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Transnationalism and Identity: The Dream of 'Better life' for Egyptian Migrants in the UAE

**The American University in Cairo**

**School of Global Affairs and Public Policy**

**Transnationalism and Identity: The Dream of 'Better Life' for Egyptian  
Migrants in the UAE**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Cynthia Nelson Institute of Gender and Women  
Studies in the Middle East and North Africa**

**Aliaa Ellawaty**

**800170031**

**Under the Supervision of Professor Martina Rieker**

Transnationalism and Identity: The Dream of 'Better life' for Egyptian Migrants in the UAE

### DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all the migrants in the UAE and outside the UAE, especially my sister in Dubai. I hope they have a good fight in their search for their dreams, especially those who sacrifice a lot for their families and for the sake of their dreams. I also dedicate this work to my family who have taught me never to settle for less and to always fight for our dreams.

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### Abstract

In the modern globalized world, there has been a shift in migration studies that now focus on those immigrants from a transnational perspective. Thus, their lives are not detached from the transnational space that is not only about the point of departure and the point of arrival, but it is more related to the interconnections that emerge in the transnational space. This means that individuals are no longer tied to ethnic and cultural diversities, but by the transformations in the sociality of the transnational space. For many years, the United Arab Emirates has been a great attraction for middle-class Egyptians who wanted to challenge the possibilities offered by their migration to the Gulf. For them, UAE presents a place where financial prosperity and political stability exist. Thus, their migration is mostly attached to their dream of the “better life”. However, in the modern globalization, these dreams are marketized for capital profits that suit the global imaginary. In the transnational space, and through the sociality that is reproduced in multiple and diverse places, identity has turned into a making of nation-states that tend to control moving bodies. Hence, through monitoring the transformations in their everyday lives, these migrants’ identities are transformed according to the interrelated connectivity with a globalized capital. Therefore, the migrants’ dream of the “better life” is contested through the tensions of the everyday these transnational households encounter to underpin the contradiction between their lives transnationally and their expectations of social and economic wellness.

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To understand the development of the middle-class Egyptian migration, it is necessary to unpack how these migrants' experiences are not only framed within a material structure, but also within "imaginative geographies" (Said, 1987). Hence, it is important to look at how the figure of the transnational migrant is tied to technologies of expulsion from the social order which fix them in the position of the "outsider" or the "other" (Nail, 2015). However, in a world of hyper mobility, the migrant in the new global order is not tied to a "geographical space". Instead, virtual connections and abstract globalization give a fluid understanding of the interconnectivities (re)produced in the transnational space (Roderiguiz, 2010). This notion allows an exploration of the social identities that are reworked away from the nation-state imaginary, but those that are understood through the everyday experiences of those migrants. Therefore, a new concept of the transnational migrant emerges whose social identity is shaped by transformative and deterritorialized globalized space (Schiller, 1995:48-49). Hence, the transnational identity is explored through the individualistic everyday experiences with all its complexities in the transnational space.

### **Key Words:**

Better-life, Transnationalism, deterritorialized, global, transformative, experiences, home, identity, diversity, nation-state, possibilities, tensions, households.

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## Chapter One

### 1.1.Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon where bodies move through borders. For middle class Egyptians, their migration to foreign or Arab countries seeking financial and social stability are considered compelling reasons for their departure. While Egyptian migration in the last ten years has been related to young Egyptians travelling to the West to attain the Western dream, many prefer migrating to Arab countries or to the Gulf as it resembles a social space that is culturally familiar. In addition, their migration is considerably related to seeking the allure that the Emirati 'dream' offers (Pagès-El Karoui, 2016). Recent scholars have examined the patterns of migration to the Gulf and to the UAE examining the trajectories of relationships of migrants in the UAE that include feelings of belonging, and other social and economic factors (Vora, 2008; Khalaf & Alkobaisi, 1999; Ali, 2011). Instability in the political and economic conditions have affected the lives of the neighboring countries from Syria, Yemen, Palestine, and Egypt. Additionally, during the 1970s and 1980s, Gulf societies were presented to the outside world as a representative to living a life of modern consumerism (Khalaf & Alkobaisi, 1999, p.284). Currently, the reasons for migration to the Gulf countries and the neighboring countries could be concluded to the wages that are 12 times more than their wages back home (ibid). In a more recent study, Vora (2008) focuses on middle-class diasporic figures who are tempted by the promotion of better living in the UAE which is the focus of this study.



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Egyptians have particularly chosen the UAE as it “offers a Western, modern and globalized life in an Arab and Muslim country” (Pagès-El Karoui, 2016, p.1). Since the Emirates offers an opportunity for development and gaining wealth, Dubai constitutes “a laboratory par excellence to the management of diversity in a globalized metropolis” (Pagès-El Karoui, 2016, p.2). Middle-class Egyptians tend to migrate to the UAE to achieve sustainable opportunities in life because of the deterioration in the economic status and the labor market in Egypt. As educated and professional individuals, they found it difficult to sustain a desired future in such circumstances. Hence, their decision to leave represents the ultimate solution to attain ‘better life’ circumstances in the United Arab Emirates. However, there are factors related to their migration that constantly constitute their desires and identities. Therefore, their migration has become not only tied between the two places of where they leave and their host society, but they are caught in the technologies of “biopolitics” (Foucault, 1980) that entails an authority of state or capital apparatus as a dominant form of governmentality. According to Foucault (1980), “Bios” is, therefore, related to a political life of quality that is designed to contain human beings through multiple technologies of power. Linking this theory to the life of Egyptian migrants reveal the processes of political and economic powers controlling their perception of ‘better life’.

This research explores the Egyptian upper middle-class migration to the United Arab Emirates and especially to Dubai in the last ten years. As these Egyptians decide to settle their new lives in the UAE, it is never easy for them to deal with the complexities of living in a highly competitive space whether on the professional or the economic levels. Contemporary Egyptian migrants thought that their migration to the UAE would help them achieve a better lifestyle for

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themselves and their families. However, through the narratives of the interlocutors included in this research, it is evident that their dreams are regulated by the pressures they endure in this competitive transnational space.

### **1.2. Background**

The Gulf has always been an attractive destination for Egyptians as it represents the portal towards a Western globalized life. Tracing the history of Egyptian migration to the Gulf, the Egyptian migration to the Gulf was mainly for economic and political reasons. It was related to deducing the pressure on the Egyptian labor market. During the 1980s. Egyptian migration has participated in being a large source of foreign currency through remittances sent to Egypt (Zohry, 2007). In a study by Zohry (2007), Egypt has been considered a major provider of young professionals for the Gulf since 2000 (p.77). In the last ten years, the UAE has become the focus for young families that dream for Western global modernity. A study for the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2011) on the most countries that Egyptians prefer to migrate to since 2011 indicates that Emirates is the second attractive destination for 23 percent. The Gulf, especially the UAE hosts millions of Egyptian migrants and their number witnessed an increase during the period after 2011 because of economic instability and lack of security (Hassan, 2013, p.12).

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### **1.3. Research Questions**

In relation to the transnational existence of middle-class Egyptian migration in the UAE, there is an exploration of the migrants' dreams as always attached to a global system of order. It is how their emotions and social realities are controlled by economic and political factors. Moreover, their dreams and hopes for a better future are explored in this research unveiling the paradox between their agency over their choices and the contemporary transnational structure. Therefore, this research aims at questioning the politics behind the creation of opportunities and freedom of mobility for the Egyptian professionals. In addition, there is an investigation of the (re)production of divisional social hierarchies as part and parcel of the modern global order that has been normalized.

Furthermore, this thesis examines the emotional existence as related to political and social processes that tend to regulate and govern moving subjects. There is an analysis on the social connections and how emotions are controlled to sustain the status of limbo for the Egyptian migrants. Emotions are exposed and conceptualized to explain how they are related to technologies of power as part of the migrants' transnational experience, and how emotions convey the transnational migrants' existence.

In addition, this thesis explores the complexities of women's experiences in transnational spaces unpacking the meaning of 'good life'. There is a focus on gendered experience as part of the modern transnational Egyptian migration in the UAE. Freedom of choice, therefore, is

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questioned as it is surfaced with considerable moral obligations towards the “self“or the “family”.

The research hypothesis how gender relations are reproduced in the transnational space.

Moreover, this research explores the social space reinvented in the transnational space raising the question of how these migrants construct new sociality in the transformative transnational space creating a de-territorialized identity. Furthermore, this part explores the distinctive mechanisms that these migrants develop in the transnational space creating new possibilities unveiling the complexities of living in Dubai and how they construct independencies related to a globalized pattern.

### **1.4 Literature Review**

#### **Lifestyle Migration**

When discussing the upper middle-class migration, I investigate the movement of people to places either temporarily or permanently, for various reasons, to signify something loosely defined as “the quality of life” (Benson & Osbaldiston,2014, p.1). This kind of migration indicates a desired life of quality and an advancement in income. As a result, there is an investigation to observe the dimensions of their decision to migrate. In analyzing the cotemporary debates on migration and social theory, this research attempts to involve a reflection that includes not only movement itself, but also debates related to social adaptation and discussions on identity, culture, and consumption. In this respect, there is an investigation on the tension between structure and agency (Benson & Osbaldiston, p.2). The introduction of such concept widens the analysis of

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how these migrants' desires and dreams are constantly reconstructed and reshaped under the notion of 'better lifestyle'. Lifestyle migration does not include only debates about social migration and lived experiences; however, it is related to economic debates or global contexts (Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014, p.3). Their desires are romanticized when they are linked to the economic aspirations that these migrants challenge to achieve economic privilege. Despite their constant urge to work more and to achieve better incomes, it has become an obsession where they feel "more rushed and squeezed" (Hoey, 2007, p.605). They always link economic success to having a meaningful life; therefore, their search has become an ongoing process through which they are constantly urged "to improve their quality of life" (Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014, p. 3). This is evident through the research done in Dubai, as the Egyptian migrants feel pressured to perform on various levels whether they are social, professional or economic. They are in constant need to fulfil emotional obligations toward their families back in Egypt and family members in the UAE. In addition, their admired lifestyle aspirations extend to having a stable economic image that might financially be a burden on them. Therefore, it is essential to include Bourdieu's *habitus* that gives accounts to social practices. Social practices are not a mechanical assembly or performed procedures, they are rather conditions that structure these habits of economic and cultural factors. *Habitus* is flexible as it is affected by changing variables of factors of social and economic domains. Therefore, the *habitus* is stressing social life structures that have become engrained in our physical form, these structures shape our desires and how we behave under conditioned possibilities. we can have subjective preferences, but they are constantly related with the objective structure. For example, our possibilities and chances are themselves regulated and presented through our past, and from this point, individual choices can be variable depending on

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the society they exist in. These choices are not detached from the economic or social domains where they exist, which reveal the dynamics of power relations in the social order. This concept provides an understanding of the Egyptian migrants' choices versus the structural collective that suggests a correlation between capital and social practices (Nash, 2010, p.178). These migrants seek a desired living style that has been modeled under the social structure that regulates the social and individual practices (ibid, p.180). Lifestyle migration motivates young professional migrants to relocate themselves in a social space that increases the probability of achieving such dreams. As Hoey (2010) expresses, "Life-style migrants concentrate on relocation as a way of forcing change to realize potential selves. It becomes an expression of their commitment to certain life-style choices to reprioritize their lives and find balance by integrating material and moral domains" (ibid).

Linking lifestyle migration to the creation of flexible labor is fundamental as part of global modern capitalism which makes this kind of migration a distinctive one (Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014, p. 5). A desired lifestyle is linked to consumption as it is premised on accounts of traditional social structures, divisions of labor and consumer choice (Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2000). This consumer society has become both a social and economic structure through which self-value and self-worth are constantly attached to these new modes of production. The Egyptian migrants are professionals who are caught into the needs of the global capital that requires them to perform on social and economic levels to stay as part of the global figure. They are in constant search for fulfilling the global figure criteria of being successful and efficient on the economic and the social levels. As a result, "the lifestyle choices that individuals make thus, 'give material form to a

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particular narrative of self-identity' (Giddens, 1991, p.81)" [Benson & O'rielly, p, 616]. This means that their life choices are regulated by habitus that is not only related to individual desires but to the social structure modeled for such desires.

With the emergence of the United Arab Emirates as a global destination as the "Dreamland" and a "world – city" (ElSheshtawy, 2004), it has become a representative of spatial heterogeneity of racial, cultural and ethnic diversity. As the United Arab Emirates has become the global image of developmental plans, there has been a need for skilled labor power to fit this developmental structure through means of marketized labor. Vora (2008) discusses the transnational global subject and a scrutiny on identity formation in the modern transnational space. She exposes the diversity in the UAE to sustain the purpose for each subject and their contribution to the global market. This research furtherly explores the social lives of transnational migrants whose lives and dreams linked to the contemporary economic structuring of identities creating complexities in their everyday living. There is no doubt that the 21st century is the "age of Dubai" (Tichu, 2013, p.78). The UAE is examined in that context not only as a place that witnesses successive development, but also in the people who inhabit the space of those who are in control and those who are controlled. Therefore, visiting Dubai demonstrates how Egyptian men and women inhabit space that is never detached from the power relations that tend to regulate their mobility. In the Arab Gulf region, and in the UAE, the concept of citizenship remains a contested issue in relation not only to migrants, but also to local mass. Hence, citizenship and the denial of citizenship to migrants are parts of the discussion on "global cities", as Saskia Sassen describes.

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### **Transnationalism and Transmigration**

In the modern world of displacement and mobility, human subjects are always on the move as part of the flexible global modernity. According to Escobar (2003) “modernity is a displacement producing process” (p.161). He sheds light on how modernity is entangled with development and displacement where different subjectivities emerge in the trans-localized space, which makes mobility and displacement inseparable from modernity. Therefore, developmental plans and globality mark the emergence of the globalized communities. Consequently, such flexibility shapes the identities of Egyptians in the UAE. Appadurai (1996) links the emergence of transnationalism with economic value (p.338) which explains why Egyptians are attracted to living in the United Arab Emirates that is of socio-economic allure. As a result, this gives an idea on the opportunistic agency over their migration by mobile sovereignty that makes adding value part of the making of modern transnational subjectivities. In relation to the emergence of the global subjectivities, Schiller provokes a debate over the making of migration as a concept that is never detached from the political domain (Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995). She argues, “Once we reframe the concept of immigrant and examine the political factors which have shaped the image of immigrants as the up-rooted, a whole new approach to understanding immigrants and the current debate about immigration becomes possible” (Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995, p.48). This means that there should be an investigation into the generation of migrants in the modern global world. The Egyptian migrants are repositioned in their new territoriality but are never detached from their “home” back in Egypt. According to Schiller (1995), in the modern restructuring of capitalism, immigrants are settled in countries that represent the global capitalist, and in this research, depicting the migration pattern for the middle-class in the United Arab Emirates allows a better



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understanding of the logic behind flexible structures that shape and hegemonize the migrants' dreams and aspirations for 'better life'. Therefore, capitalism, which is a system that produces global interconnections across borders, reconstitutes the structure of accumulation (Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995, p.50). This means that all parts of the world are incorporated towards adding surplus value to capital. This system consists of connections, production and labor (Sassen, 2014). Therefore, migrants who aspire economic possibilities and stability face limitations on their desires which have turned them into capitalist subjectivities. Hence, transnationalism has subverted the sovereignty over these modern subjects to "de-territorialized nation-states" (Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995). These migrants discover a social space away from their "home societies". Hence, it is essential to determine the nature of locality as; "lived experience in a globalized, de-territorialized world" (Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995, p.490). And that is how this research explores the individualistic experiences in the de-territorialized transnational social space.

Adopting the theory of transnationalism focuses the analysis of the transnational social phenomena in relation to areas like migration, identity and citizenship. Methodological nationalism explained by Wimmer and Schiller (2002), social spatiality was considered as "naturally given" by the local, national and global levels (Pries, 2008, p.5). Thus, the spatial structures cannot be accepted as already given but should be contested as framed categories. The issue with structuring challenges the socio-spatial fixed terms that has always been tied to concepts of "community" and "society". Instead, transnationalism and transnational migrants must be addressed to "catch all categories". Adopting this method, offers an understanding away from the often-used concepts that are based on nation-state-borders and national society (Pries, 2008, p.6).

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This means that this research attempts at using transnationalism as a methodology to be able to identify the individual migrant as a member of a group that does not belong to a specific place, but rather one that exceeds any geographical borders.

This collective belonging to a certain place is a myth (Shiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995, p.51). It only ties individuals to a territorialized space which increases their attachment to their local space. However, these migrants were not totally detached from their lives back "home". Instead, there are interconnections between these migrants and their families back "home" (Clifford, 1994). Similarly, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) focus on "the process through which such reified and naturalized national representations are constructed and maintained by states and national elites (p.12). He further explains this notion through which he shows how states claim, "territorially circumscribed home and culturally delineated nation that are usually so central to establish legitimacy" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 12). It is how these citizens construct their own identities away from the nation-state imaginary in what is called "post-modern condition" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 12). This notion defies the imagination of place that is politicized forming a strategy towards a reconfigured "home" that empowers the de-territorialized communities in a self-determination counterforce in different contexts. Gupta and Ferguson (1992) furtherly argue that this new making of place is not necessarily tied to a nation, but it is a reworking of ideas and "community" (13). Furthermore, imagined locales and nostalgic feelings compliment these idealizations of "home" and "family".

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Alisha Ticku (2013) explores the construction of the 'Emirati Dream' and the social perspective that sustains unequal relations between migrants and citizens. She provides evidence of the "mythology" of nationalism that sustains the division between nationals and ex-pats (p.77). In her claim, inequalities of gender, ethnicity and citizenship appear in examining the everyday lives of the Egyptian migrants. In addition to that, it is important to include the multiplicity of experiences and concepts that are related to this conversation to be able to unravel the complexities in the social everyday living that normalizes consequent violence against these groups under the concepts of legitimacy and 'exception' for capitalist globalized reasons. As Laila Abu Lughod (1986) explains, the deep interrelated relations of the community and how people perceive community morals take place by examining the migrants' everyday living in the translocal space.

### **Gender and the Transnational Identity**

Middle-class Egyptians aspirations for better lifestyle are enmeshed in the transnational space that is full of tensions that might differ from men to women. According to Schiller (1995), "Not everyone within a family network or even within a household may benefit to the same degree and tensions abound as men and women, those at home and those abroad, define their interests and needs differently (Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995, p. 55). Focusing on the Egyptian migrants, there is an exploration of the gendered tensions that arise due to the pressure of the structural transnational economy. Therefore, these tensions are discussed in relation to global economic power that only facilitates profit for transnational capital (Schiller Basch & Blanc, 1995, p. 59) through their labor. Both women and men are compelled to produce through their labor and through providing affect. Their labor, hence, extends to beyond their professional value to include

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other social obligations that adds to their everyday complexities. Migrants' incorporation and transnational practices within the transnational incorporation levels are interwind to include a gendered point of view. Results of research show that gender matter in the analysis of how immigrants adapt in the new social space. In a study by Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo (2005), men and women share a lot of the transnational experience, but there are also some different factors between both.

Furthermore, migrants' incorporation and transnational practices are tackled in this research as gendered experiences. The social processes within the transnational incorporation levels are interwind to include a gendered point of view. Immigration itself is a process where entanglements of complex relationships exist. These relationships are affected by notions of exclusion or knowledge produced in the transnational space. Results of research show that gender matter in analysis of how immigrants adapt in the new social space. In a study by Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo (2005), men and women share a lot of the transnational experience. They live their social lives transgressing national borders and creating a sociality that crosses borders, one that exists in the transnational space (Schiller, 1999). In that sense, women's migration may be depicted as a disruption to a priori conception of relating migration and globalization to masculinity. However, using Ong's "transnationalism" in depicting the hegemony of globalization processes captures "the transversal, the transactional, the transnational, and the transgressive aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism" (Ong, 1999, p.4). The status of Egyptian women migrants in the UAE is seen through the transnational lens – in the way they interact to the everyday

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pressures, responsibilities and possibilities that arise within the transnational space. Egyptian women are caught in care responsibilities, and in addition to that, they are obliged to perform at workspace since their labor value is essential to their existence in the UAE.

### **1.5. Conceptual Framework**

Building upon the narratives of middle-class Egyptian migrants in the United Arab Emirates, this study explores how transnationalism has structured their identities in different contexts. In addition, it also examines the emergence of these global identities in the Emirati context to explain the formation of the flexible subject in terms of the modern global order. Isin (2009) explains the emergence of this economic transnational global world as “moveable” and always changing which explains how these migrants’ rights are bounded to their new spatial “temporal” space. Therefore, Egyptian migrants’ identities are formulated in their temporalities. However, perplexity occurs when there is differentiation between these Egyptian migrants and expatriates from different Western nationalities. Vora (2008) explains these contradictions that emerge from the ‘temporary’ citizenship these migrants experience. Being unable to belong to the Emirati identity or the Emirati nation, takes us back to the middle-class neoliberal understanding that focuses on divisions between the Emirati citizens and the non-Emirati citizens (Vora, 2008, p.383). Isin (2009) explains the socio-political space that becomes the scale for these contemporary spatialities where the state is no longer the “container” of citizens, but it is the transnational global. In addition, the emergence of this new citizenship is largely tied to a neoliberal developmental frame where individuals are marketized to serve global capitalism through this “flexible”

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citizenship (Ong, 2006, p. 501). Therefore, these migrants' desire for a better lifestyle through living in Dubai is part of the marketization of citizenship where economic and political domains are in control of the making of these subjectivities (Ong, 2006). Drawing on more literature on the neoliberal contemporary agency of making marketized identities through domains of risk is explained more in literature of Beck (2004) where the modern subject is constantly pressured to perform. This has proven to be part of the neoliberal technique of citizenship that directs individuals' self-worth in building the State/ Capital. This explains the need for the Egyptian migrants to constantly prove their self-worth and value. As a result, throughout the fieldwork done in the UAE, I noticed the strategic differentiation between the Emirati citizen and any other citizen which adds to the complexities of their everyday lives, and which also makes them seek other alternatives to reconcile their feelings of never belonging.

