and this."
23. So, it's like they are putting us in the light now. So, after we know everything now,
24. when we say we resist, we say: "This one, no."
25. They feel like they should now bend us down, they call back.
26. Thank God, the supervisor also is not that dump. He is understanding.
27. So, whenever they call, he will just know [that] this people, they are like this.
28. They are doing... because... the supervisor and these people, they come from same
29. place, so, he understands them better.
30. So, it is advantage that at least the supervisor, he is understanding.

In Jonathan's narrative, perspective of exploitation is present, as in Eva's narrative. Jonathan is referring to how other workers do not take it well that he and his workmate are "like brothers" (line 4.), and from that follows mistreat. The quality of mistreatments are reports to supervisor (line 6.), effort to put him and his workmate out from the work (line 7.), and unequal share of workload (lines 11.-12., 17.). Jonathan had

seen around him, that his workmates who like to use him would like to have someone to whom they can give orders and would obey (line 9.). He sees that in the beginning he was like that (line 19.) but when he, through experience learned what is his duty and what is not, he got courage to oppose the orders (lines 23.-24.). Interestingly, Jonathan and his workmate have got their enlightening from one of the persons belonging to the group who used to oppress them: in lines 20.-23. Jonathan describes how conflict inside the other group leads someone to instruct them about their share of the work and from there onwards they have been empowered to resist unfair workloads.

In addition to workers at physically same workplace, supervisor plays an important role in Jonathan's narrative. His understanding secures more peaceful working conditions for people like Jonathan.

During his interview, Jonathan reveals that his working conditions and, especially the beginning of his time in the UAE, had been exceptionally rough. His relief, which he emphasized several times, had been other young African man who arrived same time with him. He said they immediately became like brothers and went through the hardships of the beginning together, and finally got recruited into same cleaning company. This explains that Jonathan tells this story as a story of *us*, since his friend is there in these situations with him. That is really comforting, and it is sure that this kind of treatment would be even harder to tolerate alone.

4.3.3 Positioning analysis

In the following, Eva's narrative is analysed with three level positioning analysis, so that at the first level observations of the characters in the story and their positions with each other are done. At the second level positioning between the teller and the listener is analysed and at the third level, narrative's positionings and relations to wider societal phenomena are observed.

4.3.3.1 Level 1: Eva and her colleagues

In her narrative, Eva is with her colleagues in situations where they have opposing understandings of what is right or okay to do. Eva positions herself as a moral voice for other workers but, since it seems they are not listening, Eva has concluded that her colleagues do not have idea about God. For Eva, God seems to be the reason for the moral she is expecting from herself and others and in this short narrative she does not express any other reason a person could have for their moral standards. Eva does not need to hesitate the correctness of her judgement: she is completely sure that she is right, and she positions her colleagues as people who deliberately choose to do wrong. With this apparent moral standing, which is visible in the narrative, it is no wonder that there is tension between Eva and other workers.

In her story, Eva is indicating belongings to two different groups by using plural pronoun *them* when talking about her colleagues. With *them*, there is assumed *we*, which is not mentioned in the story but is present in the background. In Eva's narrative the difference between two groups is evident, and even though she is only talking about doing wrong or right things at work, the narrative reflects strong divide. At the end Eva reveals how strong emotions there are at play in these relationships: "They will like hate you, they will do everything against you..." (line 12.), and it is obvious that Eva is speaking out of her own experience of being left outside of certain social networks or groups at the workplace. She has experienced hate, and her own little narrative reveals something of her own disapproval towards, maybe not only the behaviour of her colleagues, but towards them as members of group who do not share the same values with her.

4.3.3.2 Level 2: Eva is sure she is right

Eva's narrative is told after a request to clarify what she previously said. She has previously in the interview referred to different culture in the UAE, and relating to that I am asking her, whether the culture makes her feel that she is pushed to do differently than she would most naturally be doing. She answers first very short by saying: "Yea, they would try to [push me]. But it is not easy because when you refuse, it is a big crime to them." And when I am asking clarification, assuming that with pronoun *them* Eva is referring to Emirati people, she talks about the interaction with her colleagues.

After the narrative I still ask whether there are any other people who limit or push her, she says that she is working almost all the time, so she does not know about other people. Eva's narrative is a clarification for the interaction between me and her. Even after her story, I was still expecting, based on my assumptions, that she would refer to Emirati people's relationship with the migrants. During the interview I did not yet know the hierarchical and complex relations between migrant (groups), and it was hard for me to understand the relevance of her story.

