

## *Cultural Citizenship and the Social Spaces of Contemporary East European Immigrants in Chicago*

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Diasporic communities are usually seen as communities of heritage, representing cultural citizenship and a distinct ethnic life. In this article, however, I explore cultural citizenship through the understanding of social remittances brought to host urban settings by East European post-socialist immigrant workers that reflect their lived experiences of former totalitarian regimes. The focus will be placed on East European immigrant inter-ethnic networks of reciprocity in order to answer the question of how new Chicagoans (mainly Lithuanians) are creating social spaces as arenas of ‘social culture’ and comfort zones. Actually this reciprocity may be related to accumulation generated by the informal economy based on networks of ‘friends of friends’, which were very well established under the former socialist system in Eastern Europe as a way of establishing interpersonal bonds of trust through which individuals solved their problems in day-to-day life by obtaining resources in the form of reciprocal favours (Russian *blat*). This reciprocity of favours has been documented ethnographically among East-European-Americans in Chicago, where it was found to take the form of social remittances transplanted from overseas (Ciubrinskas 2016) and actually enacted not so much for reasons of economic need but as a cultural habit of acquiring useful contacts to help in skirting red tape and other barriers, as well as for purposes of illegal help or assistance in obtaining a good post or job etc. If the reciprocity of favours stands at the core of social remittances and also becomes a communalizing power for immigrants from Eastern Europe, cultural citizenship implies an understanding of ‘culture’ as being transmitted from overseas in the form of both social and cultural capital. In this case, therefore, cultural citizenship appears as loyalty to ‘one’s own people’ only involving social culture and social spaces in and of themselves. The question here therefore remains open: who are ‘one’s own people’, and how are their social spaces created? The present discussion is directed towards answering these questions.

**Keywords:** Cultural citizenship, transnationalism, Eastern Europe, immigration, social spaces, urban Chicago.

Diasporic communities are usually seen as communities of heritage with a distinct ethnic way of life. In urban settings, however, diasporas are undoubtedly places where transnational social experiences and social remittances brought from overseas coexist among diverse immigrant communities and networks that encounter one another through immigrant life-ways and life-styles. Thus ‘urbanism’ could be seen as an arena in which a plethora of social relations and social ties, including ‘citizenship — and, by extension, identity and belonging [...] are constantly renegotiated’ (Holston 1999 and Prato 2006, from Prato and Pardo 2013: 99).

Traditionally, for a diaspora-related person to become a citizen (besides the formal requirements), this depended on his or her membership in the dominant cultural community, as members of other cultural groups have had to adopt the majoritarian society in order to enjoy full citizenship. The best example of this pressure to assimilate is the American ‘melting pot’. Today, however, due to transnationalism and the changing realities of nation-state formation, ‘traditional principles of assimilation into dominant cultures are unviable because lifestyles in modern cities have become increasingly transcultural, especially for young people’ (Castles and Davidson 2000: 126).

Nevertheless, international mobility and the politics of multiculturalism, despite all their discrepancies, are making the cultural dimensions more and more important, as the cultural rights of minorities and immigrants are becoming an essential part of citizenship. Such rights, according to Castles and Davison, may include ‘the right to the maintenance of minority languages and cultures’ and also ‘the right to different customs and lifestyles’ (Castles and

Davidson 2000: 126). Basically, therefore, they signify a ‘right to be different’, a reference, according to Rosaldo and Flores, to cultural citizenship (Rosaldo and Flores 1997: 57, in Brettell 2008: 123). This means that the ‘differences’ among immigrants or ethnic minorities ‘start on an individual or family level with what may be termed “home-building” which may be extended into the more collective activity of “place-making”’ (Castles and Davidson 2000: 131).

Place-making as the fulfilment or enactment of cultural needs can reshape urban spaces so that they become ethnic enclaves. Thus ‘place-making can be seen as a spatial extension of home-building through which ethnic groups partially reshape their neighbourhoods to correspond more closely to their needs and values. It is a collective process that only becomes possible as a result of ethnic clustering. Place-making is a highly visible process through signs on shops and restaurants, ethnic markets and a different use of public space’ (Castles and Davidson 2000: 131). ‘Ethnic professionals — such as medical practitioners, travel agents, lawyers and estate agents — may provide ethno-specific services, or they may attract co-ethnics through the use of minority languages and sensitivity to cultural needs. In turn, the presence of such business attracts further members of the minority group to settle in the area [...] and an enclave economy may develop’ (Castles and Davidson 2000: 133).