In Marx's *capital*, that forms political constructs for a social purpose; one that marks the valorization of value. The expansion of capitalism in every aspect of the migrants' lives explains the logic of globalization and the universality of capitalism that quests primitive accumulation. Harvey (1990) explains that the concepts of space and time are socially constructed. These social constructions are highly related to the capitalist mode of production that is marked by economic growth and development (p.1). The Egyptian migrant worker social everyday living, and decisions are integrated in the benefit of capital that they are treated as industrial machines that add surplus value even during leisure time. Syed Ali (2011) illustrated how the Egyptian migrants are compelled to leave 'home' and to be engaged in the transnational behavior (p.558). They are integrated in a way that ensures their economic participation; however, they are never considered

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a part of the host society. Instead, their temporary existence of their migration and the instability of their stay reveal a structuring system to keep the order of the human participants and to control their transnational presence that is always intermingled with a state of unrest. individuals are held responsible for their security which is tied to stability through labor.

Therefore, this research sheds light not on neoliberalism itself, but on the subjectivities of contemporary migration. Egyptian migrants of the United Arab Emirates are sustained through a sense of security to maintain their labor and participation in the economic flow. This research furtherly explores the relation between labor and global modernity in the section of women's right to labor. Participating in the transnational labor is part of the creation of the neoliberal 'flexible citizen'. Women's work in the UAE is controlled by the idea of development and women's participation. However, it is part of the complexities of the modern world where subjectivities are shaped just to fit in the global capitalism. In this context, women's participation becomes stronger as they present a pillar in the transnational labor force. In this study, some narratives of Egyptian migrant women intensify their role in the construction of the household. There is also a relation between economic migration and keeping the social order. Appadurai (1996) examines the cultural effect of our "shrinking" world where she shows consumption and multicultural debates on a global overview. This approach shows the pattern of consumption of migrants that is marked by a neoliberal thinking. How these families' identities are bound to their consumption pattern is explained to meet the global criteria of citizenship in the new social order. Middle class consuming pattern forced by the modern paradigm is highly relevant to concepts of contemporary belonging. There are some frameworks related to consuming patterns in the transnational space. Ngai (2003)

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conceptualizes the production of displaced labor and how development is tied to consumerism as the driving force to attract individuals to work in order to be able to consume. Part of living in Emirates made these families follow a certain consuming pattern that serves the global capital (p.469). As a result, migrants face multiple challenges which foreshadows 'the cosmopolitan identity' (Vora, 2008). This cosmopolitan identity can adjust to the new variables in the new transnational space and develop an identity that holds a preference towards acquiring the modern lifestyle. The construct of this kind of identity is clear in Ngai (2003, p. 469-492). Therefore, the imagination of the Western lavish life becomes the force behind these migrants' spending pattern. Understanding such limitations on this 'dream' for the better life imagination is explained in (Jubas, 2007, p.231- 254). However, these migrants' behavior is tied to the making of modern economic subjectivities (Vora, 2008, p.377- 405). Therefore, these frameworks allow a proper examination of the relation between consumption and belonging for these transnational families. The capitalist profit is not only related to profits accumulated, but it is also related to an incorporated world of production (Sassen, 1994). Both their labor and dreams are filtered and commodified for the value they provide for the power of capital. This resembles a commodification of labor that only adds to the precariousness of the transnational migrants. Consequently, they are obliged to maintain their dreams attached to the labor they provide which stigmatizes them in so many ways. They are managed through being given limited access to rights instead of full rights of citizens to maintain their subjectivity. This method is used to recruit "human capital" and "skills" (Altenried, Bojadžijev, Höfler, Mezzadra & Wallis, 2018, p.299). Therefore, Egyptian migrants develop an urge to produce through labor in different fields, that eventually adds to the accumulation of capital. Their everyday working day extends to late hours, which explains how



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capital works through individuals. They (re)produce labor that adds accumulation to capital and increases their anxiety. In the private sector, shifts could extend till late hours until 8.30 in the evening. This explains the association between the capitalist vision that pushes the transnational subjects towards working flexible hours by manipulating their desires and their sense of value to assure their productivism. Ong (1999) describes how this kind of flexible citizenship as the “cultural logics of capital accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions” (p.7).

Since this thesis tackles the social interactions and practices of Egyptian migrants living in Dubai, there must be a conceptualization of space and its relation to bodies within the changeable social space (Fuches, 2007). Hence, exploring space allows an understanding of the different structures through the social activities practiced by migrant women. They have recreated a social spatiality; however, in exploring the methods of communications and the content delivered at both ends, it was clear that identities and aspirations of these migrants are (re)constructed. Although various virtual and real social connections were made but embedded within these connections bigger structural forces enacted by the global capital.

Referring to conceptual framework related to transnationalism and fieldwork done in multiple places between Egypt and the UAE, this research explores the everyday lives of the Egyptian migrants in the UAE, and their lives are examined at its fullest with all their dreams of “the good life”. Moreover, in explaining how the dream of the “better life” is promoted through

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migration, I am engaging debates on middle-class Egyptian migrants in Emirates to show the impact of this “dream” and the potentialities that are related to developmental contemporary capitalism. This research exposes the stabilities offered by this ‘dream life’ in relation to the complexities of the social to unravel the impact of this ‘dream’ on the social and the intimate relations between men and women and between these families and their “temporal” space. My research is not intended at only exposing the impact of contemporary emplacement in relation to globalization; rather, it explores how the interrelated connections that emerge in the social space are affected by actors of political and economic domains.

### **1.6. Fieldwork**

This thesis is based on fieldwork done between 2019 and 2020. In the last seven years, I have been a regular visitor after adjusting my schedule to go and see her and my nephew for maximum a couple of weeks. I have always stayed at her apartment in Dubai where she and her husband have always welcomed me to stay with them during my short visits. It has been years now since she first moved to Dubai, but I have visited her only three times throughout. During my short visits, I met with some of her friends from work and some of her neighbors who have always changed every time I visit.

In my last visit, I started to recall some of the memories of previous visits when I encountered some little conversations from my sister’s circle of acquaintances. Those memories were almost from upper middle-class Egyptian women who have left Egypt aspiring the “better life” in the Dream land. However, their narratives have always included the words ‘*ghorba*’

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(estrangement) and *'ta'ab'* (tiredness). They also told me about how it is hard sometimes to stay in touch with their beloved ones back in Egypt as there are some restrictions on certain applications that do not work in Egypt or vice versa. In addition, they revealed some of the everyday tensions that they encounter on daily basis even though others think that they have the perfect life there. They have always revealed details of their lives to me as if I am "one of them" or that they feel I am familiar. Some of them even asked me to transfer things like sentimental gifts from their families in Egypt on my next visit. This made me think of adopting a macro/micro approach to understand the human connections in the transnational space. I visited Dubai to explore how professional women migrants who are married and some who are single conceive their desires for a 'better life' and to question their attachment to 'home'. Their feelings and emotions are put into the test of whether they are the ones in control, or they are considered as actors of the bigger picture of the transnational existence. Their desires, therefore, are controlled and managed, and their freedom of choice is also manipulated for the sake of the prosperous Capital. Using tools of research of 'Transnationalism' gave an opportunity to show the complexities attached to these migrants' transnational existence. Adopting this method depicted the repositioning of migrants for the sake of keeping the global order. Therefore, a transnational approach linked the social with the political and the economic. Those who aspire a 'better life' are constantly subjected to political and economic pressures that have become parts and parcels of the figure of the modern global migrant.

As my sister has been living there with her small family, it was easy for me to stay and to be an observant participant. During my stay, I contacted Rana and Basma, Youusra's neighbors

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observing the kind of relationships they have or even have had over years as part of the social worlds. Through these encounters, I made connections with these families to have a more constructed social encounters conducting interviews to understand their social status in their transnationalism. In addition, I joined Yousra when she visited her friend Lobna and during a gathering with her women colleagues at work which allowed me to observe their social existence in the transnational space. I also met with my friend's sister, Nesma who I met at a café near Yousra's place. They discussed their daily routine through interviews that I conducted to explore their hopes and dreams in relation to their realities there. In addition, financial, social and cultural tensions and struggles in their everyday experiences, that are controlled by certain legal regulations, have become parts and parcels of the neo-capital discipline of regulating their existence in the UAE; their everyday choices are never detached from the order structured for them. In addition, time goes parallel with the concept of value when a migrant there once described her stay as '*ta'ab*' (tiredness) or the passage of time and years as '*el sneen btegy*' (years pass quickly) and that nothing has value or '*ta'am*'.

Lefebvre's everydayness approach of analysis defines the charm of the individual's everyday experience. The insignificant of the everyday activities that look repetitive or unsubstantial are the most that matter here. The study of the "normal" or the "known" that seems so ordinary of settings and people who meet holds into it more than that. The everyday "normalities" seem to hold the essence of human lives. As Lefebvre states, "Things as well as 'objects' as well as 'subjects' offered up to the senses accessible and recognizable forms. People, whether individually or in groups, performed various functions, some of them physiological (eating, drinking, sleeping), others social (working, travelling). Structures, some of them natural and others constructed, allowed for the public or private performance of

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these functions, but with a radical - a root - difference: those forms, functions and structures were not known as such, not named. At once connected and distinct, they were part of an undifferentiated whole” (as cited in Lefebvre & Levich, 1987, p.7).

I sat with some of the migrants individually or in groups, and at sometimes I directed the conversation to be able to have a flow of information related to my questions. I included some of the children about their lives away from the rest of their family and their lives in the United Arab Emirates 'the dream land'. In addition, I included some of the interviews with the migrants' parents in Egypt to collect information about how they feel while their daughters/sons live away in a different country and whether it is the best option. Some of the interviews conducted took place through virtual conversation using social media applications. Since it was hard to reach some of the interlocutors, it was more convenient to use virtual meetings. Using these tools helped in allowing me to ask questions and answers using the research questions, methodology and concepts related. To conclude, participatory observations, stories and interviews exposed the making of the transnational living in different settings which foreshadows the tensions that rise from the neo-capitalist pressure on the everyday living of the participants.

### **1.7. Chapters Overview**

The following chapter aims at questioning the politics behind the creation of opportunities and freedom of mobility for the Egyptian migrants. I engage in this part the (re)production of social hierarchies as part of the modern global order that has been normalized. As non-nationals, they are treated differently and are put under immense pressure to perform professionally since their stay

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is attached to their labor. Their performativity is the only measure of their value in the UAE which puts them under constant need to perform professionally and socially. And as flexible citizens, they seek other alternatives embodied in citizenship from a foreign country, which adds to their pressuring everyday existence.

In the next chapter, emotions are presented as tools that sustain the limbo status of the Egyptian migrants. They are attached to their place of origin, yet they ignore their emotions and continue to perform in their new realm of production. Although they detach themselves from being attached to their place of origin, they are pulled again by their sense of guilt and that they are away from their family members. Therefore, to understand the experience of the Egyptian migrants, emotions are conceptualized to show the tensions between the migrants' everyday lives and their performed one.

The later chapter tackles the extension of the pressuring everyday living in the UAE through a gendered lens. There is an exposure of how the integration of women in the labor market has become part of their living there. Therefore, they must perform according to the value they add through their labor and to perform their 'normal' gendered roles as care givers.

Lastly, in contextualizing the migrants' everyday practices, there is a reproduction of social connections. Women migrants have found a system of social connections through their similar experience of living in the UAE. Hence, they have formed a support system that has empowered them to face everyday challenges whether these challenges are social or professional. However,

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these social connections produced are never detached from the global structure. In their attempts to have a social life outside the frames of their migration, they are reproducing needs and desires related to their existence in a global realm that requires continuous attempts of seeking better life options.

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## Chapter Two

### On the Margins of Citizenship

#### Introduction

Walking in the streets of Dubai gave me a sense of diversity, yet a sense of division. Whenever I visited the UAE, there was always this image of the Emirati citizen wearing the national *kaftan* (national outfit) who work at the airport, and you can also observe the dark-skinned Indian or Pakistani working in uniforms of blue or orange that are used by those working in planting, cleaning, or dusting. Furthermore, in the food places and in shops, the salespersons are Filipinos. This has worked as an indication of the ethnic division of labor as this image repeats itself anywhere in the UAE that it has become normalized and “life continues very peacefully” (Sabban, 2015, p.18) [as cited in Ticku, 2010]. During my last visit, I started to focus on the position that the Emirati citizens occupy and how they employ different nationalities who belong to the ‘Third World’ to work in positions that they never attempt to work in, like cleaning or serving food in restaurants.

This visibility of occupational segregation and social hierarchies in the UAE give a simple insight into the duality of describing Dubai as a modern city of ‘global’ and ‘universal’ allure. This normalization initiates an investigation into the social and civil strategies that maintain the existence of these segregations under the authorial system of the State in control. The sense of harmony of these categorical existences reveals these strategies as policies used to control,



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regulate, and maintain the divisions between 'nationals' or 'citizens' and 'ex-pats' or 'professional migrants' to sustain the global economy. Consequently, strategic, and legal existences of the figure of migrants have proven to be employed by the State to maintain a division between the 'nationals' and the 'migrants' or professional migrants (Ticku, 2013). As a result, social hierarchies dominate the regulatory process over the majority of those who live in the UAE. Living there also provides a mythology of the 'better life' that ensures the continuance of hierarchies. Hence, as it is explained in gender inequalities, such social and ethnic hierarchies that divide the nationals from any other nationality are normalized to sustain the flexible existence of 'the non-nationals. Therefore, the question here resides in how the UAE policies sustain the global economic order through ethnic and citizenship divisions as methods of order. Hence, middle-class Egyptian migrants are found involved within the trajectories of global hegemony that have always had control over their dreams and expectations.

The UAE has been thought to be a 'Dream land' (Ticku, 2010) where there is an opportunity for better living conditions but living transnationally is never free from tensions that are cultivated in the transnational space. Therefore, this chapter aims at questioning the politics behind the creation of opportunities and freedom of mobility that are constantly controlled and surveilled. In addition, I engage the (re)production of divisional social hierarchies as part and parcel of the modern global order that has been normalized.

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### Naturalization and Citizenship

In the modern UAE, there is drastic 'modernization' and economic growth that have led to unprecedented material aspects in life. Although the UAE promotes a modern global image, "socio-cultural and political organization remain relatively traditional and conservative" (Khalaf and Alkobaisi, 1999, p.272). When I go out to malls or take the metro, Emirati citizens are rarely seen. On the other hand, individuals from other nationalities are only visible on public transport, which makes the Emirati citizens invisible on many occasions as if they do not exist except in their own spaces. When I met with Yousra, a lot of our discussions included how she rarely sees Emirati citizens in public places, and when she sees them, they always look different from other nationalities with their traditional clothes and lavish lifestyle. Therefore, borders have become "the production of the heterogeneous time and space of contemporary and postcolonial capitalism" (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013, p. xi). In other words, the normalization of the social categories existing in the transnational space is a global structure that sustains categorical paradigm. Eventually, this (re) produces a colonial divisional discourse, that is not a working of a nation-state, but it has become "an assemblage of law and power relations that transcends the nation-state's authority" (Altenried, Bojadžijev, Höfler, Mezzadra & Wallis, 2018, p.292). Therefore, moving bodies have become controlled by the sovereign expressed in the 'Global Capital' turning these bodies into "produced subjectivities" (p.292).

As a result, these subjectivities are governed by the political and economic sovereign that promotes the marketization of labor through designs that maintain modalities of sex, gender,

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origin, nation, and race, and then they become “bearers” of the responsibility to perform according to these set classifications (Altenried, Bojadžijev, Höfler, Mezzadra & Wallis, 2018, p.335). Yousra explained how it is essential to have and maintain a job in the UAE stating that, ‘although it is essential to have a job in any country to be able to provide for yourself and family, but in the UAE, things are much pressuring. It is never enough to have a job, but you always feel that you must perform in other social and personal fields. The work environment in the UAE is very competitive and expats do not have control over their fates as they must abide to their *kafeel* (a sponsor who’s responsible for each individual residency and work contract in the UAE)’. In interviews conducted with employees who have been living in the UAE for years, it was clear that there is always this sense of fear and unrest. Although they have established new lives there, but no matter what they do they are considered outsiders who belong to the elsewhere. Since their stay is mainly attached to their ability to produce through work, maintaining their jobs has become the focus of their everyday living; they cannot afford not having a regular job, as they are enmeshed in the consumer/ producer pattern of living in the UAE. However, there is a structural pattern that sustains the hierarchies of citizens vs the non-citizens as part of the global order.

Since I have set foot in the airport, I have noticed that nationals are recruited to work in the governmental positions of visa control. Yousra later explained how it is always the Emirati nationals who occupy these professions. Therefore, such divisions of labor prevail in the UAE declaring a dependency on foreigner professional workers as a method of control over the influx of foreigner professionals. As a result, “as a part of a long-term strategy for efficiency and harmony

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in human resource management in the region, the examination and implementation of nationalization policies are necessary considerations for governments to redress these socio-demographic imbalances within the labor market” (Randeree, 2012, p.3-4). This indicates that although there is a consolidation on immigration to the UAE, there is also substantial effort to strengthen the account for national citizenship. Therefore, democratic justifications and country building claims constitute to a great extent why migrants will continually be denied citizenship that take place through the implementation of Emiratisation in the United Arab Emirates.

I was able to meet with Hugger, a friend of my sister’s friend who is living in the UAE. She had a lot of concerns regarding how to meet although it was through a virtual social media platform. She kept insisting on not using WhatsApp since it might be surveilled by the government. Instead, she preferred to have our conversations through Facebook messenger. Consequently, during one of our virtual meetings, she stated that,

“I used to live in Oman with my family which makes the experience totally different since I was young. Back then, I did not feel that I was an outsider like I feel now. Now, there is an emphasis on the discourse of citizen and non-citizen, so you feel that this word is explicitly differentiating between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It is the truth, but when it is said explicitly, it increases the sense of not belonging. It is like I will never belong to this place. The only thing that I can get is a permanent residency, and even having that I will never get the citizenship, or be part of the system, I will not have an opinion on anything or get the same privileges of citizens. I feel that I am a second-class person, not even a second-class expat. I do not want to be number one citizen,

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but it is this feeling that you come next because you do not matter. In my opinion, all gulf countries and the UAE would not have become where they are now without the efforts of expats who are non-citizens. All of this talk about citizenship triggers it all”!

“The idea is that I work in a non-profit organization where there are some differences in the employment system. For example, there was an event, and the ‘*mowateneen*’ (Emirati citizens) are the ones who are made visible. There are different privileges when it comes to the grading system between the expats and citizens”

She added, “things in the gulf are not stable at all. Many get laid off, so the contribution of both of us (she and her husband) stabilizes our chances”.

Her concerns seemed realistic since those who live in the UAE depend fully on maintaining their jobs to be able to stay there, or else, they will have to leave. Hugger fears are like many of those interviewed through this research as they are demanded to perform on a certain level that requires from them working for late hours and to enhance their performativity rates. In addition, their renewal visas are restricted to the condition of maintaining their jobs.

The strict policies that deny citizenship to transnational migrants and the policy of raising a high level of attachment to “home” expose the situation of the Egyptian migrants. They are caught in a high-demanding regulatory system since they have the right to stay if they have a job contract. Furthermore, they are denied citizenship in the UAE and are considered outsiders until they go back to their ‘home’. Therefore, it is essential to reconsider the naturalization that attaches

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them to their place of 'origin'. These policies are operationalized to classify and fix individuals according to their value to the global capitalist market. Hence, the power of capital exceeds the power of the nation-state, and it has become the main factor in categorizing individuals according to their value to the capitalist market. Thus, the value of the Egyptian migrants who are skilled workers lies in their participation in the global market that sustains their temporary status as part of both the global order and the legal system of the UAE. In addition, the change in the Egyptian policy and the risk of the cancellation of contracts between the two countries affected the Egyptian migrants in the UAE who were at risk of losing their jobs (Hassan, 2012, p.17). Hence, until now there is a risk factor in their stay there as it is always attached to political resonance vis-à-vis an economic one.

Due to the small number of populations in the UAE, there is a continuous need for experienced labor. The only solution has been through exporting skilled and professional labor force to be able to support the demands of the rapid growth in the UAE. Therefore, creating a structure to order the movement of labor through policies of global democracy was an attempt to control the movement of mobile subjectivities. Hence, nationalization of labor involves nationals in the economic activities to sustain the expatriate labor force provided migration. Strengthening the national identity through providing labor opportunities has proven to be a method of ordering the modern subjectivities. Whenever I am at the airport, women nationals occupy a large part of the available jobs there. They are seen wearing their traditional *Abaya* (traditional dress for women in the UAE) and working in the checkpoints at the airport. Their participation is evident and made

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visible since the other, more demean jobs are occupied by Indians or Asians. Involving women nationals in the Emirati labor market has been an integral step by the government to create balance in the labor ratio between nationals and non-nationals. According to a statistic done on female Emirati employment, "Due to the pervasive labor imbalance in the mid-2000s, the government began encouraging Emirati women to enter the workforce, resulting in an average annual increase in female Emirati employment of 16.7%, compared to only 6.1% for Emirati males", and "The most recent data on unemployment , published in 2011, indicates that the national unemployment rate in the UAE was 13.8% of the total national workforce, with 2.0% of national males and 12.0% of national females unemployed as a percentage of the total national workforce." (Renderee, 2012, p.5). Therefore, the UAE strategies of involving nationals in the labor market are related to creating a wide range of considerations of competitiveness, globalization, economic growth to raise a favorable work environment that prepare them for the global market of labor and potential.