Morally, Eva positions me and her on the same side by referring to (faith to) God as the assumed foundation for person's moral or immoral behaviour. While we had lived in Emirates one year before the interview, Eva and my family were attending to same church. Based on that knowledge, she positioned us to share the faith and from there stems the assumption about shared understanding about the decent workplace behaviour. She and me are *we*, which Eva juxtaposes with *them* in this short narrative. In addition to small *we*, which is present in the moment of interaction, Eva maybe has in her mind larger *we* which consists of other African migrants, or more precisely, of other church attending and God believing African migrants. Eva does not hesitate to judge and disapprove her colleague's behaviour since she is sure she is right and that I as her interlocutor in that moment agree with her.

4.3.3.3 Level 3: Migrants relations with each other

Eva's narrative (as also Jonathan's narrative) shows that the restrictions that are most immediate for the migrants' lives in the country like the UAE are not coming from necessarily structural aspects of the workforce arrangements but instead through the everyday interactions with the colleagues, i.e. other migrant workers. During the interview, Eva, and other participants, are referring to challenges with changing employer and renewing visa, which are structural issues, but for Eva the more burning issue is her everyday relationships to people who she perceives as members of different (national/ethnic/cultural) group than herself.

The inbuilt divide between different groups, the feeling of loneliness, and the importance of feeling of belonging into some group that one can refer to as *we* are present in Eva's narrative. From the perspective of migrant workers' wellbeing, all these issues could be further researched and addressed in discussions about the maltreatment of workers in precarious conditions.

Even though hierarchical relationships and in-built racism of the structural arrangement of workforce in the UAE has been researched, this mention of the influence of face-to-face interactions between migrant workers sheds light to the importance of these large-scale phenomena in the everyday life of people.

4.4 Summary of the results of narrative analysis

In this chapter, I have sought to answer the research questions. The third question is further elaborated in the next chapter. The first research question (What kind of narratives about past and present participants tell, and what shared experiences are found in them?) is answered through the chronotopical analysis and presentation of the narratives from each chronotope. I have described the data, the similarities of the experiences in the larger scale, and the differences of small-scale experiences in the narrated incidents.

Table 3: Chronotopes in the data

Chronotope	Main features in the participants' shared experiences
Past at home: Taking future to your own hands	Home as the starting point Active membership in the community Sudden tragedy / planned change Taking / accepting the initiative to leave
Past at the UAE: Shock at the arrival	Unplanned destination Unexpected circumstances at housing and/or at work Feeling of being betrayed Struggle that has been passed by now
Present in the UAE: Navigating the restrictions	Challenges with interactions with colleagues Fear or experience of being exploited We vs. them categorizations Settling to the current circumstances

The second question (How do participants position themselves in the narratives?) is answered through the detailed analysis of chosen excerpts from each chronotope. In all three levels of the analysis, narrators position themselves in and display different aspects of their identities in the interview. Participants speak about themselves as the ones who have suffered but survived, as those who can contain what they are going through, and as ones who can participate into other people's experiences with sympathy since they know how they might feel. Even while describing the current challenges, the overall tones are mostly optimistic. Important part of the hopefulness is that these migrants had all find social group(s) where to belong to and people with whom experiences can be shared and the load that way lightened.

Answer to the third research question (How does the identity display in the narratives reflect wider social processes connected to the lives of migrant workers in the Gulf?) can be drawn from the narrative's reference to phenomena which have been discussed in research literature, reports, and media in connection to migrant workers in the global world. Reference to the aspects which support imagination about the better life abroad are present in the narratives, as also the complex and potentially oppressing hierarchical relations among migrant workers. In the following chapter 5 the imaginaries connected to life abroad are further analysed.

All the chosen narratives depict interactions between the participants and the people around them. This is partly because I - without original intention - chose narratives where there are other characters than the teller only since the first level of

positioning analysis guides the researcher to look for relationships of the characters in the story. But I think it is possible to say that in addition this may indicate the relevance of human interactions in the ways the participants of this study chose to talk about their experiences in the interviews: other people are important in constructing the original experience and in the ways how these experiences are delivered for the listener.

5 IMAGINATION AND POSITIONING IN THE GLOBAL WORLD

In this study, narratives of migrant workers from sub-Saharan Africa in the UAE shed light to how individual, concrete incidents and experiences carry in them references to global phenomena. Individual experiences are not defined by the global forces, but they are meaningful in relation to them, in addition of being meaningful for the individual and for the interaction between the participant and me in the interview. In this chapter I aim to deepen the answer the research question 3 by further reflecting the content of the narratives in relation to big themes of neoliberalism and capitalism. This I do by to the findings of thee-level positioning analyses' observations and apply Appadurai's (1996) concept of *scapes* to the aspects of imagined life abroad, and by connectim them to discourse of skills and self-improvement.

In the narratives of migrant workers, "abroad" seems to be connected in specific locations and/or directions. In here, Arjun Appadurai's (1996) concept of *scapes* helps to trace the potential origins of the imaged suitability of certain locations.