Thus, the ethnic clustering of immigrants and the implementation of their ‘differences’ through ‘territorialisation’ are very well known in migration and diaspora studies. Immigrant ethnicization as a form of the fragmentation of globalisation (Friedman 2002) implies that the cultural embeddedness of immigrants, which often turns into cultural citizenship, is usually seen as a fundamental point of departure for their classification and for treating them as ‘radically different culturally’ (Olwig 2003: 66). In addition, contemporary transnational migrant agency and activism do address the ‘right to be different’ translocally by exploring social networks that are not related to place-making but rather are employed translocally as social space-making. Here ‘the right to be different’ (in terms of race, ethnicity or language) goes along with respect for the norms of the dominant national community without compromising one’s right to belong in the sense of participating in the nation state’s democratic processes (Rosaldo and Flores 1997: 57, from Brettell 2008: 123).

‘Regular’ cultural citizenship or culture in relation to citizenship (Craith 2004) means that language, religion and other major resources are employed to support cultural rights, like language rights, and also for the politics of belonging in the sense of being framed by cultural capital, particular dispositions, the values of a moral economy and standards of conduct. In this case, therefore, the approach to citizenship as a prime expression of loyalty could be altered by a concern with the moral and performative dimensions of membership as a model of cultural citizenship that goes beyond the domain of legal rights (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar 2008: 207). For example, this applies well to recent post-socialist East European labour migrants, their moral economy and rules of conduct, which have been transferred overseas as their social capital, along with the whole pattern of practicing ‘culture’ as a model of festive culture, sports, gastronomy, and so on, eventually to acquire communalizing force among immigrants from the whole post-socialist European region (Ciubrinskas 2018).

In this sense cultural citizenship may be related to moral standards as well as rules of

conduct, to systems of reciprocity as well as social remittances. Such systems and remittances may be treated as ‘avenues of capital’ which often go beyond not just the legal but also the economic dimension and ‘do not just flow back to the people’s country of origin but to and from and throughout the network’ (Vertovec 1999: 445) by means of social capital, know-how, the sharing of experiences, volunteering, charity and philanthropy, as well as the moral norms and behavioural standards just mentioned.

In this article, I will therefore explore how social capital and social remittances are renegotiated among urban dwellers in Chicago, not those brought back to the homeland by remigrants, but those who were brought to host urban environments by post-socialist immigrant workers from eastern Europe as social capital they had acquired through their lived experiences of totalitarian regimes. Social networks and norms of reciprocity were practiced ‘at home’ (in Eastern Europe) basically to satisfy the economic need to cope with shortages of goods and services. These modes of reciprocity reveal themselves as an ability to have knowledge and experience of ‘spinning around’ by being involved in extensive use of social networks of ‘friends of friends’ (Giordano 2003) and co-workers.<sup>1</sup> Since being transplanted to Chicago, they are not any more used so much for economic needs but are still socially important cultural habits (Kopnina 2005: 138), used in bonding and trust-making and to provide a firm background for cultural citizenship.

Furthermore, post-socialist arrivals are not very visible in Chicago’s urban ethnic spaces, as they do not create new or very conspicuous ‘ethnic’ or diaspora places in the same way that older diasporas did, that is, by setting up ‘cultural infrastructure’: churches, schools, clubs, halls, radio stations, newspapers and restaurants. Instead they create ‘irregular’ cultural citizenship by creating social spaces.

Thus, I argue, the cultural citizenship of these recent immigrants is a quest not only for the ‘right to be different’ but also for particular loyalties to the moral economies and rules of conduct that are assumed to be ‘our own’. These come to be considered loyalties to ‘one’s own people’ that are capable of creating social spaces of togetherness consisting of:

- rules of social conduct created within the circles of ‘one’s own’ people, a kind of communalizing force in which an East European ‘common culture’ and loyalties are practiced by being based on social remittances;
- bridging ties of reciprocity and trust expressed in social networks by creating social spaces of togetherness as comfort zones of shared identity.