Yousra found it hard to pick me up from the airport the day I arrived since she had to be at work. Instead, her husband came to meet me and take me home since his working hours are flexible as he works in marketing in a competitive pharmaceutical company to that of Yousra. His work does not require him to be in the office the whole day like Yousra who must fulfill 9 hours at work. Through the ride, Abdullah and I had the chance to talk about his MBA that he is taking abroad in Britain. He mentioned that "It is very hard here in the UAE, and I am in need for this degree to have an advance at work. Since there are many others who are younger recruited at the company, one must acquire a degree to have an advancement at work, so I only want to have this degree to

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have a privilege at work. It requires me to attend classes on the campus in London which is very pressuring as I must perform at work and to manage my time between my 'home' in Dubai and my studies in the UK. Living here is very pressuring and I do not get to spend time with my family with all this". His everyday living is like many who reside in the UAE. They form a spur gear who need to keep going to fulfil their dreams of having a comfortable and luxurious life. Their status is found in a reading to Agier's "state control" that represents migrants as driven by "individual desires and dreams" (2009, p. 586).

Later that day, I decided to go to a mall to buy some things. From the moment I got into the Uber taxi, I noticed that only Indians or Pakistani are Uber drivers. And even when I arrived there, Emirati citizens were rarely seen; they would be noticed as they normally wear their national garments which differs them from any other nationality there. Ticku (2010) explores the making of the "national citizen" and the "Other" in relation to dreams of Dubai. In the United Arab Emirates, there is a visible binary between the nationals and the expatriates or migrants. This regulatory system that divides between the nationals and the non-nationals gives a sense of "normality" to sustain the social hierarchy which is operationalized for controlling the "non-nationals" (Ticku, 2010, p.77-78). The way the nation-state conceptualizes bodies through disciplinary processes underlines the logic behind these expulsions and divisions that allow the state to make individuals able to identify themselves and belong to a certain group of "others" (Ticku, 2010, p.79). The process of stressing the "Emirati" identity can be explored in the structuring system of the global order. The binary between the "national" citizen and the



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“migrants” emphasizes the process of having a strict division of race, gender, and social class. Ticku (2010) gives an example from a case study, that shows how the socio-economic position of Emirati women and men show superiority through their use of ethnic clothing. They use it as a statement of power and superiority to their class in opposition to “others” of migrants and expatriates which is rooted in the “politics of ethnic stratification” (p.448), as Longya (1997) states (as cited in Ticku, 2010, p.81). According to the Kuwaiti sociologist Muhammed Rumaihi, the modern system of the country is operationalized through making these divisions clear as part of the infrastructure of the country. The “nationals” do not work in certain jobs because of their status in the country, and these jobs are left for the migrants and the expatriates as part of the contemporary development of UAE (Ticku, 2010, p.82).

### Politics of (In)Security

After a few days I contacted Hugger again to finish our discussion, and even after meeting over Facebook as the suitable platform for her to communicate, there was still doubt for her to express her experience through social media. She felt that phones are being monitored for national security purposes. The security model the UAE represents was highly expressed by Hugger, who clearly stated that communication through “insecure networks” may harm her status there. This claim of being monitored makes it hard to communicate using virtual communication applications. In comparison to Egypt, “*the security system in the UAE is much worse*”, as she states. People acts and speech are monitored through a higher system that controls their existence in the UAE. Securitization works here as a method to sustain control over expats and ‘outsiders’. Their acts are

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being observed as part of national security. However, such propagated feelings reveal the underlying control over migrants who constantly feel that their stay is jeopardized, which conveys the paradox between living in the UAE and achieving your dreams, and the amount of stress brought by the idea of being monitored and surveilled. This system is not related only to the nation-state; however, it has become a matter of the state as a representative of security. Therefore, the state enacts its hegemony through security policies. Consequently, security knowledge is a political discourse that carries aims in constructing the modern global communities. It does not only take place through speech act, but it is a phenomenon that takes place through a set of discourses of bureaucratic practices and discourses of fear as matters that maintain political and economic stability. Touching on migration policies of security and systems, the securitization process penetrates profoundly into the society and the government representing various agencies that enact international security system. Accordingly, there is a reconstruction of securitization as both a political and an economic discourse that serve the neo-capitalist objectives.

According to Huysman (2006), when modulating the politics of insecurity in relation to managing the arrival of large numbers of groups of 'outsiders', this term is used as a method to manage and govern those 'outsiders'. The Egyptian migrants, thus, are considered outsiders and for the sake of developmental justifications, their labor is highly needed. However, there is a constant need to control their mobility to ensure the stability in both the labor market and the developmental plans in the UAE. Securitization, hence, intends at monitoring the situation that it coordinates policies addressing at contesting claims of insecurity. As a result, security systems are reworked to fit the modern modal of managing moving bodies. The security question here

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renders an institutionalized governmentality that is integrated in the policy framework. The policies over borders, thus, have become a discursive managerial process through a claim of 'insecurity domains.' Migrants were keen to express themselves only under conditioned circumstances away from their workplace or through 'secured' social media applications. Hugger expressed her fear through saying, "*things here are much worse than Egypt*". Her fear, thus, is expressive of the governance methodology that puts them under constant fear and feelings of risk. Consequently, her words were indicative of the status of some of the Egyptians who are never citizens of the UAE but are temporary citizens who are always at risk of leaving. Many migrants who live there expressed their distress because their stay is at risk. Hugger mentioned that the emphasis on the image of '*mowaten*' (citizen) vs the '*gheir mowaten*' (non-citizen) is explicitly shown on the privileges the *mowaten* gets vis-à-vis the Egyptian or any other nationality, and she expressed her constant 'fear' and 'unrest' because as she states,

*"The security system in the UAE monitors non-citizens excessively as everything is linked and organized so it is easier to track everything you do."*

Furthermore, the Emirati policies of nativity are practiced upon Emirati citizens to increase their sense of fear of the 'other'. They are tied to their Emirati identity which is introduced as an opposition to the migrants'. Ticku (2010) expressed this notion of how the "migrant-other" is dehumanized to produce certain affect that is put in a binary with the Emirati citizen. This categorial procedure is intended to put forth the Emirati identity in opposition with the migrants' through policies of fear and risk. Consequently, there is an attempt to manage bodies through

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politics of fear and risk to sustain the category of the 'other' and 'different' to have control over them. Thus, the Emirati identity is given privileges and is put on top of the hierarchical social order to sustain this state of fear and instability for the Egyptian migrants and other expats. Ethnicity and indigeneity are stressed, then, to maintain a divisional frame of categories of opposites — the citizen and the non-citizen. Therefore, through the State's claims of maintaining security and preserving the Emirati identity, it provides a desired kind of living to the migrants who are recruited for their economic value.

Yousra constantly seemed busy either by working extra hours or even trying to finish work from home. There was hardly free time that I could manage to go out with her or sit for a couple of hours due to her busy schedule. During her busy day, I managed to contact some of her neighbors whom I met before from previous visits. After settling for few days, I started to contact some of Yousra's neighbors who live in the same building or nearby. All of them were very interested to have a conversation with me about their concerns and experiences of living in Dubai. Through the words of Basma, Yousra's neighbor whom I had the chance to sit and have a conversation with, it was evident that her everyday living in Dubai is not as easy as many may see. Basma is a mother of two (a boy and a girl). She has been Yousra's neighbor for years in the same building, then moved to a nearby building. Whenever I saw her, she seemed burdened and stressed. She has been living in Dubai for years, and she had just started a new job as a schoolteacher. For her, working as a teacher is suitable since she finishes work early and will be home before her kids come back from school. She did not work for years and only her husband used to be the only provider for the family. Unlike Yousra, Basma does not have a nanny to take care of the kids when

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she is not at home. Therefore, her decision to be a schoolteacher seemed more convenient at that time. Knowing Basma from previous visits, she always appeared concerned and stressed, and during this visit, I was able to sit with her to discuss her experience in living in Dubai. She expressed how they constantly fear that their contracts end with their employer which jeopardizes their stay in the UAE. It is of great importance for them to perform well in their jobs and their social conformity routines to maintain the stability of their stay. Our first meeting was in one of the malls, and she was carrying a lot of shopping bags of purchases she wanted to return. She has this routine of buying things and returning them after few days. Her shopping obsession seemed uncontrollable at many times that she even mentioned that herself. She explained how she always shops for things she does not need and after figuring out that she is no need of them, she returns them. Managing her shopping appetite was impossible at that time. After a while, we sat in a coffee shop to take a break. She was so distressed and started complaining about living in Dubai and how pressuring the lifestyle is on anyone who tries to keep up with the daily demands that the lifestyle there requires. Her concerns are considerably linked to Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' that refers to variable technologies of governing and regulating the everyday lives of subjects. Consequently, individuals are regulated according to the market need; being professional labor force allows them to join the structural frame of competence and efficiency. As a result, they are positioned according to the labor need and the market status as part of the global order. Therefore, physical borders diminish, and instead, flexible regulatory technologies of power hegemonizes the transnational space. This is delineated from Giorgio Agamben's theories on *exception* by the sovereign, where the flexibility of borders is used as a technology of disciplining and governing moving bodies. In this case, there is no physical borders, but there are governing strategies that

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sustain control over these migrants. They are obliged to work and produce, and to join the market logic of performing according to the lifestyle pattern in Dubai. Basma started working to have a sense of self-worth and to have an income. She started talking about her experience and how living in Dubai is expensive starting from renting a decent apartment in a nice neighborhood as “everything in Dubai is expensive; schools, food, entertainment and preserving your image. Living in Dubai necessitates maintaining a good self-image of having a good car, a job and living in pleasant place. In addition, things here are never stable, one can lose their job and get laid off which jeopardizes staying in the UAE. That is why I wanted to have a job, to have a kind of sustainability to our living style.”

Due to the classification systems and monitoring strategies that require rigid conformity, desired life in the UAE is questioned as although all individuals have rights there, the citizen is always privileged and the non-citizen never enjoys the same ‘grade’ because as Hagger states, “*things are not stable at all*”. Their flexible existence, then, denounces a fixated limbo status for maintaining the global structure. Although she and her husband work, it is never enough because of the highly demanding living style in the UAE.

### Flexible Citizenship

Trying to contact Hagger again after not being able to contact her for days was a bit difficult. She was so busy and tried to apologize for not being able to contact me for days. She started the conversation by mentioning how she never feels that she belongs to the UAE. She is

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aware that her stay in the UAE is temporary and is unguaranteed. Citizenship act is manipulated by political powers represented by the contours of passports and regulatory policies of residency and belonging that are brought into question. Citizenship has proven to be an instrument of governmental biopolitics (Foucault, 1991) that regulates the movement of moving bodies and migrants to ensure the nation-state's security and prosperity. Migrants are pressured to perform on professional and social levels, and they are derived by their dreams for success. However, they are never detached from belonging to their 'homeland'. Being flexible citizens requires them to adhere to the needs of multiple sites. Their belonging, therefore, is fragmented because they belong to more than one place. This means that they must perform according to their classification as flexible citizens who never belong to one place.

Having a deeper conversation with Basma, she started unveiling how she constantly feels attached to Egypt and her family back there. She is always distressed and troubled that she is away from them. She expressed that "living in Dubai is consuming, you always have to perform on the social and the professional level. Migrants here are torn between fulfilling their dreams and how they must keep up their performativity rate to be eligible to stay in the UAE". Her husband works hard for keeping up with the daily demands for his family, and "although we have a car and live in a nice place, there are a lot of financial aspects that should be covered like keeping 'an appropriate' social image. We are doing our best to fit in this pattern of living, but we will never belong here". Living in Dubai is financially burdening since those professional workers aspire a style of living that is related to their dreams and hopes from their migration. And although they

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are burdened keeping up with this style, they cannot live reasonably. It is part of living in Dubai that you go shopping, have a car, and live in a nice place.

Starting to get our meeting to an end, we met Yousra at the mall to get back home. Yousra had a tiring day at work, and she drove to the mall to sit with us for a while and get us back to her house. She could not come earlier as she was stuck in a meeting and joined us afterwards. She wanted to come earlier, but she had to finish all her tasks at work even if this meant to work extra hours. She was not worried about Malek being alone at home after getting back from school because she already has Jenny, Malek's nanny who leaves when Yousra arrives home. By the time we got home, Malek was already sleeping, and Abdullah was out sitting in a café doing some studying. After getting home, we were all tired and I went to stay in Malek's room. Scrolling down a conversation with a friend, I found a connection from a friend with a man who lives in the UAE. He is a musician who decided to leave his wife and two kids in Egypt and come to the UAE 'to make it'. Ashraf stated that,

“A year ago, I decided to pursue my dreams in the UAE seeking a more decent kind of living. However, it is very hard to bring my wife and kids, because living here is very expensive, and the schools are very expensive which creates a financial pressure. I wish they are here with me, but at this point I am working hard to be able to bring them to live with me here in Dubai. My life here is good and the UAE is a place where my dreams of achieving professional success and having a luxurious life-style can come true.”



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Ashraf was so related to the idea of making it and of achieving his desires from his migration to the UAE. However, it seems that he had to sacrifice having his family with him as living in the UAE requires a financial stability. As a musician, he wishes to expand his art and be famous there, and as a metropolitan city, Dubai seems the perfect place to achieve the purpose of his migration. His attachment to the place of where his family lives and to the host society where dreams are desired creates such a rupture in the meaning of citizenship. Existing as a flexible citizen, he belongs to both spaces, and at the same time he never belongs to any of them. He sacrifices the reunion with his family to be able to achieve dreams related to materialistic gains. Hence, citizenship is a constructed concept that sustains the state of limbo of migrants between multiple spaces. As a result, as flexible figures of modern migration, they are attached more to capitalistic purposes.

These migrants sacrifice their time and health, and they dedicate themselves to the opportunistic allure the UAE presents. However, their flexibility endures a denounced resonance since their hyper need for mobility is augmented making them in a constant need and desire to live/work in different countries. Their subjectivity, thus, is highly deterritorialized and constantly destabilized. Their experiences are recognized as an unfinished business; there is no end to their search for the 'better life'. It is obviously so tiring to pursue an endless goal where they are enmeshed in the requirements of being a modern political figure. As migrants of the third world, their experiences are radical and unfinished. This marks their identities as unfinished and as constituted by political and economic shifting processes.

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Because of their flexible existence, they create various strategies of accommodation. Their familial existence is highly affected because of the busy routine they are involved in; they are compelled to work hard and to be involved in commercial competitiveness, in their daily norms of discipline and hard work. Their everyday living in the UAE, hence, becomes attached to loyalty to money. As a result, their identity is transformed by the flexible capitalist activities that are rationalized. In a similar context, Vora (2008) explains how the middle-class Indian migrants in Dubai, despite the impossibility of attaining legal citizenship, are bounded to a behavior of social practice – “consumer citizenship” – which is citizenship through buying. This means that these migrants are involved in a buying pattern that should be up to the living of the Emirati citizens, who enhance their sense of belonging through this kind of social practice (Ali, 2011, p.559).

Dubai always offers an image of prosperity and living the good life that is based on the consumer-economy. This pattern of living includes getting nannies, going shopping and being involved in the community life of a metropolitan city. The Egyptian migrants are caught into the consumerism pattern which is assigned to the middle-class there. It is apparent that most of the households require having a domestic worker to sustain the living lifestyle and to be able to work for long hours. Being an upper-middle class puts a lot of accountabilities since they resemble the professional working class who are needed for the completion of the neoliberal vision (Ali, 2011, p.561). Furthermore, the migrants become attached to the idea of living and earning money from their jobs which increases their sense of alienation. This notion of alienation is previously explained in Marx's *Capital*. Marx's historical perspective questions primordial notions of governmentality that structures labor force only for surplus value and primitive accumulation.

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For Yousra, she finds it difficult not to fulfil the demands of work as living in Dubai is very expensive and requires a high-performance rate from migrants or they will be dispensable and without value to the capitalist system of the UAE. Hence, history repeats itself as it reproduces labor power through structural violence. This structure reproduces primitive accumulation through alienation processes. The contemporary mode of production has transformed, yet still works for the benefit of capital. It has evolved to fit the transnational globalized modern society. Embedded in it, laborers are alienated from their 'species being' where they are altered into living labor who are involved in social practices that alienates them from their sense of humanity. They become subjectivities to creating surplus value for the capitalist; all their interests are focused on achieving success and working to add value for the economic sovereign.

Ashraf expressed that even though he is away from his family, he believes that he is doing something that of value to his kids in the future. He kept stressing the notion of 'to make it' that most of the migrants in the UAE believe in. For them, it is what keeps them performing and working hard, knowingly that they are only pushed by materialistic concerns. This notion explains their self-worth as always attached to money that guarantees a 'better life'. As for Yousra and her husband, the measure of self-worth is seen in her achievements at work; having value in the quantity of work done which includes "biopolitics and the elasticity in pursuing wealth-making opportunities in diverse places" (Ong, 1993, p. 756). In both cases, it is the materialistic urge that keeps them in the cycle of achieving further successes and are drawn towards achieving career advancement. Her temporary migration has extended to be ten years away from her family. This

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extends among many families that embody different kinds of economic value and political risks, and they represent disciplined political bodies. Foucault (1991) explains this disciplining governmentality as a technology of the government which *homo economicus* (as mentioned in Ong, 1993, p.763) is positioned to be managed. Consequently, upper middle-class Egyptians feel obliged to rise the economic ladder that is contrasted with the lower classes. Hence, concepts of productivity, professionalism, self-reliance, and sufficiency are models for the desired human capital against the other less achieving minorities. This discursive manipulation in the migrants' identity where they become flexible citizens is "part of the symbolic economy of flexible accumulation" (Ong, 1993, p. 771).

### **The Logics of Performativity and the Image of the 'Perfect Migrant'**

Yousra's work seem endless as she always tries to manage having some time with me or her son. She usually goes to work for 9 hours and even when she goes home, she is always on the laptop working. Same thing for Abdulah whom I rarely met during my stay. Both work on different schedules which makes it almost impossible for them to meet, and even after the normal working hours, they are on their laptops working or studying. Their work seems endless as they work at home and even through weekends. In addition, it has become very competitive that they need to add to their professionalism by seeking higher degrees and working extra hours to achieve higher ranks at work. Yousra, who works in a managerial position in an international pharmaceutical company in Dubai states that,

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“I usually work long hours as the normal working day is nine hours. Since it is flexible, you can spend the whole day at work. Working flexible hours is so hard to manage because when I go to work a bit late, I must compensate these hours in the evening which extends my working day. In addition, the working day is stressful and even after getting home, I most of the time keep my laptop open to review things or prepare for presentations and meetings. Even at the weekends, the work never ends, I open my laptop and make sure that I am there; working in an international company requires my visibility all the time since in some countries the working days and hours are different. It is like working throughout the whole week endlessly”.

Yousra finds herself working even through weekends and vacations. Even her flexible hours of working are so pressuring because she must perform throughout the working day even if she is working from home; attending virtual meetings and completing tasks, which explains the reconfiguration of capital. This situation expresses Marx's notion of “floating population” (Nail, 2015, p.16). This term coins a new definition of the perfect worker who is more preferred – one that is being active which is better than a precarious surplus (Nail, 2015, p.16-17).

One day, Yousra and I arranged to go out on a working from home day. She was so stressed when we were getting prepared because we only had an hour to be at our destination for her to be able to open her laptop and be present online. Taking time to prepare and getting ourselves ready, we arrived at a café exactly in time that she will not be noticed as offline. She had a work from home day which she usually takes once a week. Although it might appear as suitable to have a day off, but her work is so demanding that she even wakes up so early to be online and attends online

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meetings from all over the world. When we managed to settle at the café, it was impossible to communicate as she was putting her headsets and focusing on what she was doing. We kept sitting for hours until it was time for us to go and pick Malek from his swimming class.

The high level of performativity that the Egyptian migrants who live in in the UAE endure is enormous. Due to the high level of competitiveness, they are required to attain degrees that better their stance at their jobs. They are pushed towards enhancing their skills and their performance that most of them seek degrees beside their actual jobs. However, this takes from their family time and their personal time. Abdullah is studying to acquire a master's degree in marketing from a prestigious university in the UK. He believes that it will make his position at work more stable. Although it is hard to balance his busy schedule and his job, it is a necessary action to save his chances at work. The same goes for Ashraf, who lives away from his family back in Egypt to be able to 'make it' faster. He sacrifices being with the rest of his family to seek his dreams that will allow a more prominent kind of living. Hence, their labor and level of productivity are inseparable since they mark the norm of the flexible citizen in contemporary migration.