Narrative of Luke reveals that he is very convinced that his expectation about decent accommodation is reasonable. When this small statement is reflected in relation to other narratives in both Luke's and other participants interviews, they connect to Appadurai's (1996, 33) claim about *imagined worlds*: imagination and ability to imagine how life is somewhere else is in operation when decisions about migration are done. Luke and other participants of the study are not forced migrants but, on the other hand, they have not migrated on completely voluntarily basis either since the conditions at home before the decision to leave have often been strongly pushing people to look for means of living in somewhere else. While considering whether to leave or to stay, imagined life in somewhere else is compared to what is seen in everyday reality around oneself. Decisions and considerations are influenced and created by *ethnoscapes* and *mediascapes* (Appadurai 1996).

5.1 Ethnoscapes

Ethnoscapes, according to Appadurai (1996), are flows of migrating people which influence the imaginary of how the world is seen. When someone in Sub-Saharan Africa is considering his choices related to the future, his imagination is not tight to his own experiences alone, but he has seen and heard people going and coming abroad, travelling with success, coming back with lots of money, or sending WhatsApp-pictures where they are posing in front of fine cars and houses. People tell stories about their life abroad but, as Eva summarised, there is often something that is not told: “*Yea... they (relatives living abroad) say it's not easy to live abroad. But they will not say really that it is hard. They will say it is not easy but that it is far better than staying at home. They don't really tell you what is inside, they will only tell you it is better to go than stay back at [home country].*”

When seeing and hearing people migrating, moving abroad becomes potential option when life is not going according plans in the home country. The more people migrate, the more migrating people also become part of the societies and smaller communities' realities. Remittances become part of states' financial flows, visiting citizens part of cities and villages landscapes, and people planning to migrate feed the business of travel, work, and visa agencies.

In Mary's interview, “abroad” seems to be connected to something where she believes environment is better than at home. Despite Mary says that she has pondered how would she survive if she travels, imagined challenges are connected to being in a strange land and not knowing anybody, not to hardships which would surpass the ones she faces at home. Maybe surviving in a strange land is connected to potential financial challenges, e.g., how to pay the fees of an expensive university? The agent knows which stories work and assure their customer that the solution is easy: one can study and work simultaneously. And that in Dubai the situation is even better since they provide the housing as well.

Mary adds how those who have experienced moving abroad participate in maintaining the imaginaries of those at home who dream about travelling: “*And even the guys who are coming here and are working, they go back home, they don't tell people there. Like. If somebody go back home and the friends are like: "Oh, my God, you are living a good life. Can I come?" He cannot say they are not living there like that. So... you don't know, you only have to come and experience yourself. It's when you come and you pass through the challenges, you don't want to tell other person, you want other person to come and experience... it's like that. I did not really know about the life abroad but I just... although, even though I was planning to travel, but I didn't really know how it is. I had to come and experience. Even though from first experience it was tough but from there now at least I can manage.*”

5.2 Mediascapes

Other *scapes* in Appadurai's (1996) theory, are *mediascapes*. It refers to flows of media-mediated images and stories of same repertoires of images broadcasted to large audiences in all over the world. These too serve as building blocks for expectations related to life abroad. People in Sub-Saharan Africa can imagine the life in Europe or in the US since images about "the life there" are available. On the other hand, otherwise unknown location (such as the UAE seems to be for the migrant workers who I interviewed) is somehow familiar through the images of Dubai or oil production seen in the media. As Appadurai comments (1996, 35), people who do not have experience of living in the environment the media images refer to, are likely to produced imagined world that are more at the level of fantasy than "real" life.

These same images spread through the media are also purposefully utilized by people whose aim is to attract people to travel out from their home countries (e.g. employment agencies, referred in the data as "travel agencies", "agencies" or "agents"). For example, when referring to "personal accommodation" which will be provided, the agent strategically elicits images of houses or rooms where privacy is secured. When this expression is coupled with the idea of travelling to a country (the UAE) which is something similar as the UK or Australia (since the language spoken there is the same, English), only certain kind of expectation of the accommodation is created. And most of the migrant workers then comment in the interviews how disappointing, shocking, or outraging it was when it turned out that they were housed in the camp or in a room where there might be 6-7 other people living with you.

Images of houses, cars, clothes, workplaces, etc. in the media create concrete visions of how life seems somewhere else. I argue that the disappointment - e.g., about the housing arrangements - is, at least to some amount, related to what one has seen in media; in tv and newspapers but more and more especially in the social media where stories and images are shared on more personal level.

As I mentioned earlier, it might be that those agents, whose purpose is to attract people to work in poor working conditions, purposefully utilize the expectations created by media and stories of others who have travelled abroad. Luke says that in his contract "provision for accommodation" is mentioned but, assumable, no clarification of the quality of accommodation is provided. "Accommodation" combined with images of Dubai, for example, automatically create certain expectation.