In both these ways of making social space, social remittances from overseas and social capital are used as resources. These new social spaces created by transnational migration are at

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<sup>1</sup> Here, ‘Spinning refers to one’s resourcefulness to make do with limited material means like in the command economy of shortage’ (Lankauskas 2013: 53), but transplanted to diaspora (Kopnina 2005) it becomes social capital ‘inherited’ through the manipulation of limited means, which (in the former socialist societies) was of key importance for a successful life. This all fits with the well-known (in migration studies) practices of transnational networking by sending of remittances (Levitt 1998) and enacting philanthropic or potlatch-type practices, which are supposed to bring status through charitable activities and give-aways to fellow countrymen. Thus, joining the circle of ‘one’s own people’ becomes a form of belonging to cultural citizenship.

once situated in a kind of ‘urbanism’ that constitutes a ‘way of life’ but also represent the ‘city as a fragmenting, rather than unifying place’ (Prato and Pardo 2013: 99). They reveal themselves to be different from the reality of ethnic enclaves or Chinatowns and could be seen as accommodating imagined communities of ‘own people’ with their ‘festive culture’ (Kopnina 2005) and ‘demotic discourses’ (Bauman 1997) as distinct features.

I shall explore the social spaces that have been created by the new Eastern European post-socialist immigrant urban dwellers in Chicago. By focusing on a mode of cultural citizenship that is based not on ‘culture’ as given realities but on social relations enacted in a transnational city where ‘urbanism’ is ‘a way of life’ (for a critical analysis see, e.g., Prato and Pardo 2013), we will see how the immigrant ‘right to be different’ (Rosaldo and Flores 1997: 57 in Bretell 2008: 123) is employed along with patterns of moral economy transplanted from overseas, as well as being learned through the performative dimension of membership in a dominant host society.

In order to provide more detailed examples of transnational belonging, I shall use mainly the case of Lithuanian migration. Being a small country of three million, since the mid-nineteenth century a fourth million have been settled outside the country, mainly in the USA, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. I shall deal with only two waves of out-migration, those who fled communism in the late 1940s, and economic migrants who left after the borders were opened following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

I shall use ethnographic materials obtained from fieldwork conducted in 2006 and 2013 in Chicago among Lithuanian and other Eastern European immigrants. As a field site, Chicago has the highest number of people of Lithuanian background outside Lithuania, as well as a very significant proportion of people with Polish and other Central or Eastern European backgrounds. The research was conducted in different contexts, encountering immigrants in their places of work, ethnic and inter-ethnic sporting activities, schools, restaurants and clubs, as well as in private parties and neighbourhood festivals.

### **Two Waves of Immigration: Refugees and Post-socialist Immigrants in Chicago**

A wave of flight and exile emigration from Eastern Europe occurred at the end of the Second World War, when Eastern European refugees, especially from the Baltic States and Ukraine, fled to the West from the Soviet-supported communist regimes and became concentrated in Displaced Persons (henceforth, DP) camps, mostly in the American and British occupation zones in Western Germany. Many of them were later given permission to move to the USA, Canada, Britain, Australia and other countries. Of about 70,000 Lithuanians from the DP camps (so-called ‘DPs’), at least 30,000 settled in the USA, primarily in cities in the East and Midwest, as a result of the Displaced Persons Act passed by Congress in 1948 (Public Law 774) (Kucas 1975: 287). The Act authorised the admission of 205,000 refugees to the USA.

These immigrants included many middle-class professionals who hoped to return to Lithuania at some point in the future and who ‘fought hard to advance the Lithuanian cause and established (the) entire nation of Lithuania-in-exile, with its government in Washington, D.C., and all the necessary institutions’ (Zemaitis 2015). The fact that the USA never recognised the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States was the major reason for the emergence of an identity

politics based on ‘long-distance nationalism’ (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001) that was supported by the majority of this wave of emigration.

This homeland nationalism was founded and supported by many public and political organisations, significantly increasing the number of ethnic schools, media and cultural institutions in the diaspora. The Lithuanian World Community (WLC), established by the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania in Hanau, Germany, in 1949, and the Lithuanian-American Community (LAC), founded in 1951 as its US branch, became an umbrella organisation for all Lithuanians in the diaspora, who were urged to follow the principles set out in its ‘constitution’, principles of ‘Lithuanian-ness’ inscribed in the *Lithuanian Charter*. The *Lithuanian Charter* served as a kind of moral constitution for those in exile and other members of the diaspora, urging every Lithuanian ‘to preserve the existence of the Lithuanian nation’ and to promulgate its cultural heritage, language and traditions for future generations (Lithuanian Charter 2014). The Charter generated a nationalist imperative that was enforced as a ‘moral duty’ on those who ‘were lucky in a situation where others were not’, as most of these Lithuanian immigrants had lost their relatives and friends in the Soviet deportations to Siberia during the 1940s and early 1950s (Budreckis 1982: 198).