Furthermore, Hugger, conveyed *that* "living in the UAE does not grant a person freedom or the right to express oneself". In addition, it is very hard to live there as everyone must abide to the regulations and rules of the country that are meant at sustaining a divisional hierarchy that keeps the order of things. Her words, "things here are much worse than they are in Egypt" explain

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the monitoring system through which they must abide to. In addition, it is a must to move a lot and to express loyalty to the companies the migrants work at; they must attend team development activities and abroad conferences to fit the model of the entrepreneurial self that shapes their lives and mobility. Therefore, spending endless hours at work and working on self-performativity have proven to be workings of the contemporary modal for moving subjects who are under continuous feelings of risk and unrest. She even commented on how labor is essential in any place people live; however, it is extra important in their stay in the UAE as their residence visa relies on having a stable job. Losing a job in the UAE is not an option since there is an endless bureaucracy in the process that deals with recruiting professional migrants. As she states,

*“Having a prior experience adds to the probability of getting a job. Although I am not hundred percent satisfied with my current job, but having experience is a must if you want to have a job in the UAE. It is the market logic that puts ‘us’ under continuous pressure”.*

She expressed how professional workers in the UAE must attain a high level of performativity to be part of the market logic which marks the stability of their stay in the UAE. It is a normalized pattern of work that the professional workers there perform on a certain level and to update themselves on regular basis on the advancement of their fields. It is never enough to perform well at work, but you are required to attain extra degrees and to make workshops which is considered a demand to be included in the work arena. As a result, those professionals created an attachment to work that is consuming their time with their loved ones and family; they are working flexible hours that diminishes the margin between private and public life. In addition,

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their self-worth is strongly related to their performance and advancement at work. Since their self-worth is linked to their highly performative work rate, their everyday existence is also linked to work as part of their global identity that fulfills their aspiring dreams for a wealthy life. The market logics have hegemonized the social structure where the migrants exist are extremely pressured to perform, or else their value is unrecognized, and they are threatened to leave. And since their structured dreams are always attached to producing labor and value, they are constantly compelled to perform under such circumstances. As a result, many migrants resolute to the debt system as a method of keeping up with the style of living in the UAE, which is highly demanding.

I managed to meet Nesma, my friend's sister who decided to live and work alone in the UAE away from her family. She wanted to explore her options in the global market and to be an independent self. At first, she found it difficult to convince her family to go there, but since the UAE is an Arab country which seems to hold the Arabic traditions, it was convenient for her family to accept the fact that she is going to live alone there. I tried contacting her on the mobile phone for a week for us to meet, but it was hard due to her busy work schedule. Nesma went to the UAE three years ago to be part of the global dream that exists in her migration to the UAE. She is working in an IT counselling company which is relevant to her studies in AUC (the American University in Cairo). We managed to sit in a café below Yousra's place, and she was a bit late as she was with a client before coming to meet me. When she arrived, she was exhausted and had a lot to say. She started telling her reasons behind her migration and how professional migrants in the UAE are pressured to work flexible hours to keep up with the fast and demanding pace of living there. Although it was a dream to leave and follow her dream in Dubai, she feels that "things



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in the UAE are not as glamorous as it seems. People here are pressured all the time and there is this sense of fear of losing everything if they lose their jobs. There is this man who committed suicide by jumping off a building where he used to work. It was known later that this man was laid off from work and took his own life because of that". She herself find it very demanding to work flexible hours as she mentioned that "working in Dubai is very demanding and time consuming. I can hardly find time to go out with friends or contact my family in Egypt. It is even harder on single women who seek success since there are other social factors that are being looked at when you are living alone here. Living in Dubai requires one to fulfil the socio-economic demands and to keep their performance level at work". It is evident that migrants try to ensure a style of living even if they cannot afford it. For them sustaining a financial stability is supported by a system of loaning. On the same day, after Nesma had left, Yousra joined me at the cafe' for half an hour and we left since she had to wake up early the next day for work.

### **Debt and Foreign Citizenship as Methods of Survival**

Egyptian migrants find themselves overwhelmed by the fast pace of living in the UAE to an extent that they resort to taking loans or take extreme measures in life to ensure a stable living there. Some of the interlocutors talks or even way of living conveyed multiple methods of surviving. Being in debt defines their identity in the transnational kind of living, which explains their exploitation in their quest of dream lives. As modern subjects, they become "debtors" to the representative power of global capitalism. Maurizio Lazzarato (2012) explains the concept of the man in debt as part of the neoliberal project. Putting the modern subject both in private and public

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debt makes them responsible towards capital. And since they are not Emirati citizens, they resort to taking loans to be able to cope within the expensive and demanding market of the UAE.

Through a casual interview with Basma, she explained how many individuals living in the UAE count on taking loans. She expressed that,

*“Living in the UAE is very demanding and expensive; it requires a person to work really hard to be able to provide for the family to be able to pay for the rent and provide necessities for the kids. For example, my husband took loans from the bank to be able to keep up with the kind of living in the UAE. To provide for the family and to keep up with our social level, my husband took a loan from the bank to be able to buy a car and pay the rent. It is a ‘normal thing’ in the UAE to take loans to fulfill the demands of the everyday living. Since everything is expensive here, one always feels in need for extra money to keep up the image of living here. Although you are paid good money in comparison to Egypt, but everything here requires having extra amount of money. Since there are strict rules, you can end up having to pay traffic fines which is usually very high. In addition, you are required to preserve your image that goes with living here, that is why I go shopping for things that I know that I do not need.”*

She afterwards needed to leave since her kids were coming back from school and she is the only one available to wait for them as her husband works till late hours.

Going up again to meet Yousra at her place and have a conversation about how much she misses Mom and Dad, and how she wants to go back, but that she cannot since living in Egypt now is a bit unstable. Yousra seemed busy all the time I was there, and her husband was rarely seen during my stay. He usually used to finish work and then sit in a café to finish studying, for him acquiring

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such degree will enable him to acquire a better position at work since it is very competitive there. To acquire such a degree is not easy though since the tuition fees are much to pay, especially with all their daily needs and everyday necessities of Malek's school tuition, rent and Jenny's salary. That is why Abdullah took a loan from his father to be able to acquire his MBA degree from a university in London. For him,

*"It is an opportunity to have a better position at work. This way I will get paid more. It does not matter what degree I get if I succeed, it is only a certificate to improve my status at work. It requires me a lot of planning to be able to work and attend classes in a different country on many occasions. This absolutely pressures me at work and at home as I must perform in all areas and 'to make it.'"*

Abdallah's words made it clear that to make it, a migrant must perform in different aspects to keep up with the market's fast pace. And since their stay is tied with their labor, bettering their status at work make it a main aim as it somehow stabilizes their chances of a better future. Their constant struggle seems always tied to work and performance which entangles their social with their public lives. It has become like an endless cycle which enmeshes them under the regulatory system of global performativity. Hence, they take loans and become financially burdened to be able to compensate that in the future.

### **Citizenship as a Desire**

Mentioning that Yousra was pregnant during my visit, she told me about her plan to have her baby in the United States of America. Both her husband and she have saved a lot of money for Yousra to have her kid there. This decision is not something new to most of the Egyptian migrants

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there. Since there is no stability for the future of their kids in the UAE as they cannot stay there after being 18 years old, they look for alternative nationality that empowers their situation in the UAE. Therefore, getting a US citizenship enhances their chances at work and provides better opportunities for their children's future.

Yousra one day decided to pay a visit to her friend, Lobna before she leaves for the US to give birth. We could not go except at night since Yousra finishes work late and that was the only day suitable for Basma before she leaves. Lobna and Yousra used to be neighbors when Yousra was in Qatar 10 years ago. Basma works in the same medical field of Yousra's and her schedule is very busy that she only has one month to travel and have her child in the US. She had put a lot of planning and money to arrange for this trip. In addition, she was travelling alone since her husband cannot accompany her and be absent from work for a whole month. The situation itself was very hard and of high risk because it is the mother who travels alone during such a hard time. Since she knows that Yousra wants to plan something similar for her childbirth, she was helpful in giving some contacts and names for the hospital she is giving birth at and the doctor's name. Those who travel for giving birth there usually arrange a housing plan and accommodation where the mother is going to stay the whole visit. Going through all the planning and putting a lot of money for this trip assures a US citizenship for the child. This conception of parents mirrors the state of unrest these migrants have. They are willing to put a lot of money and effort to ensure a better future for themselves and their kids. According to Yousra,

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“Many mothers in the UAE do that. Since their stay in the UAE is never guaranteed, having a US citizenship will provide better opportunities at work and better salaries. Even the child will get better offers from universities abroad. That is why I am also planning to go to Miami to give birth there. I took the contacts of people who arrange receiving mothers from the airport and the doctor who is going to perform the operation from Basma, and I planned a similar trip for myself. I wish I could have arranged a similar trip for Malek’s birth, but at that time we did not have enough money to pay for that trip”

Consequently, the Egyptian migrant finds himself/herself obliged to react to the fast pace of the global structure that requires them to perform and enhance their abilities. Acquiring a U.S citizenship by giving birth there has become a normalized action taken by several Egyptians who live in the UAE. Some of the interlocutors involved mentioned that they took loans to be able to do this trip and to endure the medical expenses. They go through the procedures and even hire a person to receive the mother at the airport to provide accommodation. This process has even become commercialized that there are professional US citizens who receive the mothers and drive them to the place where they are going to stay. In Yousra’s case, she regrets not doing the same thing for her first child. However, this time, they were willing to put a lot of money that she and her husband had worked hard for, and a lot of time and effort to provide a ‘better life’ for their second child. This situation expresses the economic pressure the migrants endure since they must re-establish their financial stability after their trip to the U.S. However, they willingly approached this choice and sacrificed because of their constant attachment to the idea of the better future and

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'better life' that consumes them in their everyday decisions and actions — the concept that commands most of the Egyptian migrants who live in the UAE.

## Chapter Three

### Nostalgia and Belonging: What is 'Home'?

#### Introduction

Egyptian migrants' emotions are constantly reproduced through rituals and connections to homeland of past life experience that might not exist anymore. Thus, their emotions "are not only shaped by direct social interactions, but also by memories, imagination, expectations and aspirations" (Svasek, 2008, p.218). This does not mean that emotions of belonging to homeland are always positive, but it could become a sense of not belonging to either the receiving society or feeling identified with the homeland community. That what transnationalism is concerned of; it is more of tackling migration as not only in the sense of sending or receiving societies, but of multiple attachments and social relations within the experiences of transnational migrants. Thus, understanding Transnationalism is meant at detecting migration within the transnational space that tackles their incorporation into new societies or being connected with their countries are not opposite matters (Levitt and Schiller, 2004). Migrants keep the social connections between multiple nation-states. Their identities are shaped by hegemonic powers of 'race' and 'ethnicity' that turn them into transnational migrants. As Levitt and Schiller (2004) explain, the transnational migrants are constantly caught in endless social, political, and economic practices. As a result, this chapter examines the emotional existence as related to political and social processes that tend to regulate and govern moving subjects complicating their stay in the UAE through which they are linked to multiple spaces only for regulatory purposes. It is how the connection of families across

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borders bring so many emotions and intensity, which raises questions of how emotions play an important role in the transnational experience? How the depiction of emotions reveals the everyday living of the transnational individuals as emotionally regulated? And how conceptualizing emotions provides a framework of the networks the transnationals are caught in showing the difference between structure and agency.

### **Egyptian Collective 'Aliens'**

After a few days, I was able to spend some time with Malek who always feels happy when someone comes to visit them in Dubai. Malek had a routine of which he goes to school, then Jenny goes down to take him from the bus. I have always waited for the weekend to spend some time with him. Malek, have always expressed an extreme attachment to the Egyptian civilization and he always feels proud that he belongs to Egypt. In previous school parties, he would always wear ancient Egyptian costumes as he always feels that it is part of him. Yousra constantly tries to remind him of his homeland where his aunts and grandparents are, they are his only reminder of Egypt as he does not stay for long during their summer vacations. Malek, who goes to a British school has found it difficult to communicate in Arabic. And since English is the commonly spoken language in the UAE, it is very hard for him to speak in Arabic most of the time. Jenny always speaks in English with Malek and even Yousra and Abdullah communicate with him in English. However, when he is in Egypt his grandmother tries to teach him little spoken English. It is even very hard on him to speak in Arabic and he eventually gives up and uses English instead. Yousra is always keen to teach him some Arabic that she brings home a personal tutor to teach him Arabic; she tries her best to connect him to his Arabic roots and is keen to speak to him in Arabic. On the



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contrary, Abdullah is proud of Malek that he rarely uses Arabic in writing or speaking as he thinks that it is a privilege at school and later in university. Although Malek believes that English is easier for him in communicating with others in the UAE, but he is seen frustrated at situations when he is in Egypt. There was this time that we visited the Airforce Museum in Egypt, and he got frustrated as he could not understand the explanation of the historical stories during the visit. He did not even know the name of the former presidents or the current one. Malek's situation is confusing since he feels that he is a stranger to Egypt, but when he goes back to Dubai, he experiences a turmoil of emotions of both longing and adaptation. According to Ho (2008), "Transnational migration arguably invokes heightened emotions towards place-based notions of home, belonging and nation" (p.1290). Therefore, involving emotions and the "emotionalization" of migration (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015, p.77) reveal a parallel coordination between emotions and nationalization that is created to maintain a connection with "homeland" as a naturalized boundary between insiders and outsiders. The management of moving subjects is constantly adhered in that matter through nationally based emotions and rituals which are generated and developed as imagined. This naturalized positioning of immigrants is emotionally constructed to maintain the harmony in the migrants' mobility under the collective of "aliens" (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015, p.77), which eventually politicizes emotions. Involving the interlocutors' expression of emotions related to how they feel as residents in the UAE makes it clear that keeping themselves distinguished from the Emirati citizens pressures them and enhances their feeling of unrest.

Yousra and Abdullah started their professional life early. And since they were married young, her husband's salary was not much at that time to be able to sustain financial stability for

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his family. Therefore, he decided to travel to Qatar to get a better salary. Although both came from families that hold financial stability, they were urged to search for better jobs that will allow them to have financial constancy that will enable them to promote their style of living. After two years, her husband got a better job opportunity in Dubai in an international pharmaceutical company, and she too got a job there in a different company. Since then, they have been constantly in need to pass exams and get professional degrees that prove their capability of joining big pharmaceutical companies in Dubai. Their need to achieve professional success has not been but a must to sustain their residency visa in Dubai because their stay is attached to maintaining their jobs. Yousra's son, Malek, who is 9 years old reveals an aspect of their migration that is fragmented. Although he is Egyptian and has been living in an Arab country, he speaks broken Arabic. In examining their emotions there is an understanding on how they perceive 'home' in comparison with the 'host' society. Malek is confused between how he feels toward both places of Dubai and Egypt. Therefore, examining their emotions illustrates how feelings of nostalgia and belonging are manipulated fixing their attachment to Egypt and other times to Dubai. They are not detached from where they 'belong', and that is why we cannot exclude emotions from the study of transnational migration and the experience of migration (Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995, p.234) as it explains the difference between agency and structure. In a study on Polish migration to the U.S (Skribis, 2008), there is an explanation on how the intensity of emotions is relevant to the transnational existence of family members in the transnational space. Family connections and the intensity of feelings of sadness, longing, pain, and happiness that are shared in the transnational space are undenied since they are enmeshed in these families' everyday existence.

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Although she has been living in Dubai for nine years, Yousra feels a great void. Her vacations are always planned and related to visits to Egypt. Her son, Malek who is nine years old has always been attached to his Egyptian roots as he is fascinated by the Egyptian culture, especially the pharaonic era. He feels proud that his 'roots' are linked to Egypt as he feels proud belonging to the Egyptian great history, and he even wears pharaonic costumes to any school party. He is obsessed with pharaonic stuff, which is evident in how he always purchases pharaonic decorated items like pens and little statues that reminds him of his 'home'. In addition, he always talks with his friends about Egypt and all the family time he spends there where he meets the rest of his family and grandparents. Such memories keep growing an attachment to Egypt that is not only attached to a place but also to people and times spent with those who love him. Documented after a short visit in June 2019, it was very emotional for Yousra and Malek to leave Egypt and go back to Dubai where their lives are located. Being there for a family engagement and leaving after ten days made it emotional for both sides, those who are leaving and those who are left. They all knew that the stay is short, but the departure moments generated multiple emotions of sadness and disappointment. However, Yousra and Malek had to go back to Dubai to prepare for her work and Malek's school. For Yousra, leaving her sisters to go back to her life in Dubai made her feel more upset that she is leaving all her family members and memories behind.

During my visit I was able to meet with Basma for coffee, and she started explaining how living away from her family is heartbreaking. Although living in Dubai might seem fun and luxurious, it is very difficult to keep up with the expenses of living there. Whenever I met her, there was an amount of grief because of the fact of staying away from her parents and family in

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Egypt. She sometimes receives her parents for a visit that only lasts for a month maximum as it is the duration allowed for a visit visa in the UAE. And although she comes from a middle-class family, it is difficult to pay for consequent multiple visits either for family members or herself. Although both Yousra and Basma have been living in Dubai for years, it is difficult for them to be included as citizens since there are strict rules for non-Emirati citizens regarding residency and visit visas.

Although it has been only few hours of their departure, Yousra and Malek already felt nostalgic. She longed for family gatherings when they were all together in one country near each other; times where there was neither physical nor emotional departure. Even those who knew nothing but departure, feel detached to their 'home' after getting back from a vacation with their families. This enormous gap, thus, explains how it feels to be torn between two places. Malek expressed these feelings after getting back from their vacation in Egypt. "I wish I had two of me, one in Dubai and another in Egypt", his words reveal belonging to the two places and the grief created every time he leaves either one of the two places. The way it feels comfortable and cozy in the UAE shows how it is never easy to belong to multiple spaces where strange becomes familiar and familiar becomes unfamiliar. However, as soon as Malek went back to Dubai, he immediately felt connected; he merged with his present trying to compromise the feeling of loss he felt after his departure from Egypt. Although everything there, in the UAE, is familiar, he misses a part where family exists. Few days after his return to Dubai, he had a video call with his aunts back in Egypt. His reactions through the video call expressed how he began to incarnate his transnational self that easily copes with its transnational existence. Hence, his transnationality has dissolved into his

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everyday life. That is explained in how he gets back quickly to his daily routine and activities. Missing family members never goes away, but it is replaced by new memories and expanded familiarity of friends and daily routine. His friends already exist in Dubai and a huge part of his memory was constructed in Dubai as he has been living there since he was one. This means that the space of non-belonging has been diffused with the made memories in the transnational space of his family's migration. Hence, a compensation has been created and reconstructed in the transnational space which is built on new memories related to a new sociality. Although he feels culturally linked to Egypt because of family members there, he reveals strong attachment to his social life in Dubai. It is the place where he grew up and where he goes to school. Although Malek has friends from different nationalities, he is kept close to his mother's friends' kids. Yousra usually feels safe for Malek to go to any of her friends' houses for play dates with the kids or even for emergencies if she wants someone to take care of him when she has something to do. These Egyptian families have created a support system where they feel it is like 'home'. Such recreation of 'home' in the shape of social existence between Egyptians in the transnational space reveals the reproduction of 'home' in the UAE.

It was both confusing and overwhelming to be back to the 'normal' everyday life in Dubai. Malek could not help but to express his distress through another video call with his aunts in Egypt. Although he was having fun going out with his mother and his friends, he immediately felt something was missing. This feeling of emptiness caused by separation from the people he loves, and family members made it hard on him. As soon as his eyes laid on his aunts' faces, he expressed what his heart felt. He adhered in a frustrated tone, "I wish I was there with you in Egypt". Even

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though he has a very busy life in Dubai that is filled with soccer training, school, swimming training, and music lessons, he misses his family in Egypt. As a result, feelings of confusion between there and here were manifested in his comment. He did not even want to continue the call. He calmly commented, "I want to sleep". Later, Yousra, tried to fill his day with the happy things he loves doing, but it seemed that there was something that could never replace the comfort and familiarity of family and their physical existence. The video calls using the internet at that moment were as if they have control over his feelings of longing. The connection kept going on and off, until it suddenly stopped. Yousra was trying to keep hold with the mobile phone to include her sisters in her everyday living even through a blurry vision because of the poor connection. However, the connection went off. Soon after, Yousra tried calling back several times to include them in what Malek was doing, but it was extremely difficult to keep the connection. Malek avoided any eye contact as a sign of refusal to what is happening. He refused having an electronic existence that crushed all humanistic connection like a live laughter or even a cry. And then, it went off again cutting a conversation that only increased all their feelings of longing and frustration.

Yousra had to go back to Dubai as she is only given an annual vacation that enables her to visit her family. After she got back to Dubai, she went to work the next day as she always tries to book her flights back the day before work. This is her way to prolong her stay with her family back in Egypt. For her, she can never get enough of her sisters and parents, and her feelings of longing can never be replaced because of the many years they have spent away from each other. She went back to her routine where she works long hours only to be back quickly to cook dinner and then to

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drive Malek to his football training. Coping quickly has become a routine as she constantly must move between the two spaces. It has been remarkably noted that the transnational existence has involved the interaction of social relations. Hence, linking emotions with political, social, and economic factors is quite relevant to the case of Egyptian migrants in Dubai. It is how their emotions are constantly in motion, and that migrants are active creators who constitutively affect and get affected by the transnational experience. As Skrbis (2008) claims, the transnational experience is embedded within structures that have power over it, yet these structures are never fixed as they always change and grow to exceed any molded pattern. According to Talcott Parsons (as cited in Skrbis, 2008), emotions resemble a disruption in the normalized world order. It makes us question the normative notions of the transnational existence. In relation to that, Wright Mills tackled the commodification of emotions in capitalism (as cited in Skrbis, 2008). Therefore, emotions have been placed in the center of the discussion when we tackle the social life of Egyptian migrants and transnationals. Therefore, tackling the complexities of the everyday lives of the transnational families, affirms the status of emotions as the center of research as it extends to other concepts as class and gender. Therefore, it could never be detached from other contexts of importance but must be a constitutive part of the transnational experience. The main reasons behind this link of emotions and the transnational families exist in the existence of emotions that link individuals of different age groups and gender with their families. Secondly, since it is a social phenomenon, transnationalism connotes strong emotional experience. Thus, the social significance of such experience includes a unique involvement of multiple social interactions that include familiar surroundings or people, landscapes, memories, objects, everyday routines, and practices. All these elements are combined within the migrants' stories of adjustment, settlement, longing,

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nostalgia and belonging, opportunities, achievements, discrimination, loss, achievement – all sorts of emotions. Moreover, emotions are fundamental in the human interaction with friends, family, and different social networks. As a result, emotions are integrated in diverse ways that include emotional labor as a part and parcel of the transnational family, emotions that exist in the transnational space between family members, emotions of nationalism and the emotional expressions expressed in ways of communication like writing and video calls.