5.3 Skills and self-improvement

The ability to imagine the benefits of studying abroad is a strong influencer in participants' original decision to look for study place outside their home countries. Both the situation at home (for example the perceived quality of education) and assumed situation somewhere else (in relation to both quality of education and its influence on future career) are at play when the option of moving abroad is considered.

Mary's narrative about her wishes to study abroad and the investments it requires, reflects features of the global market of education and self-improvement. In the narrative of Mary (and Eva and Jonathan who had also planned to rather study than work abroad) studying abroad is seen as providing more value than studies at the home country.

Strong motivation to study and so to develop one's skills can be seen in relation to skills discourse recognised on the field of migration. Vigouroux (2017) claims that skills are not just tools or concrete abilities people possess, but when used in by institutions and officials, rather arbitrary skill-based categorisations become powers influencing migrant's lives beyond their own control. Vigouroux (2017) writes: "[...] skills and the migrants they are used to characterize as unskilled, low-skilled, or highly skilled should be analysed as discursive categories embedded in a web of institutional practices and multilayered ideological formations. The classification of migrants according to labour skills is not just a theoretical or methodological issue; it has implications for policies. At the ground level, it has real life-trajectory consequences for millions of people." (p. 313) In addition, people who are labelled as "unskilled" in the categorisation apparatus are subjected to heavier control by migration officials than people categorised to other skill-based categories. (Global Commission on International Migration 2005). Therefore, it is no wonder that around the World migrants and people who are planning to migrate do their best to avoid being labelled into the category of "low-skilled" or "unskilled" migrant. As these discourses travel across the globe in the media contents and institutional documents, it influences on the perceptions of people aiming to move abroad. It becomes part of one's self-understanding that to be "right" kind of a migrant, one should not be categorised as "low-skilled" or "unskilled" migrant. Having education, and the need to talk about its necessity, becomes an urgent matter.

6 DISCUSSION

Global phenomena like the neoliberal market logic, flows of information, and unequal distribution of power can be seen as a force behind individual migrant stories described in this thesis. While in the beginning of the thesis process, I was interested about the agency of individuals, during the process the small narratives and their relationship with the larger scale phenomena started to be the framework with which to observe the findings of this study. Often, as shown, the situations which are described in the narratives with the vocabulary of unintentionality are not only coincidences of individual life, but situations framed by larger societal and global forces.

Narratives have been widely studied on the field of migration studies, and based on that, it is safe to say that data of this study was suitable for the purpose of understanding migrant experiences. However, the data was not originally gathered as a narrative data. It is possible that some aspects of migrants' telling would have been different if they would have orientated themselves in story-telling mode, or if the questions would have been broader or more inviting to narration.

Concept of choronotope has been found useful in migration studies, and it offered a frame to arrange the data with sensible categories with time-space connections. However, the concept and methodology connected to it was not fully utilized in this study. It would have required more systematic analysis of discourses and subjectivities of different time-space nodes to catch the whole potential of it. In addition, combinations of large and small scale chronotopes would have offered clearer understanding about the chronotopic identities of the participants. However, it was useful in arranging the data and offered support when I was trying to conclude what were the unifying features in the narratives in each time-space category. Especially the notion of shared experiences in certain choronotope was useful in the framework of this thesis and with the help of it the data's similarities were made visible.

Three-level positioning analysis worked as a very practical tool in catching different layers of positioning of the narratives. It made possible to try to achieve the aim

of finding the connections between individual narratives and large societal processes and phenomena. In the future, to further study narratives and narrative positioning of migrant workers in precarious conditions, gathering and analysing diverse ethnographic data would be beneficial. Detailed analysis of interactions between migrant workers with different backgrounds in everyday settings could further deepen the understanding of observed large scale structures and their influences on individuals. Data gathered by interviewing groups of migrants would potentially offer deeper and more nuanced reflections about the past and current situations.

This study contributes to the field by shedding light, through the analysis of larger and smaller scales in narratives, to the simultaneously shared and strongly individual nature of experiences of migrants living in the UAE. The data used is rather unique as the participants tell openly stories which, I would assume, are not told for everyone. My earnest wish is that I have been able to do justice for the valuable stories I have been having privilege to listen and to analyse.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Questions for the informants:

Please tell me about yourself. Who are you, where are you from?

What are you doing in Emirates? Have you enjoyed staying here? How long have you been here? How long are you planning to stay?

How did you end up coming to Emirates?

What kind of plans did you have in your home country before you came here? Do you still have the same plans?

Did you have previous experience of living / working / studying abroad? What did you know about life in Emirates beforehand? Did you have somebody telling you about life abroad? Who, and what did he / she tell to you?

What do you think in your life is similar and what is different compared to your home country?

What has been worst and what has been best in living here?

What are the most important things in your life at the moment? Who are the most important people in your life / around you, at the moment?

What are your plans for the future? Where do you see yourself in ten years? What is the best that could happen to you?