### **Emotional Labor and the Co-presence**

When I met Basma, it was fascinating how distressed she feels by living in the UAE. Every time I met her, she revealed complete attachment to Egypt. She just had a job few months ago as a teacher in a school, and she always mentioned how she never feels comfortable there. Seeking a job was not because of financial need, but because she felt lonely as most of her friends have a job. This was her way of adaptation to being away from her family for years in Dubai. Her parents come and visit her for a month once a year, but it is never enough for her. Ever since she left Egypt, she had this terrible feeling of loss; however, she is trying to find company in her friendship with Yousra and meet with her for kids play dates every now and then.

Basma's feelings of longing for family and the embodiment of hope she encounters do not belong only to those who left, but also belong to those who stayed behind. Hence, the connection is a two-way interaction that involves emotions and affect between the migrants and those who stay behind in what Habermas calls the 'new communicative space'. In his theory, Habermas



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moves away from what he calls 'the colonization of lifeworld'. In his approach, the lifeworld cannot explain the complexities of modern societies. Thus, there must be a move away from the lifeworld as a normalized and reproduced communicative order. This means that to unfold the lifeworld of the Egyptian migrants, there must be a consideration for the social obligation that the migrants try to preserve as part of the legitimate social obligation. In addition, there must be an involvement of how they establish their transnational existence in relation to the economic and political systems.

"It's been ten years since you decided to live in a different country away from me", a comment said by Yousra's mother who stated that on Yousra's last visit to Egypt on a summer vacation that lasted three weeks. It was the longest visit that she had had ever since leaving Egypt. Yousra's decision to settle there was a desire to have a good job and a 'better future'. For her, Dubai offered higher salaries than she could have ever got in Egypt having the same position. However, in return, her family is bounded to higher living expenses, schooling, and rent in Dubai. Although Yousra's life is so busy with all the planning for visits or even to keep up with the fast pace of living in Dubai, she tries to keep in touch with her family in Egypt. Both say that they "worked hard to stay in touch", and the best way to do so was through phone calls, and mostly during weekends when it is suitable for them both. Yousra tries to keep her mother updated with everything and the highlights of her day. However, she always avoids telling her mother about the bad things that happen or any problems that she encounters as she (the mother) really "wants us all to be happy". On the other hand, Yousra does not speak that much over the phone with her father. Instead, he prefers to hear about her through her mother. He tries to hide his feelings of unhappiness that his daughter has been living abroad for many years. However, her parents

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frequently visit her at least once a year. Their visits and co-presence have provided a better connection and knowledge than communication over the phone (Baldassar, 2007, p.386).

Migration or mobility of families across borders is not something new, a lot of families like Yousra's were separated by distance and national borders. The global domains of power and capital seem to have control over the movement of families, and their inevitable state of unrest. With the movement of people, there is a mutation in their lifestyle and where they feel safe and secure. This movement of bodies resulted in transnational communication crossing borders and space. Therefore, transnational communication and care obligation toward families are matters that must be taken into consideration. It is how migrants maintain a communication pattern through which members can exchange emotional care. For example, Yousra schedules her day in a way that makes her involve her family in her everyday happenings through video calls; she exerts a lot of effort after having a long day at work, and she connects with her sisters while preparing dinner. This creates a connection and commitment that endows different members of families to maintain these kinds of connections and emotions. It is how families maintain a pattern of connections across distance and exert effort to provide emotional support which requires commitment and sacrifice. It is the notion of "staying in touch" that provides a portal of understanding the interrelated emotions and ties between transnational family members (Baldassar, 2007, p.388). Hence, Yousra's mixed feelings of longing and absence are only negotiated by the co-presence existence. They are aware of their state of unrest because of the detachment from their families in Egypt, but they do their best to reunite with family members.

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Yousra and Basma usually meet for coffee to discuss multiple matters in life; it is where they find comfort in each other's company. Their conversations are mainly on how they miss their families in Egypt and their plans for their lives and kids. From a meeting with Basma, she told me that she usually arranges a visit visa for her parents to come and stay for a month. They cannot stay longer as the permit expires after a month. Even when Yousra receives a family member, they can only stay for the same duration. This kind of emotional effort they encounter every time they receive a family member and the sadness when they drive them to the airport shows how much being away from them is not something easy. And although Basma has just started working as a schoolteacher, she constantly expressed how tired she is. The kind of care both Yousra and Basma offer to their families explains how pressuring their lives are; they usually take care of the kids and work, and care for their family members in Egypt and even take care of each other. In a conversation with Yousra, she stated that "I usually meet with Basma at the coffee shop in my building to discuss the matters that stress her at life. She usually complains about living in Dubai and how she longs for her family in Egypt". She also expressed how "it is very hard to listen to Basma's problems and how stressful she feels". This amount of emotional labor exerted in listening and giving advice is pressuring; Yousra feels that she replaces the position of family members for Basma where she comforts her. The amount of energy and effort Yousra puts to satisfy the emotional needs of others illustrates a regulation of feelings to meet social expectations. Hence, providing comfort and displaying care are ways of displaying emotions in a defined method.

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### Longing for an 'Absent Place'

Egyptian migrants usually experience intense emotions like emotions of absence. Emotions of absence are exemplified in one of the observations when having a conversation with a migrant in Dubai. Basma expressed, "I miss the places and outings in Egypt and how people get together and the security when I am 'home'". These feelings of a place narrate a reflection of emotions of a place that does not exist anymore. When interviewing other migrants, it becomes clear how their conception of "home" is distorted and different from reality. Their emotions towards absent places of nostalgia and longing have been imaginatively constructed. As a result, migrants' feelings of despair are encountered when they discover that this place, which they long for, is absent and is part of a constructed imagination. Basma expressed her strong attachment to Egypt and how all her good memories are linked to being there. Through a casual interview at the coffee shop down the building where Yousra lives, she revealed words of strong attachment to Egypt.

"Although my mom and dad always come to visit, there are constant feelings of void and not belonging that never goes away. All my memories and happiness belong to Egypt", she states.

Even though she has her own family now, and that her social life is mainly in Dubai where her husband and kids are located and where she works, she expressed her distress of being apart from where she 'belongs'. She always looked miserable and lost whenever I met her. Later, few days before my departure, I went to her house with Yousra to pick Malek up from a play date with her daughter. She contemplated her stay in Dubai that can never be as staying 'home'. Instead of attachment to a place that is defined by love and coziness, it has become a place where emotions

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of nostalgia and longing are brought forth as her attachment is not only related to the place of her parents but to a place where memories of happiness and life where no care obligations prevailed. These suffocating emotions were explained in Peter Read's essays **Returning to Nothing** that depicts the experiences of migrants who return to nothing, when family home is destroyed by ethnic violence and what only remains is a staircase that leads to nowhere. A crushing feeling of loss and fear only prevail. Similarly, Yousra explained how staying away from her family in Egypt made her life different. Family meetings during these years could be easily counted. Even when she went to Egypt lately it was not like the image in her head; she is always hurried to fulfil the needs of her son and to see some relatives during her busy working schedule. She also manages to do some work obligations at the company's branch in Egypt. Yousra stated that, "It is very difficult to schedule a visit to Egypt, and I always manage to have some meetings with co-workers in the branch in Egypt. Doing so makes me lose valuable family time". Eventually, she does not have enough time to bring back the real conception of family reunion.

Although notions of belonging and homeland have been discussed in previous literature, there is another aspect that is worthy of analysis. This significance is related to how the migrants encounter stereotypical attachment to 'home' and how they manage their transnational existence vis a' vis these primordial social attachment to 'home'. A distinguished focus on the migrants' lives and the dynamics of emotions that occur in their everyday lives have powerful effect in the emotional life – a life of people who move from home or 'across homes'. Their lives have become bounded with a unique independence of social space, place, and emotions. Focusing on these dynamics gives a distinctive insight into their subjectivities (Bocagni & Baldassar, 2015, p. 74).

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This process does not only include the person involved in the process of migration, but it involves the social relationship that takes place under certain circumstances. According to Barblat (2002), it is “an experience of involvement” that “registers in {one’s} physical and dispositional being” but remarkably “is in the social relationship” (as cited in Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015, p.74). Hence, depicting emotions involves an interpersonal social and corporeal reaction that occurs in the multiple worlds that all the subjects within the migration process are involved. Emotions, then, becomes a link between agency and structure as Barblat (2002) states (cited in Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015, p. 74). And as emotions resemble the social reality, they “are not only shaped by, but also shape, the relationship in which they occur (Boiger and Mesquita, 2012, p.221-222). Therefore, the examination of what happens after migration and the transnational connections with homelands and the influence of their migration are included. They form their lives around emotional obligations and to being in multiple places; they must perform affective labor in the transnational space which is considered a corporeal reaction to their migration.

Since emotions are constructed across different socio-cultural contexts, the emotional life of these women becomes extensively expressive to the whole situation, and it gives novelty to the multiculturalism that is depicted when dealing with the individual emotional experiences that are collectively categorized. At different levels, since migration does not involve only the movement from one place to another, it entails connections, affect and emotions whether they are socially or corporally (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015, p.75). Emotions, in this case, circulate in a way that makes them co-constructive with place. This kind of relation between place and emotions brings out a dialogue between different elements that are involved in the migration process as a whole –

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people, places, objects of special meaning, stories, and histories. For example, Yousra belongs emotionally to both Egypt and Dubai. She feels at home when she goes to Egypt where she finds family members who can take care of Malek and where she is not the only person responsible for all the daily tasks, but she also feels comfortable when she lands in Dubai where she feels safe and that everything is back to the routine. As a result, belonging to both places create a burdening feeling because she feels that she belongs to both places, yet does not belong to either place. Both Yousra and Basma love the way they keep the family bonds, and they are never sorry for the effort they make to stay in touch with all their family members, but this attachment to multiple sites makes it harder on them both; all the scheduling and organization for every visit, and the effort they do either in Dubai toward their spouses and kids or the effort they do toward their family members who live in Egypt is tremendous. This is proof of how belonging to multiple sites takes away their agency where their emotions structure their lives.

It is evident that care work and family demands are fulfilled through mothers and not fathers. It is Yousra and Basma who carry the burden of enacting everyday socialization and familial interactions. It is normal for both women to receive family members who come and stay with them a duration that is not less than a month. In addition, they also receive their husbands' family members. Therefore, they take care of the housework and care for their husbands and kids. Being care givers in so many ways is bounded to them as women more than it is an obligation; it is how they were raised, and how they react in real life situations. It is their responsibility to behave in a fulfilling way towards their families and to be there for their kids. As Egyptian women, they

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are the ones who provide care, and their migration adds to their transnational care obligation because they are attached to the fluid social space extended through multiple social sites.

### **Emotions as Performed: Politics of ‘Hope’ and Constructed Spaces**

Yousra’s hope for ‘better life’, or ‘better future’ have formed the infrastructure of her life. She settled in Dubai to have better education for her kids and better financial stability. Hence, it was essential for her to manage her emotions and to cope with the pressuring reality of living in Dubai where everything is expensive and where they must show high performativity levels on the social and the professional levels. For example, Yousra’s work provide schooling fees for Malek, but she must pay more to enable him to go to a desired British school. However, after being 16, she will not get any deduction on Malek’s educational fees. Therefore, she must have a plan for Malek’s education through which she has a bank account that is only dedicated for Malek’s future education.

Having another outing with Basma, we discussed the pressures she feels during her living in Dubai. Her hopes and dreams are like Yousra’s where she desires a better future that they thought living in Dubai will guarantee.

“All we want is a ‘better life’ for our kids and a decent life where we have rights and feel secured”, she said.

Her emotions have been assimilated according to ‘better’ living conditions and environments that are constantly changing. Hence, “hope is materially distributed in significant



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spaces” (p.75). Yousra’s and Basma’s dreams and hopes for better life are attached to materialistic gains; their emotions are constantly attached to material basis. They always look for better working opportunities and how to make life easier for their kids; they look for better schools and training for the kids and their hopes and dreams never end at this point. Their hopes are constantly changing as they are affected by their migration status which is temporary. They have on going hopes and aspirations, but there are still feelings of unrest and alienation as they could leave the UAE at any time if there is something wrong with their labor status or their husbands’.

Their emotions may include an attachment to their previous dwelling places or where their previous experiences were encountered. In this case, their emotions of anomaly, estrangement or alienation may be more experienced. Their attachment is driven by familiarity and embedded social and cultural bonds. This familiarity is associated with feelings of attachment to place that gives a meaning of “home” that is linked to community and family ties. It is the place where their ancestors were born. This indicates a paradox that points out their attachment as a human need that is different from how social ties extend through place and transcend spatial boundaries (Massey, 1993). Consequently, this implies that emotional embeddedness is both variable and socially constructed. Furthermore, emotions “are the driving force behind commitments to culture ... [they] give cultural symbols the very meanings and power to regulate, direct and channel human behavior/ performance and to integrate patterns of social organization”, as Turner and Stets (2005, p.292)) argue. Therefore, there is an inclusion of the potential divergence in the contemporary manifestations of emotional embeddedness and attachment to place. The flow of emotions is explored in the transnational space where everything is transformative and changeable. The feeling

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of alienation that is constantly felt by both Yousra and Basma is infinite; they constantly feel that they only belong to the place where they were born and raised as kids. This sense of *ghorba* (estrangement) is expressed by other interlocutors who vary in age and gender. Thus, the kind of emotional link that ties the migrant to a cultural space is questioned as it directs the human behavioral pattern through a hegemonic power of ordering the transnational social existence. Hence, in the transnational approach of analysis, there is a constant linkage between emotions felt and cultural framework through which emotions are felt and displayed.

“I always feel that everything is incomplete. I wish I can reunite with my family and have this sense of security where all my family members are here to help me. Although they come and visit me every now and then and even stay for months, it is never like being there with them like before”, expressed by Basma as she stated how it feels like being away from ‘home’. Her feelings of *ghorba* (estrangement) reveal the strong attachment to her ‘homeland’. She always has this feeling of strangeness and incompleteness; she feels detached from ‘home’ even if members of family come to visit. For her, feelings of *ghorba* (estrangement) are inevitable; there is and there will always be this missing link when she is away from home. Although the UAE represents the land of hope for Yousra and Basma, it is never like ‘home’. As a result, constant feelings of unrest strengthen the attachment to ‘home’ that no longer exists, which sustains their state of limbo.

### Co-existence Within the Transnational Space

Furthermore, new technologies are introduced as mediators of communication. With the advancement of technology, there are new sites of emotions to explore. These technologies create

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a bondage of co-presence and familiar ties. New media tools facilitate the communication across place and time, which enhance feelings and emotions of embedded-ness. This kind of materialism reflects how technologies have become agents that saturate the Egyptian migrants' emotional world in a more materialistic and virtual world. This world of technological advancement orients our emotions and affects it in a way more than geographies or places of 'origins'. They have become tools that reassure the re-embeddedness of migrants and tie them constantly for economic purposes. Consequently, these tools direct and monitor the migrants' emotions and constantly reconstruct their embeddedness. This eternal link that keeps the migrants attached emotionally to the place of 'origin' is sustained through the technological devices and applications provided. Eventually, the migrants' emotions are constantly materialized that only adds to their feelings of endless attachment. Hence, the connection made through technology and media tools turns their place of 'origin' into the transnational space—they no longer belong to their 'homeland' nor host society; however, they belong to the structure tailored for their transnational existence. During hard times or even happy times, Yousra tries constantly to update her parents and sisters of her daily routine; she keeps the video call open for hours to feel connected in a way with what resembles 'home' for her. This connection initiates endless feelings of unrest since the video calls are never enough, it is their physical meeting in Egypt what counts most. Her continuous request of having family members to come and visit entails the need for a connection that is never made real unless it is physical. Hence, even though these technological tools ease maintaining their connection, they burden them with feelings of nostalgia. Studying emotions is more concise when analyzing the experiences of migrants as bearers of "distinctive emotional disposition" (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015, p.75). The plethora of potentialities embedded in this process is so vast and is

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captured in how they manage their emotions and affect in the transnational space, which gives a broader vision of the migrants' emotional condition. Economic motivations and allures attract the Egyptian migrants into integrating in their new sociality.

It was normal for Yousra to receive her neighbor, Rana's kids over to spend some time with Malek and at sometimes she would send Malek to spend time with them. Her older son would get along with Malek, but the younger was hard to deal with specially if Yousra was alone without the help of Jenny. I met with Rana in previous visits when she was not in the same building of Yousra's. For Rana, "living in Dubai was a dream. When I knew that Yousra had moved to this building, I decided to move to the same building. Everything in Dubai is great, you can go shopping and it is a magnificent place for the kids as there are many activities to do and a lot of nice places to go to".

She expressed her fascination with the city life that Dubai offers where she enjoys the "modern living and the cleanness of streets". She has always found Egypt as an estranged place since she had lived in Qatar with her family and just went to Egypt when she was in college. She is fascinated by the luxurious living in Dubai and all the nice things it offers. Although she is attached to Egypt, but she has developed an attachment to another social space \_\_ Dubai. She usually goes out to malls for shopping and to beauty salons for facials. Her attachment is more of an economic attachment that counts more on her as a consumer. For most of the Egyptian migrants the UAE offers a quality of living and a secured future, but it all comes with a price. Similarly, Yousra expressed how she feels estranged sometimes when she visits Egypt because she is "accustomed to living in Dubai". She commented, "I cannot drive in Egypt since everything is chaotic and unorganized. Living in Dubai is disciplined, and everyone follows the rules here". She reveals an

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attachment to multiple places, an old one that preserves memories and a new one that she has been exposed to. Hence, connecting to two places emotionally is fixing the transnational existence of Egyptian migrants. According to Leersnyder, Masquita and Heejung (2011), *Emotional acculturation* “refers to changes in emotional patterns due to an immigrant’s exposure to and contact with a new or second cultural context” (p.452). This means that the contact with other cultures lead to changes in people’s attitude. As a result, their emotional experience might encounter emotional acculturation where a migrant feel attached to both places as the migrant is internalized in the new social space. Therefore, they are engaged in a new cultural context of belonging that attaches them to multiple sites as the new normalized transnational pattern of migration.

Both Yousra and Rana express ‘hybridity’ in their identity. In acknowledgement to that, the emotional behavior of the migrant determines an open-ended process and variable hybridity. Therefore, it is preferred to acknowledge these conflicting emotional existences as parts and parcels of the migrant’s experience. They encounter a negotiation with the social integration that has become an outcome of the “transnationally-oriented emotional identification” (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015, p.76). The paradox in their feelings reveal the emotional orientation of co-existence. Both are attached to the lifestyle and attractions life in Dubai represent, but they also feel attached to their ‘home’, Egypt. They might express comfort and normality that they have coped to their lives in Dubai, and that they found a retreat in the company of each other. As Yousra is busy most of the time, Malek prefers to spend time at Rana’s and to play with her kids. When Yousra is obliged to work for late hours, most of the time, Malek goes to play with Rana’s kids, or they come over at Yousra’s to fill in Malek’s time. And since there is not any family members,

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both Rana and Yousra have developed a coping mechanism through which they have adapted to the non-existence of family members. They have created a co-existence mechanism that they have formed as a response to their situation.

It is evident that Yousra and Rana has formed a support system through which they have performed as family members to reconcile having no family members around to help in various situations. It was highly noted that in multiple situations they were able to form a support system for each other. Yousra narrated a situation when Rana's younger son had a head injury while playing and she had to take him to the hospital.

“One day, Rana's younger son was playing in Macdonald's and suddenly he hit his head hard into a sharp object. Rana left her older son with Yousra the whole day as she had to take the other one to the hospital for his serious injury. We only have each other and living in the same building makes it easy at many situations like these. Rana always brings me food when she knows that I am sick or busy at work. It is comforting to have someone who can help out in serious situations, we are like family here.”

### **Emotional Economies**

Yousra's everyday life is always full of things to do and places to go whether it is going to work, driving Malek to his training or to run some errands. She was happy that I am staying with her for few weeks even if we do not get to spend a lot of time together. She expressed how she

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misses mom and dad and how that being in a different country and having to perform on so many levels bring feelings of guilt that she does not spend enough time with them. When her father had to undergo a serious operation, Yousra was not able to be present and to travel to Egypt which was crushing for her. As a migrant, she encounters multiple emotional attitudes towards happenings and homeland from guilt, relief, and abandonment, and the most highlighted feeling is guilt as “guilt, guilt, guilt is what all migrants face” (Baldassar, 2001). Their decision to leave is mixed with variable emotions of guilt and abandonment. They constantly try to reconcile this feeling of guilt through “markers of both economic success as well as emotional commitment to those left behind through performed visits to ‘home’” (Baldassar, 2001). Yousra usually pays visits to her family during her vacation days, and she manages to spend some time in Egypt.

Yousra had just finished work and decided to pass by me and visit an old friend, Lobna, Lobna, is a friend of Yousra since her stay in Qatar years ago has a similar experience of that of Yousra's. Lobna, a 38-year-old Egyptian migrant, is a mother of two girls who has been living in Dubai for more than seven years. She works in the medical field in a post related to quality control of medical devices used in surgeries. She always has long working hours; in addition, she needs to take care of the household and kids. She was Yousra's neighbor in Qatar and now she lives in Dubai in a villa in a luxurious compound. Her husband is an engineer who also works long hours. In a casual interview with, she expressed her guilt of not being there when her mother died. She has always been close to her family in Egypt, but due to the fast pace of living in Dubai and the dense everyday schedules, it is hard sometimes to see abroad family members than often.

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When we were at Lobna's, her feelings of remorse and guilt were inevitable, especially after the death of her mother. She was wearing black although her mother passed away many months ago. However, she expressed deep sadness because she will not be able to see her upcoming child. Consequently, once what was considered performed visits, have turned into feelings of guilt and remorse. Her departure has taken the shape of an act of abandonment, and even though she had made regular visits to Egypt, she wished she had had more visits. The migrants' justification to reconcile their sense of guilt has always been economic success and emotional performance towards those who are left behind. However, these visits are never enough when you lose a beloved family member whom you had not had the chance to see before they were gone. Guilt and loss between stayers and leavers explain the transnational life dynamics. This relation includes a gendered bond between those who leave and those who stay. The quantity of emotions attached to such conflict is enormous, and it explains how they manage their emotions through fulfilling other care obligations and sacrifices.

Yousra's sacrifice is extended as she had to stay alone in Dubai for three years because her husband had to leave the UAE due to political conflicts with Qatar. His stay in the UAE was jeopardized as his work was transferred to Qatar before the conflict. As a result, Yousra had to stay alone in Dubai with her child, leaving her no choice as her husband could not leave his job. He kept moving between Qatar and Dubai for years trying to make a connection with his family in the UAE, as an attempt to resist these suppressing conditions. This kind of separation between the shows the pressure the transnational families encounter for their pursuit of "better life". The emotions exerted through their pursuit forms a weight on the transnational individuals whose



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choice is always affected by main actors of economic and political domains. Furthermore, it was Yousra who was taking care of the household and Malek during his father's absence, "it was really hard living for three years almost alone doing everything by myself. Although Abdullah used to come in the weekends, but I was burdened to fulfil all the family's needs, and to be there on the emotional level for both Malek and my husband. It was a hard time, but I had to cope and perform upon such circumstances". Yousra had to tolerate; it was not only the emotional labor performed between Egypt and Dubai, but it was extended to include another site. This co-existence of emotional identification reveals a conflicting emotional orientation and opposing affective resonance. The migrants' hope for a better life, and the conditions they endure of anxiety and guilt entail a unique emotional experience and a different attitude towards their migration indicating the spectrum of potentialities within the fluid transnational experience.

Interviewing some of the migrants involved in the study revealed how their migration is related to a quest for a better economic promise that enables them to save money to buy a real estate in Egypt. Their desires are attached to creating better work conditions and better social life for their kids. Therefore, it is essential to include the economic motives that made them leave and seek their "better life" version in the UAE. It was hard for Yousra during these three years that Abdullah had to keep his job in Qatar at that time. However, there was not an alternative for their separation. Depicting migrants' emotions in various situations allows an examination of constant care obligations that are interrelated with economic concerns. To keep their residency in the UAE, Yousra was forced to stay alone in Dubai and almost live by herself with Malek. She was responsible for keeping her family together during such critical times. She even tries to perform

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both on the professional and the familial levels; since work arranges conferences in the branches of the company all over the world, Yousra felt glad that one of the visits was going to be in Egypt's branch. This notion is explained by Baldock (2000) who describes how professionals choose their work trip in their homeland as an opportunity to afford a family visit on the same trip of their work. In a similar case with Egyptian migrants who prefer having conferences in Egypt to have a guaranteed trip to their families whether it is related to the economic or emotional aspect. It has become a chance for her to fulfill family needs even if it comes with work obligations. However, the exerted effort to achieve these trips is enormous since it enforces her to perform on both levels, the familial and the professional. She always feels connected to both ends where she cannot detach herself from either obligation. For example, Yousra usually schedules her days in Egypt of meetings and business dinners, and afterwards she spends time with her parents and sisters. Such affect produced and reproduced in the transnational space puts a lot of pressure on the mobile subjectivities because they must manage their schedules and emotions to fulfill all the requirements whether it is familial or professional. Examining the migrants' emotions sheds light on the economic emphasis that takes place in the connection between migrants and their homeland. The economic stance flashes out whenever there is a connection between migrants and homeland. This means that attachment to homeland is related to economic terms. Skribis (2008) and Boccagni (2014) stress the fact that the migrant's mobilization accounts for a cultivated attachment to homeland are merged with nostalgia and belonging for instrumental and structural purposes. This attachment of emotionalized dimension reflects on diaspora literature that links homeland with affective discourse in a kind of framed idealized matters.

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The emotional labor exerted in such manner is introduced in an “organizational and private setting” (Skribis, 2008, p.237). Their emotions and affect are employed as performances of “emotion work” as explained by Hochschild in *Managed Hearts* (as cited in Skribis, 2008, p.237). In his book he links emotions with capitalism and commercialization of human feelings. In this search of authenticity, there is a revelation on how human emotions are manipulated under the capitalist system that puts humans under forced normalized tension between the “real self” and the “on-stage” selves (Hochschild, 1979, p.185). For her, society uses feelings for economic and capitalist purposes. In reference to ‘commercial behavior’, every emotional reaction is considered a commercial behavior that alienates the human “real self” from its feelings of wholeness. This way smiles, affect, relationships and human connections have become “products”. Therefore, belonging becomes no longer an affection but an organization that is operationalized through a capitalist ideology. In addition, she points out the results of framing emotions and managing them that creates a “false” self Vis à Vis a “real” one. In her argument, individuals’ private emotional systems have been moved into the public market. Individuals navigate their emotions into the public sphere, and that is when “a profit motive slips in” (p.153). In this case, the private becomes entangled with the public. As a result, the migrant’s identity is crushed under this constant tension of finding a compromise between both. Therefore, migrants constantly feel that they must perform this emotional labor to fulfill the social/economic structure of capitalism. They are turned into robots who perform emotional affect towards those who are in their private sphere, but in a way that also affects their public sphere. This kind of emotional labor demands emotional management from them to be able to receive the outcome. Therefore, the relation between emotional labor and transnational labor is co-constitutive, which creates the connection cross space and time. As a

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result, the transnationals get consumed through this formula trying to find balance to be able to achieve what is required of them — economic profit. These family relations, thus, require negotiating relationships that affect all family members in what Hochschild calls “transmutation of an emotional system” (1979, p.19). For example, Yousra’s visits to her family in Egypt are always linked to performing at work at the same time. She takes virtual meetings and finishes tasks; she even stresses the importance of having internet all the time to be able to finish work requirements. This means that there is a performance of affect with labor time and vice versa.

Emotional management and the artificiality of emotions have extended through the children of the transnational migrants themselves. They are learnt the techniques of this normalized social order of balance between the private and the public. It is apparent that the children of middle-class or working-class parents pass on the conformity attitude of their parents. According to Hochschild (1979), middle class children “learn that it is important to know how to manage feelings” (158). This idea is clear in Malek’s case; he got accustomed to the idea of mobility between the two spaces and having a fluid social space. Although he misses Egypt and the rest of his family, he adapts to the new social space in the UAE where his friends and social practices occur. He even adapts to the idea of family visits that only last for a short time, that after them he gets back to his routine. This is explained in how he abandons feelings of attachment to family members whom he does not see a lot – instead, he flips back to his everyday social activities. This kind of interchanged endeavor assures that the transnational children of middle-class families continue the emotional conformity pattern. Therefore, there must a consideration of the emotional changes within this structural framing.

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To conclude, transnational migration allows an investigation on the plethora of emotional trajectories in the migrants' lives. As a result, ways of belonging, identity and structural accounts are valued through this focus. Eliciting from emotional residue of Egyptian migrants, structural patterns are unveiled. Depicting Egyptian migrants' emotional experiences reveals the complexity of how they identify themselves in shifting spatial. Their performances are considered multiple relationships enacted in the transnational space that is highly mobilized. They are never detached from the workings and networks of global capitalism, but they somehow represent a less glamorous pattern of mobile labor. These highly trained and skilled individuals are represented to broaden the scope of embeddedness within global cities, and to present a current conceptualization of skilled migrants.

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## **Chapter Four**

### **Gender in Motion**

#### **Introduction**

Including gender relations with migration explores the experiences of women migrants as they move between “here” and “there”. Their experiences show the motives behind their migration to the UAE. Hence, this chapter explores the complexities of women’s experiences in transnational spaces unpacking the meaning of ‘good life’. Egyptian upper-middle class women envision the UAE, and especially Dubai, as a ‘global city’. They are attracted to what the city life offers of modern living style; however, they have become haunted by the enforced independencies they are pulled into by the contemporary migration structure. As a result, including the narratives of some of the middle-class Egyptian women living in Dubai and the challenges they encounter in their everyday lives, there is an explanation on how their dreams are located within the networks of global hierarchies. Living in the city entitles having social hierarchies upon the professional laborers of Dubai. Hence, their everyday realities construct these complex relations within the city of Dubai. As seeing the relationships these women construct in the realm of independency maps the contemporary patterns of globalization that freely facilitates the mobility of such women but through altering them into subjectivities of the contemporary global space.

#### **Discourse of Corporate Responsibility and the Privatization of Care Economy**

It was normal to find Jenny available at Yousra’s doing the daily chores and caring for Malek when he gets back from school. There was a day that I asked her to go down to pick him

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up from the school bus that arrives at the building every day at 3.30 pm. I wanted to surprise Malek and to make him feel happy that I was the one waiting for him. When the bus stopped to let Malek drop off, the bus nanny refused to give Malek to me since she did not know me, and because Jenny is the only one authorized to pick him up. It was not until Jenny gave her a call to accept to make Malek leave with me. Jenny, who is from the Philippines, was living with an American family for years in Dubai. However, after they left to the US, she went to work at Yousra's place. Jenny is a single mother who works hard to provide for her family back home and to financially support her only son. She chose to live away in the UAE as working there will make her get a proper salary even if she works in the household care system. Jenny's responsibility towards the families she worked with of middle-class migrants explains the representations of transnational subjects. Both Yousra and Jenny represent a constitutive relationship between transnationalism and neoliberal practices showing how there are multiple forms of the subaltern woman. They contribute as gendered figures in the neoliberal discourses of exclusion and inclusion.

As a woman laborer, Jenny has responsibilities towards her family back home in the Philippines; she collects money to be able to pay for her son's schooling and to save money to build a house of her own there. Her labor is supervised through a global vision that governs her mobility as a women laborer. Women like Jenny endure lack of adequate work conditions as she does not have agency over her work conditions, and she accepts what her employer company dictates her. Being a global 'emancipated' woman who negotiates both 'the home' and 'the world' prove the higher hierarchy that subordinates her under social codes of citizenship enforcing her to negotiate existing in both social spaces. She performs in the two social spaces of being a provider

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of her family in the Philippines and providing care as a caregiver by being a nanny. Both her domesticized labor at Yousra's and her social and financial obligation towards her family in the Philippines represent a gendered international configuration enacting neoliberal discourse.

Yousra's relationship with Jenny is constitutive. Since she is professional who works at a pharmaceutical company in a managerial position, she needs someone to take care of the household and the kids. Hence, both represent the hybrid figure who tends to perform according to the neoliberal economic governmentality that directs individuals toward "personal responsibility and empowerment" (p.134). This indicates women are socially reproduced in the transnational spaces they inhabit. Bhatt, Murty and Rmumurthy (2011) theorized this process of 'neoliberalism as an event' which marks the significance of practice and experience. In addition, Yousra introduce representations of a new middle-class aspiration through acquiring a lifestyle that is luxurious. While she embodies a global figure, she tends to use the English language showing pride in presenting a global figure abroad. In her communication with Malek and Jenny, the English language has become the common language that facilitates the communication among these women. Hence, as representatives of modernity, 'Through processes that are both inclusionary and exclusionary, the new middle class and neoliberalism are defined through the figure of the gendered subaltern.'" (p.142). In addition to their affective roles toward their families, their labor becomes part and parcel of the formula of the global figure.

Although having a nanny is considered a marker of wellness, but hiring Jenny was not an option as both are involved in the complex relation of women labor. Yousra has had Jenny with her for years, and since having her new baby, she became more in need for her presence. This means that Yousra and Jenny are managed through "hegemonic aspirations" (Bhatt, Murty and



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Ramamurthy, 2011, p.132) where women play a major role through their consumption. As a middle class, Yousra wants to elevate her level of living back in Egypt, she discussed that she wants to have a house in a good compound in Egypt and to enjoy life in a comfortable way after years of *ghorba* (*living away from 'homeland'*). Although she and her husband have an apartment in a good place in Egypt, she aspires for an apartment in a compound with a reasonable price. Her dream is to have enough money to buy the house of her dream. However, saving money for Yousra is not an easy job since she must keep up with the demanding lifestyle in Dubai that requires them to have a certain professional look through which Yousra buys a lot of outfits to sustain her image. Such consumerism reaction evokes the image of the hybrid figure which is applauded by the global vision of capitalism” (Bhatt, Murty and Ramamurthy, 2011, p.133); being a professional career holder who seeks a consumeristic style of living includes them as participants of the neoliberal global structure of capitalism. In addition, hiring domestic workers to do the caring labor like cooking, cleaning, driving kids and the need to live in an expensive building in a good neighborhood are statements for their conception of 'good life', which are key factors why women like her work and aspire professional success in Dubai. Her life has become impossible without the existence of Jenny's care work which makes the relationship between Jenny and Yousra constitutive. The new lifestyle Yousra creates for herself is relevant to the making of the new modern middle-class. It is how she and other migrant women aspire a higher rank in society through their pattern of living and aspirations of higher social existence. As a result, neoliberalism as an event marks a transformation in the structure of the subalterns, and as Bhatt, Murty and Ramamurthy (2011) explain, “the relationship between domestic servant and employer is

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reworked through governmentalities that enforce and regulate practices that constitute modern neoliberal subjects.

### **Crafting the Good Life**

“Living here is not as easy and idealistic as it might seem to others. Everyone here is running either for self-accomplishment by performing at work or being a good care giver satisfying the kids’ needs. I am used to having Jenny, who else will be home before Malek gets back from school. And now that I am pregnant, I will need someone to be with the baby until I come home from work since they (work) are giving me only thirty calendar days as maternity leave.”

Yousra’s participation is essential in the household management since the money she earns participate largely in the everyday living expenses. She helps in paying for Jenny from her salary. In addition, Malek’s everyday expenses and outings cost much in Dubai because everything there is expensive, and she always wants to get him everything and spend time with him outside which requires having enough money. In addition, having a job provides health insurance and other privileges for schooling, which is needed for the kids as the schooling expenses in the UAE are very high and not having an insurance plan would be impossible in Dubai. Her contribution to labor, then, has become an obligation and an integral part to their stay in the UAE. They need work to hire a nanny to be able to work more. Hence, her incorporation in migration has aspects that are linked to understanding gender and identity politics existing in the transnational space. They are involved in the labor market as an enactment of their own desires; however, perplexity comes to surface between choice and structure. Their desires are altered to fit a demanding lifestyle of high

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expenses and everyday choices; they are attracted by the lavish life that Dubai offers, but this life pressures them into fulfilling these demands which risk their chances of having agency over their choices and desires.

On the same day, Yousra took me and Malek to City Walk, a place in Dubai like an open mall where there are restaurants and fun activities for kids and adults to be done outdoors. Since we were in May, it was hard to spot anyone enjoying their time outside because of the hot weather at that time. We tried to make Malek have fun, but although there were a lot of activities to be done, he got bored quickly because there were not any other kids that he could play with. Yousra booked for me a game that involved a VR theme that was expensive. It only lasted for few minutes and it was not that fun. Soon after, we headed home early because Yousra had to go to work the next day. We then met Rana, and she offered to take Malek to play with the kids for some time before his sleep time. I managed to arrange an outing with Rana early in the Morning to the Mall where she had a doctor's appointment, and we decided that we will go together.

On the next morning, Rana and I met at the parking lot to take her car and go to the mall. We had the chance to chat in the car till we arrived, and during that Rana expressed how much she appreciates having free time and not having to work,

“Work is not essential for me now; all my needs are fulfilled. Working would consume my time and that will affect my social life and family time. I prefer being a stay home mom and to take care of the household and my children. In addition, I have the option to go back to work whenever I want, but now I am enjoying every moment I am spending without any work obligation”.

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Since her husband is the main financial provider for the family, Rana does not have the urge to work. She enjoys having her morning going shopping and to have facials or even to spend it at home. We arrived at the mall, and she went to the doctor who is located there to check her back that had been hurting her for a while. During that time, I went to check some shops, but did not buy anything since there were not any sale at that time. People usually wait for the sale to be able to buy their needs. After Rana had finished, we went for a shop for her to buy some items for her kids. At that time, Rana did not care to buy things during the sale. She seemed enjoying her life and not bothered about the expenses of things that she is buying. She always buys branded items for her sons either from Dubai or from any foreign country that she goes to for vacation. She wanted to pass time, and during that she was spending a lot of money. Her consumerism is related to her existence in a city that promotes buying and enjoying the facilities that exist there. She even bought a gift for Yousra's baby who was not born yet. After a while, we decided to end the day and go back home.

looking into the complex relationship these two (Yousra and Rana) encounters during living in Dubai, there must be a consideration of “‘drivers of migration’ as a concept” (Carling & Collins, 2018, p.909). Whether they are entrepreneurs or professionals at their fields, or household mothers, they aim to identify themselves through their individualized stories. These complexities are better illustrated through their individual experiences that are related to economic and political outlets. Therefore, examining the experiences of women in living ‘the dream’ is related to their social realities. This means a significance in the geographies of migration and the hierarchies made in the everyday lives. Living in Dubai might seem flawless; however, they have become involved

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in Dubai's globality (Ticku, 2017, p.214). Within these complexes lived experiences of migrants, neoliberal trends are exposed and are being related to a structural system of global economy. Dubai manifests "rigid social hierarchies" (Ticku, 2017, p.216). Therefore, exploring the system that divides nationals from the expats under the claim of 'globality' shows the exploitation of these migrants who represent modern subjectivities of neoliberal spaces.

Rana's graduation from the Faculty of Pharmacy from a private university in Egypt and her good education make her a desirable figure in the international labor market. However, Rana has a different perspective in life. She believes that "working now is not essential" as it might "consume" her time. However, she prefers being a stay home mom and take care of the kids and her household. She was very expressive explaining her choice of not working and refusing to work. For her, she can enjoy her free time doing whatever she desires and spending her time with her family in Dubai and taking care of the kids. Since there is a financial stability provided by the husband, Rana does not feel that her contribution to work is necessary. However, she kept pointing out her ability to go back to work; she stated that, "I have the choice to stay at home while others cannot. For me, I can work anytime I prefer, but for now, I prefer having enough time to spend on my wellbeing". She believes that work is not a necessity for her financial stability, but she also stressed her ability to join the labor market anytime she prefers. This means that working has been established as a self-worth value that these women craft their social life around. They have created a connection between their eligibility to work and their belonging to the upper-middle class that is derived more toward enjoying a demanding lifestyle. Rana does not strive to be included in the labor market, but she also stresses her ability to work. Given that she has an option to go back to

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work as an upper middle-class woman gives her agency over her situation as she is not enforced into the labor market; however, she constantly expresses that it is and will always be a desirable aim to work. As a result, work is related to preserving social class of being a professional migrant which explains a breakage in the normalized gendered roles. This means that having the labor market open for her as being a qualified professional in Dubai positions her desire in a complex relation to work. Although work is not a necessity for her now, it is related to her social and professional level. This means that featuring living in Dubai necessitates acquiring a desire for work.

On the other hand, Yousra feels pressured to perform both at her household and at work. Her performativity must stay at the same pace and not to be affected by any social factors. She must stay at work for nine hours even if she has flexible hours. Her day is always full trying to satisfy the needs of her family and her work, too. When we were at Basma's, Yousra was asking her questions regarding her arrangements in the States. She explained to her that she wants to do the same and to give birth there. On many occasions, Yousra expressed her regret that she did not give birth to Malek at the States, but she and her husband were young and had limited financial capabilities. When we went home, it was part of their daily discussions that she wants to give birth to her daughter in the States. And although Yousra had a medical condition related to her pregnancy, she was willing to travel all this distance to make a better future for her daughter

Yousra commented that she "rarely sees Emirati citizens in the streets or public places" which explain the rigidity of the social hierarchies in the UAE. Although it might seem as a cosmopolitan and diverse city, All the interlocutors in this part are involved in the process that is based on the identity of professionals who belong to the upper-middle class. The everyday power

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allows a deeper analysis into how the Egyptian migrants represent mobile subjectivities in the temporariness of neoliberal global structuring system. Within the complexities of their desires and dreams, Dubai is seen as place where dreams are constructed on fragile grounds as it always represents itself as a glittery place where all dreams come true, but embedded in the migrants' every day, Dubai seems like a social space where aspirations and success are negotiated.

As professional workers, women migrants represent the fuel for the civil society of Dubai who will never belong to the nationals but to the "other expats" (Ticku, 2017, p. 215). Linking the three concepts of aspiration, desire and drivers prove an analytical approach towards understanding how migration works for these migrants. According to Carling and Collins (2018), "the friction between the three concepts arises from their connectedness" (p.211). This illustrates the importance of linking the three concepts when examining the lives of these migrants and their perception for a 'better life'. As a result, it was important to involve the demanding lifestyle they are experiencing in their existence in the UAE. Yousra's participation in the household is essential as it maintains the family's lifestyle. This means that she is enforced to keep up with the structure of living in Dubai. She is the one who pays Jenny's salary, which is highly needed since Yousra cannot keep up with the household needs. She is she one who mainly does the everyday chores of cleaning and cooking. Furthermore, living in Dubai is expensive starting from the food, water and electricity bills, facilities and other expenses, so in most cases women work to help in these expenses. Furthermore, Yousra is obliged to maintain her performance level at work because it is where she gets some benefits of medical and schooling coverage and keeping the family's lifestyle. Therefore, her contribution to the labor market has become a necessity as part of her identity that

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is required to perform on different levels whether it is social, professional or familial. Being involved in the labor market has become an enactment of her own desires shaped by a very demanding kind of living in Dubai from compelling expenses to everyday choices. As a result, her desires are altered to fit the neoliberal structure which later pressures them into the realm of high performativity. Lefebvre's (1991) 'production of space' links the workings of production through professions with the everyday life. The women migrants' everyday possibilities are mapped according to their experience in the social space of Dubai. Accordingly, their experiences are analyzed in the geographical space that represent the complexities of their everyday living. In addition, it becomes the space where all hierarchies take place. Connecting the social existence in relation to neoliberal logics allows an understanding of the global structuring systems that are burdening especially on women migrants. These burdens are seen in workspaces, households, and citizenship divisions (Ticku, 2017, p.220).

As an Egyptian working woman in the UAE, there is a constant pressure on her and other women professionals to produce through their labor time and to perform in other aspects of life. They have become involved in the arena of production and consumption that they have become 'slaves to modernity'. Their existence in the transnational space has become limitless that it exceeds any attempts of containment. In the case of many women workers, their work has become the center of their everyday lives – they do not feel 'productive' unless they work. Their struggle grows bigger as they compromise their free time and their family time only to fulfill the requirements of the feminine global representative. The status of the Egyptian women workers in the UAE is compared to the figure of "the country higgler" that is a representative of both a



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consumer and a producer of goods between country and town, introduced by Katzin (1959) (as cited in Freeman, 2001, p.1020). Therefore, Egyptian women migrants reproduce structural factors of global capitalism through behavioral attitudes of consumption and production.

### Ranges in Women Migrants Experiences

Both Yousra and Rana live in an area that is near the Burj Khalifa in one of the skyscrapers of rented apartments. Because the regulations in the UAE which state that expats cannot buy a place of their own, they are obliged to pay very expensive rent rates that is increased every year. As a result, the temporality of their stay as not formal citizens who are living in the 'spectacular Dubai' is juxtaposed with the financial burden they are living in matters of being able to pay expensive rents. Therefore, they are enforced to acquire a highly professional pattern of performativity to be able to cover all the daily life expenses in such space. Hence, Yousra is constantly pressured to perform according to the global neoliberal standards that require pressuring work environment and having flexible working hours. It is this 'uncomfortableness' that possesses her everyday life that many people of the upper-middle class experience. The catering for a wealthy life in Dubai is found in so many levels that empowers both Yousra's and Rana's social practices. This globality that Dubai prospects is different from the realities of these women's experiences, and it allows an insight into their individual experiences in relation to the high demanding living style in Dubai. Understanding their dreams of wealthiness in Dubai is put into contrast when facing the demanding lifestyle that these women try to keep up. For Yousra, having a job is necessary not only for financial prosperity, but it is important also to the personality that Dubai shapes. Amid

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these ranges of experiences, both women expose an understanding to the dominant image of Dubai which demands involvement in the everyday expenses. Both provide for their kids a certain kind of living that includes having expensive outings and everyday practices.

Yousra expressed the pressure she endures since she is a working mom who takes care of her kids and preserving a highly performative lifestyle. She is seen taking care of the household, working, and participating in the social encounters that are related to living in Dubai. She tries to finish her working day and come home to cook dinner, then she takes Malek to his sport and music activities. During his training time, she mostly does some home shopping. In addition, she finds it a must to take him out in the weekend in one of the new and attractive outings available in Dubai. Hence, during my fieldwork it was obvious that both women are following the blueprints of the neoliberal global structure that rewards those who are involved in these complex and highly performative encounters. In addition, scheduling life outside work is barely possible because of the demanding working environment. Yousra regularly checks her emails and opens her laptop for any popping task. Generally, being in Dubai for these women requires an extremely difficult consuming and performative pattern where they are constantly required to fulfil the everyday demands there.

Before my departure, Yousra and I had to spend some time together before she goes to sleep. She seemed puzzled by the many things she needs to cover before she leaves work for her maternity leave and while she travels to the U.S. for her childbirth. Her job does not allow her to

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take a vacation of a whole month even if she is giving birth. Therefore, she needs to plan how she will manage her time in the U.S. of doctor visits and having virtual meetings. She was even planning on how she will ask her mother-in-law to come to Dubai to stay with Malek during the time her husband will join in the U.S. in the last week of her stay there. The whole situation paved the way to a new form of femininity that involves women's labor through the increase of their autonomy and being worldly figures. Ong stressed on the involvement of women in the local space enacting global processes and modalities where there is a constant need for them to work hard and to prove their worthiness towards the global feminine figure. However, their lives have become enmeshed into this formula of self-proving and being aspiring global models. In viewing the Egyptian working women in the UAE, there is a constant pressure on them to produce through their labor time and to perform in other aspects of life too. They have become involved in the arena of production and consumption to an extent that they have become 'slaves to modernity'. In the case of many women workers, their work has become the center of their everyday lives – they do not feel 'productive' unless they work. They even compromise their free time and their family time only to fulfill the requirements of the feminine global representative. Hence, these women who have freedom of mobility introduce new modes of power and admired traits to the global woman.

Yousra tries to make it up for Malek because she works long hours, and she takes him out for dinner in expensive places. Her consumption pattern is relevant to living in the UAE where everything is lavish and expensive. These women count more on themselves being workers, mothers, consumers, and at the same time travelers and 'citizens' through their actions. Women

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there contribute to the making of the global figure through their excessive need to work and even through their everyday activities. The average women worker needs to go shopping to look 'adequate for the work environment' where she must impress other colleagues and workers of her ability to sustain the global figure of a working woman. In addition, their mobility through travel in business trips and their mobility between work and 'home' contribute to their consumption pattern. Hence, women in following the blueprints of global capitalism re produce the structure of global capitalism through their reproduction of consumption and production forms.

### **Women's Autonomy as Negotiated in the Transnational Space**

Although it is necessary to observe these women's experiences in the transnational space, but it was essential to include their local existence in Dubai to be able to understand their individual experiences. As a result, scholars were cautious when it comes to overgeneralization of women's experience (Tienda & Booth, 1991). Instead, gender is included in the discussion of gender inequalities and the sites where it occurs in spaces like the state, the household, and how they respond the contemporary modern restructuring. Hence, highlighting the term 'translocal' focuses on the mobility of individuals and their relationship with transformed localities, and its relationship with the reproduction of social structures between past and present asserting the link between locality and mobility. Translocality is not only concerned with movement of people, but also about the movement of ideas (Oakes & Schein, 2006, p. 1). This means that mobility interconnects with patriarchal institutions that "control female sexuality and gender divisions of labour" (Porter, 2011, p.65). Introducing Nesma, my friend's sister who migrated to Dubai four years ago as an IT

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specialist who works in a big company reveal part of the complexities that women encounter in the UAE. In an interview with her, she expressed how it was a dream to come to Dubai and work there, and to become independent from her family back in Egypt. Being an unmarried woman who seeks independence was fought a lot by elder females in the family. For them, it was unacceptable for a single woman to work and live alone in a foreign country. She stated that her grandmother did not agree on her decision as it is “just against the traditions”. From this point, gender divisions were asserted through her mobility choices. For Nesma, it was a challenge to convince her mother and family to come and live in Dubai by herself, and to pursue an independent lifestyle. Seemingly, she defied social and cultural structures that contain women’s dreams and desires in a way that makes her resist such framings. Here, Nesma is seeking her aspirations that were different to her social category as both a woman and belonging to the upper-middle class. Defying the social and gendered structure tailored for her was a challenge that was captured in the act of her migration. According to Nagar (2000), “a historically and spatially informed examination of gendered resistance in day-to-day places can help us capture more thoroughly on how multiple axis of difference intersect with domination, privilege, and subordination” (p.571). Therefore, it is essential to trace Nesma’s behavior and choices in relation to the social space she exists in to understand how women negotiate gendered roles transnationally.

As for Nesma, it is uncommon amongst young Muslim women to leave and to live alone in a foreign country. However, her choice of the UAE was because “the UAE is an Arab country which was going to be familiar to the social standards back in Egypt”. Her ability to break the gendered role and her decision to go to the UAE reveal a power that is captured through the

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everyday tensions surfaced by her migration. Nesma resisted the social and cultural pressures through her choice of migrating to the UAE, and to experience how it is like to live by herself in a foreign country. As an Egyptian veiled young woman, she represents a different structure from the 'normal' veiled woman figure. In an interview with Nesma behind her motives behind her migration, she revealed that the main aim behind living in Dubai is enjoying a respectful lifestyle; she explained how people are respected in the UAE, and how life is organized there.

“The expansions and constant growth Dubai experience have led improvements in mobility, especially for women. The transport services here are clean and organized and they really respect women; there are special carts available only for women in the metro with strict rules against whoever disregards those rules. In addition, for women who do not drive in the UAE, it is easy to move around by the metro or even walk in the streets where the risk factor is almost not there. Even at night, women can walk freely at night in the streets without getting annoyed by men, and they do not find difficulty in finding a ride home.”

While women's mobility is seen by women as empowering and encouraging for them to join the labor market, there are some challenges that reproduce cultural institutions and gender differences. Hence, women's autonomy is put into question and its relation to gender, power, and space (Bastia, 2013). Despite living in Dubai, which is a cosmopolitan urban city, patriarchal domination was contested in how Nesma's neighbours and work colleagues look at her. Since the labor market there is very demanding, both men and women struggle to keep up with keeping high performance rate that the market requires. These tensions were brought up when discussing their

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individual relation to work and how there are other social and economic factors that are manifested in these relations. At Nesma's workplace, many men expressed their disdain from her existence. For them, she is taking their opportunities. As following the normalized male position, she is expected to get less opportunities since she is "just a woman" who is threatening their 'normal' role. These men are pressured by the demanding work environment and their obligations toward their families as the breadwinners. They afflict a normalized conception that men deserve better opportunities at work as they are the only providers for family although many women are single or providers for their households. Therefore, while women's mobility is applauded by many, feminist researchers have always drawn attention toward the frames of women empowerment and exercises of migrants between "here" and "there" in their everyday experiences (Ramdas & Yeoh, 2014, p.1198). As a result, complexities found in the relation between gender and work arise. It is their everyday challenges in the transnational spatiality that unveils the entanglement of gender with social and economic factors. Both men and women strive to keep up with a highly professional work realm in Dubai that reproduces gendered relations creating such complexities. Nesma revealed that it is stressful to be involved in such tension at work. She stated that, "men at work always feel threatened by my existence as both a woman and a single veiled woman". This illustrates the entanglements of gender relations and work aspirations. Although both strive towards achieving a prominent rank at work, complexities arise when 'who has the right to have opportunities' is being brought up.

Although it might seem that Nesma, as a young woman is privileged at work, but the expansions of capitalistic values have enforced her to negotiate her flexibility as existing in a

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highly competitive transnational space. Her contribution to work is never less than her colleagues as she mentioned in an interview as she works long hours and she, as a representative to her company, is obliged to move a lot to clients to be able to provide 'proper' technical assistance. Hence, adopting this approach provides a better reading into the local-global articulation of things and everyday living (Appadurai, 1990). Women who migrate to the UAE are involved in the contemporary global structure. That is why it is necessary to never relate a fixed structure in understanding how these migrants raft their lives. Women are depicted as professional employees whose value is embedded in their ability to work. In addition, in such a highly securitized state, women's movement is highly securitized and monitored to serve capitalistic purposes. They are managed and given facilitations of movement and work opportunities, but these chances are meant at managing women on the move. While women's mobility is seen by women as empowering and encouraging for them to join the labor market, there are some challenges that reproduce cultural institutions and gender differences. Hence, it is essential to question women's autonomy and its relation to gender, power, and space (Bastia, 2013). In relation to this, there is a question of to what extent do these migrating women have agency in their migration? How do they reconcile their "choice" of migration with their responsibilities in the household and expectations for the self? And how their involvement in the labor market threatens men's position at work or in the everyday social space? When tackling gender and work together, there is a focus on the economic value of work that makes it produce "social and political subjects" (p.8) and not only economic. Work generates disciplined subjects and worthy citizens through work. According to the Marxian political economy, it is essential "to publicize the world of waged world, to expose it as neither natural precursor nor peripheral byproduct of capitalist production, but rather as its central



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mechanism (the wage) and lifeblood (work)" (Weeks, 2011, p.9). Nesma reveals her experience as a women worker who participates in the making of a feminized labor force. She expressed that, "the company always welcomes Arab women in the company", and she stressed the fact that at her workplace, women are more encouraged than men to participate in programs at work. She denoted that, "a male colleague at work usually expressed his disdain on inequality at work when it comes to opportunities", he also "always questions why Arab women at work get better salaries sometimes and better opportunities on different projects". According to the interview conducted with Nesma, women's participation, and especially Arab women, is increasing showing a clear feminization of migration.

It is essential to trace women's behavior in the public space to view how they negotiate gendered roles. For instance, Nesma's pursuit of independence is transnational as it is connected between the two places of Egypt and the UAE. For her, it is uncommon amongst young Muslim girls to leave and to live alone in a foreign country. However, her choice of the UAE was because "the UAE is an Arab country which was going to be familiar to the social standards back in Egypt and a place that is safe enough for women". In addition, when I furtherly asked her about her experience in living in the UAE, she commented,

"There is a lot of consideration provided for women in the UAE. There is respect in following the rules and even the social access to women — in public transportation facilities, healthcare services or even doing everyday groceries, there is an ease in how a person is respected. There are a lot of expansions and constant growth that are made in the UAE that led to the

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improvements in mobility, especially for women. The transport services here are clean and organized and they really respect women; there are special carts available only for women in the metro with strict rules against whoever disregards those rules. In addition, for women who do not drive in the UAE, it is easy to move around by the metro or even walk in the streets where the risk factor is nearly diminished. Even at night, women can walk freely at night in the streets without getting annoyed by men, and they do not find it difficult to find a vehicle for the journey home”.

Nesma’s choice of the UAE seemed the best solution as it is, as she stated, “an Arab country that keeps hold to some traits of Arabs which provides availability for women to work and live independently”. In addition, it is a place where “women are respected and treated in a good way”. She furtherly expressed her experience through words of “freedom” and “safety” that coin the reasons behind her departure. According to her, UAE is a place that encourages women’s mobility and stands unique in providing services related to women’s safety and security. She elaborated that “if your car gets broken at night, you do not feel scared as there are services provided and there is safety in the streets for women”. As a result, Egyptian women feel encouraged to leave the house and to join the outer world. Nesma is a highly qualified professional, but her labor is regulated to fit the global structure as a Third World woman. According to Oishi (2005), globalization entails a manufacturing of highly regulated subjects as docile laborers, she elaborated on how “Many corporations \_\_especially those which cannot afford to relocate or outsource overseas \_\_have found migrant women to be the most “qualified” workers in this this regard” (p. 4). This entails a relation between labor and women’s integration as constitutive to a complex system of inequalities. Hence, Nesma, as a professional worker who seek an independent lifestyle,

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represents the tensions within the highly regulated labor market in Dubai. She wanted to be independent, but her days at work have become endless as she works long hours and is always on the move. Therefore, Nesma's autonomy is regarded as an act of control enacted by a system of order and securitization. Drawing on Marx, reproduction is viewed from another point of view that involves the reproduction of labor force (Kofman & Raghuram, 2006, p. 284). Relating reproduction of labor to women's autonomy involves defining it as described by Keller and Mbwewe (1991) as "a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination" (as cited in Haque, Islam, Tareque & Mostafa, 2011). Having autonomy here is regarded as an attempt to have control over their own lives and choices. In that sense, Nesma represents the autonomous figure who has the choice to participate in the formula of the global living in Dubai. However, the complex relationships that are brought in her participation unveils the making of articulations of power. Her desire of having control over her resources and having self-esteem is constitutive to her participation in the labor market that requires highly performative subjectivities who are ambitious and flexible. This situation paved the way to a new form of femininity that involves women's labor through the increase of their autonomy and being worldly figures. Hence, the depiction of the constant need for women to work hard and to prove their worthiness towards the global feminine figure reveal their enmeshment into this formula of self-proving and aspiring global models.

In conclusion, women's autonomy in relation to labor exposes complex gendered relations to labor in the transnational space. When looking closely into the logic behind the integration of

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women in the transnational market, there is a revelation of the constitutive connection between the facilities appropriated for women just to make them work better. Yousra having Jenny does not mean that her everyday living is made easier or that she is having a luxurious life. However, having a nanny has become an adjustment that makes Youara able to focus on her self-performance. Yousra's long working hours and stressful life necessitates having a constant help which is existent through Jenny. In addition, Jenny in need for the job to be able to financially support her family in the Philippines. Hence, their relation to work elaborated the complex relations between women's migration and their value. Referring to women's autonomy and choice making have been proven to be related to higher policies of integration in the labor market. Hence, these women's everyday living was a portal to understanding these women's involvement in the global neoliberal structuring of mobile subjectivities.

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## Chapter Five

### Beyond Migration: Sociality in the Transnational Space

#### Introduction

There is a need to contextualize the experiences of the migrants as experiences lived and existed in the transnational space. Therefore, there is a purpose in this part to draw attention and to look at the variable connections that exist in this fluid social space with all its ambiguity. Hence, there is a need to “explore conceptual frameworks for understanding the connections between migration, community, and place.” (Phillips & Robinson, 2015, p.409). Linking the previous parts and after exploring variable migrants' experiences and how they have become involved in social, political, and economic complexities that are related to their existence in the transnational space, there is an understanding to the factors that link these experiences with transnational migration. For example, how do these migrants integrate themselves in the global structure and the living style in Dubai? How women built new sociality in the host country? How do they connect and identify with other migrants creating a bond in the flexible realm of transnationalism? And how their reinvention of transnational sociality is linked to the globalized structuring system of managing moving bodies? Consequently, this chapter explores the interrelated connections between migrants and community, and place. As a result, there must be an inclusion to the value added by this research that allowed an understanding to the development of community relations and their significance to the multiple structures of global mobility. Embedded in this part an exploration to the diversity in their integration stories and these migrants' conception to identity and social attachments. Therefore, contextualizing the various experiences of migrants allows an

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understanding of how community relationships and social interactions are intertwined with global structures of management.

Away from romanticizing social bonds, there is a link between social practices and the transnational context these migrants exist in. Hence these contexts are considered complex settings for the social practices. These places are linked to dreams of economic prosperity, social relationships, and multiple assemblages of social and economic decisions. This means that their practices are constantly shifting and changeable since place is never fixed. However, they find themselves in a position of subjectivity that is being reproduced in multiple contexts. According to Phillips and Robinson (2015), “places, whether constructed as the city, neighborhood, park, street, or home, are also multilayered, personal, and imagined spaces.” (p.410). This means that place is never fixed and is constantly changeable and flexible; it is created and re-created by those who enact social practices and is presented through their interactions to space. Hence, conceptualizing place as experienced through the scope of gender, social engagements, experiences and belonging reveal the intersection between global and local that impacts the migrants’ experiences and reactions (Schiller & Caglar, 2009). Thus, to understand the Egyptian migrants’ transnational experience, there must be a recognition of the transnational paradigm that connects people in the localized global world.

### Social Networks within the Transnational Space

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Each social existence is created in its own space and area of activity and its realm of interactions. These social interactions created are based on human existence in a transformative space that is constantly changing. Hence, social existence creates space where society exists and where people are involved in the making of the social space that is never fixed. That is why we can never detach the transnational social existence from the domination of capitalism and the global structures in contemporary migration (Fuchs, 2007, p. 49). Conceptualizing space in that matter allows an exploration of the different structures that are produced in space where bodies and relations come together in interactive activities. As a result, a system of boundaries is brought forth that has control over these moving bodies. Egyptian migrants are depicted compromising their temporary existence through social communicative activities. In addition, having social connections in the transnational space is also linked to bigger political and economic structures that have power over the migrants' lives. It is how they compromise their temporary stay and how they seek opportunities that might offer better life chances. Yousra's relationship with her neighbors and colleagues at work reveal a connection that is made as a kind of accommodation to living in country where there are no family members. From that point, having connections is required to be able to live in the transnational space where multiple systems of ordering the social exist. Recognizing their temporal existence in Dubai, where they have a desired social and professional life, Egyptian migrants constantly strive for creating better opportunities in the global world of high requirements. They can feel the temporality of their existence in the UAE since their stay is related to their professional status. Therefore, they make use of their experiences in the fluid space, and they try to look for other opportunities in the elsewhere. Having a network of relations is linked to the complexities these migrants encounter in their everyday living.

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On one of the days during my stay, Yousra informed me that her women colleagues at work are going to meet over dinner at the apartment of one of them. According to Yousra, “these women come from different backgrounds and social statuses. Although they come from different backgrounds, they feel attached somehow as all of them are temporary residents in Dubai, and by experiencing the complexities they face in their everyday life. Some of them are single and live alone there and some of them are married and have been living there for years, and the others are married and just came to the UAE recently and are new to the experience of living there. These women might not be close to the level that they share their intimate secrets, but they come together as sharing similar everyday challenges of living in Dubai”. They have known each other from work since they all work in the same company. These women spend long hours at work, but they have recreated a socializing space outside the realm of work. According to Fuchs, “Social spaces are created by human activities in social processes; they incorporate and transform natural space” (2007, p. 53).

It was Mona who was going to invite all her women colleagues, and she is well-known for the dishes she makes and how good she is at making them. She is a single woman who has been living for years in Dubai. She rarely goes to Egypt, and she fills her life with work and friendships. She is always keen to gather her friends from work and cook the food they desire that reminds them of 'home' and family members who cook it. Although at first it was an attempt of a dish party, but she is the one who was making all the main dishes. I asked Yousra if I could join them,



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and whether they all feel comfortable to have me over, and they all welcomed me to come over and meet them. Apparently, these women have reinvented social spaces in their temporary transnational existence. They are aware that they must integrate in the new social space, so they create a system of social relations since they have common experiences as transnational migrants. Nevertheless, these relations are related to economic and social concerns. Since most of the women invited were working mothers, it was hard for them to cook something for the dish party, especially that they had to go pick up their kids before joining others at their friend's home. Yousra after a long day at work was able to come and pick me and Malek who had just arrived from school up from her place to head towards the dish party. She has informed her friends earlier that I will be joining them for dinner. When we arrived at her friend's place, the atmosphere was both laud and cozy. They were all chatting and laughing, kids were running around and there was a good smell of food being prepared. The moment I entered, I felt welcomed, and the host started to introduce me to the women guests. There were about six women, some of them have been living in Dubai for a long time and some were just new to living there. However, they appeared as if they had known each other for a long time. The kind of connections these women share have been enacted as a coping mechanism against the complexities of the busy life in the UAE, and Dubai in particular. The gatherings take place away from men where they feel free and at ease talking about different topics away from any masculinist existence. These collective practices where women gather show the capability of women of asserting existence in the transnational space. This miniature creation of 'home' has become a place of intimacy and coziness that mixes the public with private space. These women, hence, reproduce familial ties and family connections that strengthen their existence within the demanding lifestyle of the Dubai. From other observations it

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was clear that women usually use their homes as spaces for socializing and for having friends and neighbors over for coffee or treats (Ehrkamp, 2013, p.24). Women gathered for dinner and for sharing life experiences, and the hostess cooked food herself and tried to cook the dishes they love most as a replication of home. Being able to join them and see them sharing different life experiences allowed a see through their everyday challenges as migrants and women. They are all middle or upper-middle class women who came to Dubai seeking professional advancement. Some of them were not married and some were married with kids. Mona, the one who made dinner is a single woman who lives all by herself there. She finds company in cooking dinner for her colleagues and friends and to grab some laughs too. She worked hard to cook dinner that day to have some company for the night. She was keen to make everyone there feel as if they are home, cooking the dishes they requested that reminds them of family members back in Egypt. I also had the chance to talk with Lara, who comes from a well-off family in Egypt and whose father has his own company in Egypt. However, she did not seem different from the rest of the women there. She had decided to seek financial independence and Dubai seemed the best option for her because it is an Arab country that holds familiar atmosphere like her 'home' in Egypt. The gathering was an opportunity for women to talk freely about personal issues or to just have fun away from their everyday life obligations and pressures. They came together for food and laughed for the night which was a purge for each one of them. And although there was a newcomer to the company and Dubai, Shima, who is married with two kids, it was as if they had known each other for years. Shima used to work in the same company for years in its branch in Egypt; however, moving to Dubai was a huge step for her since she is a mother of two and already had her child settled in a school in Egypt. The experience of living in Dubai was totally new to her, but having these women

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around formed a comfort sanctuary through which she can share her fears and anxieties of the move she did. Shimaa was comforted by the presence of other women who offered help to make life choices in the UAE better for herself and the kids as suggesting places to hang out or giving her options of schools for the kids. Shimaa expressed how worried she is by coming and settling to Dubai with her whole family and the options for the kids' school as she expresses "that my children already act differently from those who had their kids here in Dubai. Every child here uses the English language as the common language of communication, and my kids are not used to that as they were raised in Egypt. Although they are still young being 6 and 3, it is still pressuring that they would not fit in here and would struggle to communicate with other kids. I have noticed how the children of people living here use English all the time since the nationalities vary a lot at school". In addition, there was a concern of how "everything is expensive in Dubai". Although her salary by working in Dubai's branch would be a lot bigger than her salary back in Egypt, but she was shocked by the expensive pattern of everyday living in Dubai.

These women had visions of cosmopolitanism and desires for 'better life', but their meetings encoded some of the tensions of living globally and the multi-layered living in Dubai. These women present, then, a strict structuring system that shapes their everyday living. Although living in Dubai and working there offer better professional profile and higher salaries, but in return they become involved in other structures that are seen in their everyday struggles or concerns. Shimaa's older son has not been exposed to the community of Dubai. Compared to other kids who have been in Dubai all their lives, he is different. He does not use the English language as the other kids living in Dubai which is the 'normal' thing there. In addition, other concerns started to surface

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during their chats and side talks. It was clear that sharing the meal embedded sharing care and experience that might be of use in her new environment.

Although the gathering was of women of prior acquaintance and of women who are new to living in Dubai, but there was connection that was created once they all gathered. This connection these women created in the transnational space shows the enmeshment of both public and private spaces in the everyday life. The diversity of these women coming together expresses the multiplicity of their experiences and how they come together in the transnational flexible space. For example, Lara detached herself from the wealth of her family and avoided being privileged by her father's position; she decided to live by her own and to manage her household by herself. Doing that asserts ownership of personal space that defies any conformity of gender or social class. Her choice renders independency and affirmation of power over the private and the public space. These women do not only discuss familial concerns, but also professional matters that affect their existence in Dubai. As being in a field that requires acquiring high performative profiles, these women discuss their concerns at work and the stability of their positions. Hence, getting together for dinner was an act of having a break from everyday pressures, but their talk included other social and economic concerns.

### Local Spaces and Neighborhoods

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Yousra and I had to leave early since she had to go to work the next day. As soon as we arrived home, Yousra arranged to meet Basma, her neighbor, the next day. Yousra usually meets with Basma or Rana as they are the closest to her logistically. She has created a bond with them over the years of their stay in Dubai. And since Rana has known Yousra from before when she used to live in Qatar, Rana had chosen to live in the same building Yousra lives in to stay near each other. Malek even finds company with their kids since he does not have sisters or brothers yet. Yousra usually meets with them for coffee and play dates with the kids. They even baby sit each other's kids sometimes in emergencies. They have created connections that form an alternative for family existence. Having each other's company empowers their characters in the transnational space and makes life tolerable with the lack of family members existing in their everyday lives. Therefore, everyday living is presented through multiple spatial practices that defy any conformed power relations. The intimate space of home emerges as a space where women challenge transnational pressures and *ghorba* (estrangement). Yousra also has formed a connection with Basma, who lives nearby. Yousra is seen comforting Basma in multiple situations and giving her advice about work options and everyday living situations. Basma, who finds it hard to cope with living in Dubai and its fast-paced style, usually meets Yousra to discuss her professional options and for advice in various matters. I had a chance to meet with Basma again where she expressed continuous fear of the unknown that is enriched by her living away from her family and parents. Although she lives in Dubai with her husband and kids, but she constantly feels detached from her parents who live in Egypt. Her distress is inflated by the fact that she cannot meet her family whenever she wants, and that their visits to Dubai are very short. Living in Dubai, therefore, projects a pressuring lifestyle that Basma cannot endure. She constantly feels that she does not

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belong in Dubai despite living in a good neighborhood and having financial stability. Seemingly, her stay in Dubai is temporary and is projected in her everyday concerns. During our meeting, she expressed "I constantly feel sad and detached from my family. I really miss my father and Mother. Although they come to stay with me for a whole month every now and then, but it is not like living with them in the same country. There are a lot of things that I would really love to discuss with a parent or to leave the kids with my mother to finish an errand, but living all alone in a different country, and especially Dubai, is not as easy as it might seem to others". She often meets up with Yousra to discuss her concerns about living in Dubai and how she feels nostalgic to the living in Egypt. Her talk usually entails perplexity between places and people, but her conversations with Yousra makes her feel comforted creating new places of identity as a negotiation between the transnational ties and local lives (Ehrkamp, 2005).

It was almost the end of my stay when I met Rana for the last time. Yousra and I were going to drive Malek to his Qur'an. After the lesson Rana came with her kids to pick up Malek as they will all spend the whole day at Water Park. During that time, Yousra and I would be going to her doctor's appointment for a visit that is essential for her decision of giving birth at the U.S. Yousra expressed how having Rana around is essential in her every day because she feels that there is someone that she can count on during emergencies. She mentions "At times when I had to undergo a nose surgery, Rana took care of Malek and she cooked food for us for a whole week. It is always good to have someone around when there are no family members to take care of you during emergency times". As all of them do not have family members to help around in emergencies or even to be there in social activities, they find that they are reproducing 'home'

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through creating social bonds that imitate family existence. Yousra has developed a close connection with other migrant women who live in the same building where she lives. They constantly rely on each other for providing care in certain situations. Since they all live in Dubai where there are no other family members around, they have formed dependency contingency plan that compensates not having family members around. During my field work, I have noticed how her neighbors have created a network of care; they take care of each other's kids during emergencies and even arrange outings. Furthermore, Yousra mentioned a time when Rnan's younger son hurt his head badly and she had to rush to the hospital. At that time, her elder son stayed with Yousra for the whole night. This kind of reproducing social relations reveal accommodation strategies where they negotiate their unstable status and temporary stay. Being alone without family members and enduring all the social, economic and political complexities related to their stay in Dubai show how their reproduction of social space is significant. They have compromised the hardships of their stay through reinventing social ties in the transnational space.

### Global Network Capitalism within Gendered Space

Yousra is demanded to perform both at work and at home. Her productivity, hence, does not only rely on her contribution to work, but she is pressured to manage living in Dubai through other performances. Since living in Dubai is never guaranteed as being a temporary migrant, Yousra and her family always look for other options to enhance the stability of their future. As a

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result, Yousra managed to have a plan of giving birth to her second child in the U.S. Her claim was “because of the instability of living in Dubai and since it is temporary, and the pressuring work demands, we took the decision that our second child would have better future opportunities regarding education and work for us if she acquires the U.S citizenship”. This means that the pattern of connectivity with other Egyptian migrant women entails a similarity in the approach of seeking citizenship. Yousra has just started planning for her trip to the U.S which required regular visits to her doctor who follows up the pregnancy with her. In addition, she was over working herself and trying to manage all the tasks that are required from her and to plan for a follow up plan while being abroad because she is going to stay for a month in the U.S. Yousra seemed confused about where to give birth and how will she manage the trip alone since Abdullah will not be able to join her till the last week of her stay because of his busy schedule of work and studying. Both women have come together in their desire for better life opportunities and stability for themselves and their kids. Yousra have decided to ask Lobna for all the details and how to make this happen since she had the same experience few weeks ago.

Lobna had the same experience of giving birth abroad. This kind of repeated act is constitutive to their feelings of instability in living in Dubai. They are aware that their stay is temporary; therefore, having an alternative and acquiring the U.S. citizenship seemed the best option. Yousra explained how Lobna recommended the same doctor who will operate on her and the accommodation she had and the hospital where she will give birth. All the planning and adjusting multiple schedules reveal the transnational complexities these women encounter in their everyday lives. Their resolution to giving birth abroad and to invest a huge amount of money in



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this trip reveal their involvement in the capitalist workings. The planning reveals a new side of social connections reinvented in the social space that are also linked to workings of the globalized demanding structures. Having a social connection with friends, then, is related to the globalized paradigm of living transnationally. Both Lobna and Yousra seek better opportunities for their kids that will affect their value on the professional level. Yousra stated that “having a U.S. citizenship will provide a great advantage on both the social and the professional levels”. She expressed how having a foreign citizenship will in return provide citizenship to Malek. In addition, Both Lobna and Yousra strive for a better financial stability at work since having a U.S. citizenship guarantees higher salaries and better work options in the future. They are pressured by the dominating economic and political structures that they try to find solutions for themselves in seeking nationality in a foreign country. Therefore, social connections bridged the link between the social space with political and economic structures of neoliberalism. They have become involved in the arena of production and consumption that they have become ‘slaves to modernity’. Their existence in the transnational space has become limitless that it exceeds any attempts of containment. In the case of many women workers, their work has become the center of their everyday lives – they do not feel ‘productive’ unless they work. Their struggle grows bigger as they compromise their free time and their family time only to fulfill the requirements of the feminine global representative. In addition, their constant search for alternatives for their families in Dubai entails a state of unrest and uncertainty. As a result, social connection reproduced in the transnational space involve the existence of these migrants in limbo. As they will never be Emirati citizens, reproducing citizenship rights has become their alternative that will allow them to create better life opportunities for their kids. This proves the fact that having social connection with other migrant

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women is connected to seeking 'better life' opportunities out of the context of their temporal stay in Dubai that is constantly pressures them. Their decisions, hence, are tied to the bigger global structuring system of (re) producing moving subjectivities.

An assertion has been made that gender has been an important part in the political economy. This expansion of capitalist workings has been the only possible path for developing countries in the world (Freeman, 2001, p.1015), which means to be subsumed by the modern processes of capitalism. Aihwa Ong (1999) includes analyses on globalization that engages macro-economic systems with micro/local space of power relations. She uses the transnational space as the focal point of her analysis by pointing at the cultural logics and humans' everyday practices to unveil the processes of global modern capitalism. She argues that "while mobility and flexibility have long been part of the repertoire of human behavior, under transnationality the new links between flexibility and the logics of displacement, on the one hand, and capital accumulation, on the other, have given new valence to such strategies of maneuvering and positioning. "Flexibility, migration, and relocations, instead of being coerced or resisted, have become practices to strive for rather than stability" (Ong, 1999, p.19). Therefore, Egyptian women migrants negotiate their flexibility that has been part of their transnational identity. Adopting that approach moves them away from defined patterns of globalization (Harvey, 1989; Waters, 1995), and it moves towards a new local-global articulation of things and everyday living (Appadurai, 1990). This notion abandons the model of women's locality in movement. However, women who migrate to the UAE are involved in the global structure which means that their movement is not only tied to the local realm, but also to the global space and across spaces of economic, social and political interrelations. Therefore,

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Egyptian women who migrate to the UAE are not tied to the local sphere only; however, they are enmeshed in the global interrelations of social, economic, and political everyday realities. That is why depicting the Egyptian women in the UAE, involves an analysis on their movement as transnational, adopting the language of “*transnationalism*” that is used to refer to “the narrow sense of new corporate strategies” (Ong, 1999, p.4). Their realities are never related to a fixed structure but is linked to the fluidity of globalization strategies.

### **Virtual Social Space and the 'Network Society'**

During my last few days there, Yousra expressed how she misses all the family members and how she misses our gatherings. The only way Yousra tries to connect with her family is through video calls. However, there are restrictions on most of the media applications in the UAE, so she uses only the Facebook messenger or tries to adjust the VPN. Egyptian migrants living in Dubai use various media tools to connect with family members. It was a method of reproducing family ties and identities related to 'home'. It was noted that most of the Egyptian migrants keep family connections through having video calls that can extend for hours. Yousra, for example, usually involves her sisters in her everyday practices, Egyptian migrants use media to negotiate their physical existence. As a result, complex relationships are revealed in this fluid space of networking exploring the link between the online and the offline.

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Contextualizing space in relation to technology involve the production of sociality and identity within various resources. Speaking of virtuality evoke social representations that are produced in the social space where individuals react in a world of governance (Slater, 2002, p.534). This means that migrants might act through this virtual world in manners that are unrealistic and more of structured ones. We can see this in how migrants connect with their families in a way that is detached from reality. During video calls, migrants conceal some of their everyday realities and struggles. Conversely, they present imaginary figures of desired selves. These methods of virtual stimuli allow interaction between individuals who are distanced spatially. However, it allows a connection between time and space promoting the idea of co-presence that is expressed in previous chapters where individuals can correspond to each other without meeting. This idea of copresence enacted through virtual reality tools express the function of technology in regulating individuals' social encounters. According to Slater (2002), "new media could sustain communities whose existence was largely or entirely virtual". This means that this act of disembeddedness is empowered by the confined connectivity that the migrants have with their families. Linking this to the idea of modern diasporic figure shows how relevant that virtual communication is being framed allowing only specific reactions to go through. It is this governance over the social lives that ensures containment processes. This contributes to draining the sociality remaining between those who are in the UAE and those who are in Egypt. This notion is exemplified in the conversations between Yousra and her family in Egypt. Although using video calls is a method of connecting family members across borders, but the use of internet in delivering a message has proven to be very hard. Yousra's conversations with her family lack the deep details that she encounters in her everyday living. She even does not find enough time to communicate her

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concerns and fears with her family. Instead, their family video chats are commonly filled with laughs and funny details of their day. Despite the complexities that Yousra encounter, it seems that communicating them through the internet fails to deliver her everyday reality. She even conceals some of the hardships she encounters of financial concerns, future planning, or emergency situations. This kind of connectivity does not locate the realities of the migrants' struggles; instead, it only conveys a certain image that does not replicate real life, but only reveals a system of governing their ties.

Drawing on the previous chapters where family ties were enacted through using virtual applications for family members to meet. Having virtual meetings with family members indicate a status of disembodiment as communication between individuals reflect performed identities. Both parties communicate fake feelings that lack expressions and identity. It is rather performed embodiment of real complexities that are involved in this transnational communication. Therefore, these social encounters and meetings are considered deceptive and misleading in relation to the actuality of these migrants' everyday struggles. Instead of portraying everyday encounters, they reveal a fragmented reality that conceals within it complex governing processes. These migrants, then, are socially disconnected from their families in a way that induces their fragility. They could never deliver real feelings, which are framed to conceal the 'real' encounters. Within this virtuality, migrants can choose identities and experiences that are not real, but rather performed which draws attention to the concept of authenticity in the realm of virtual global connectivity. Therefore, to be able to understand the relation between the virtual communicative space and reality, there is a need to conceptualize virtual communication as a method of governance that controls the representation

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of identity and everyday life experiences. In one of the meetings that Yousra had with her family, there was a vague communication that concealed the reality of her struggles of living alone without family members. Instead of revealing how she really feels, she decided to express that everything is fine. She always reveals how “everything is going fine, and that everyone is okay”. This undetailed and shallow expressiveness of feelings indicate a highly performative structure of responses. She never reveals how she really feels but only reveals an outer layer of the everyday complexities of living in Dubai and the challenges she encounters at work. Instead, she constantly asks her mother to “pray” for her. Her speech is also very brief and constantly disrupted by the poor connection. Hence, their meetings do not involve actual happenings or concerns, but they present a fragmented reality that is different from what Yousra struggles or experience in Dubai. Her everyday living cannot be displayed and discussed fully in these short meetings that are constantly disrupted and stopped.

Online social existence within the context of migration has proven to have a great significance when related to understanding social and political interventions. Virtual reality in that matter is explored as a tool of communication in the transnational space. Accordingly, virtuality has proven to be linked to performative reactions and reality representations. Linking virtuality to contemporary governance systems maps an understanding to the contexts of modernity. Therefore, it does not capture reality, but it allows an understanding to of the complex entanglements of global governance systems. These tools, then, legitimate a disruption in communicating actual experiences. On the other hand, it mirrors an out of context reality that is performed and is highly globally structured.

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To conclude, conceptualizing the social space has allowed an understanding of the interrelated relationships between space and people. Consequently, Egyptian migrants are involved in complex power relations that overpowers their social existence in a manner that aims at containing them in limbo. They are involved in various social practices in various social space, but these practices only relate them to the global structure. Although creating social bonds is necessary on many levels, but these relationships are further involved in other economic and political contexts. Hence, social existence of Egyptian women migrants does not reflect reality, but rather reflect a disruption of realities and the revelation of social structuring systems. Through exploring women migrants' experiences within the social space whether it is face-to-face or virtual, there is an understanding of the involvement of a structuring system that constantly controls their decisions and practices. Although they attempt at creating a social space, these relationships are never detached from the global bigger picture. As a result, their aspirations and dreams are not only their own, but are constitutively related to the global structure that contains these migrants and sustain their subjectivity within the transnational space. And within their attempts of reproducing social relationships, they become entangled in the transnational global processes of ordering moving subjects' aspirations and expectations.

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### Conclusion: Creating Possibilities

Exploring cases of migrants living the transnational experience in the UAE has shaped an understanding to the different yet constitutive factors of the making and the unmaking of their dreams mostly related to an aspiration for a 'better life'. However, as Papadopoulos (2008) states, "You can never really know exactly when people will engage in acts of escape. The area of escape appears magical, but it is the mundane, hard and sometimes painful everyday practices that enable people to craft situations that seem unimaginable when viewed through the constraints of present" (p.xiii). This means that despite the enmeshment of the transnational global figure in the complicated system of power that constantly shapes and hegemonize their existence, there is still hope in the magic of the social existence that cannot be ignored. In that sense, the transnational migrants create a social disturbance in these molds that they are fixated in. They create an escape, not through a heroic escape or revolt, but through experiencing life as is. As Papadopoulos furtherly explains, "people are often moving, creating, connecting, escaping the immediate moments and given conditions of their lives, and that it is only after the imposition of control that some of these actions come to be seen as responses to regulation" (p.xv). Therefore, through observations, conclusions, interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, this research draws on the "autonomy of migration" (xviii). Therefore, this research attempted at questioning "rights" and "representations" of the regulatory global structure; this creates a disruption and "Escape" that is "a mode of social change which is simultaneously elusive and forceful enough to challenge the configuration of control" (Papadopoulos, Stephenson & Tsianos, 2008, p.xiv). The construction of the middle-class Egyptian migrants' dreams for 'Better Life' is constantly contested in relation to



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modern global modalities to be able to reveal the frameworks behind forming these categories of transnational subjects. This means that it is impossible to tie the social existence of the migrants to a certain spatiality; instead, new possibilities emerge on the social, economic, and political levels. Depicting the everyday practices and challenges of the ordinary life forms an escape from the structing system they exist in that regulates their desires and mobility. Yousra decides to continue dreaming and maintain this search for the better life no matter what it takes. For her and to many other migrants, living every day with all its challenges and complexities is a proof of how life and dreams never end, and how the social everyday living emerges through the constraints that are enforced over it.

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