It was the aim of these organisations to create an alternative to the Soviet representation of Lithuanian culture. One such project that was sponsored by the LAC was Danute Brazyte Bindokiene’s textbook ‘Lithuanian Customs and Traditions’ (Brazyte-Bindokiene 1989), which presented an essentialist codification of ‘proper Lithuanian-ness’. In fact, such a code had already been forged through the experience of life in the DP camps in post-war Germany. This was an exercise in living in a society without really being part of it, and it served as a model to help immigrants settling in the USA in the late 1940s and early 1950s to cope with the politics of the American ‘melting pot’ by re-establishing their ethnic (or ethno-nationalist) code of cultural citizenship (Baskauskas 1981, 1985). This code of ‘proper Lithuanian-ness’ was also used to oppose and ignore Soviet projects purporting to represent Lithuanian culture (Senn 2005).

The more recent wave of economic migration by Eastern European post-socialist immigrants started to arrive in the USA in the late 1980s, right after the fall of the Berlin Wall, of whom it is estimated that 30,000 were Lithuanians, about half of whom settled in Chicago. Here they began to create their own ethnic schools, newspapers (even a TV station), sports clubs (the Lithuanian Basketball League with fifteen teams), ethnic enterprises and even business clubs (Rotary Club of Chicagoland Lithuanians).

Even though recent immigrants draw on the Lithuanian language and the Catholic Church as their main sources of Lithuanian identity and attend ethnic institutions, gatherings and cultural practices, their sense of belonging is full of frustration and uncertainty (Ciubrinskas 2011). In their case attempts to retain their Lithuanian culture and heritage are being undermined by strategies for coping with the risks of marginalisation, and even with their illegal status (Liubiniene 2009: 19), as quite a number overstayed their visas in the late 1980s and early 1990s and eventually had to apply for naturalisation.

It is notable that the post-socialist immigrants used to share experiences of their homelands that are related to their totalitarian (Soviet) past while also being eager to equip their

social capital with learned models of social networking practiced specifically in the informal economy. All this plays a significant role in their distancing themselves from the rest of the East European diaspora, established in the USA as far back as the nineteenth century, and especially from those who belonged to the wave of forced migration as DPs. From the perspective of the conservative DPs, recent immigrants are ‘different Lithuanians’, sometimes called ‘new Lithuanians’ who are marked by a ‘lack of Lithuanian culture’, having been ‘contaminated’ through exposure to ‘communist culture’. In this case their framework of cultural citizenship seems to take the form of social bonds rather than cultural codes.

Thus, the last wave of immigrants differs from earlier ones because of its culturally important strategies of social conduct, which turn into cultural citizenship (Olwig 2003). This goes beyond the usually assumed framework of ‘cultural resources’ in terms of language, religion, customs and traditions. What are these differences? These might be brought from the homeland, but they also might be constructed in the host society, like the ‘moral constitution’ of DPs in the *Lithuanian Charter*. What are the markers of ‘difference’ that distinguish the new Chicagoans from Eastern European from earlier immigrants?

### **Markers of ‘Difference’ of the New Chicagoans**

Following Rosaldo and Flores (1997), immigrant cultural citizenship can be understood as recognizing the ‘right to be different’. In the present case, strategies of ‘difference’ in social conduct are marked with respect to the exploitation of the moral economy and social capital.

First of all, there is a difference in the ways in which recent immigrants imagine ‘home’ and construct a ‘politics of the homeland’ as the empowerment of ‘home’. For example, for forced migrants the idea of a ‘home’ in the diaspora is usually elevated to the status of an ideal place and is enacted as symbolic resource of resistance to assimilation, often forged in diasporic nationalism. For the more recent Lithuanian immigrants, ‘home’ is constructed as an ‘own space’ (Liubiniene 2009), which are seen as transnational networks of the circles of ‘one’s own people’ constructed by using kinship, neighbourhood, friendship and co-workers ties. Such social networks are enacted in the everyday lives of migrants by using social bonds, social remittances and social capital remitted from the former socialist Central and East European region, a perfect example of social space.

This serves as a good example of how cultural citizenship is constructed in a host country. For the earlier diaspora, so-called ‘refugees from communism’, the main strategy was ‘to stay Lithuanian everywhere and forever’ (Kucas 1975). Already in the DP camps in Germany at the very end of the Second World War, Lithuanians began to forge the moral imagination that would inform the dominant narrative of ‘how to be a Lithuanian in the free world’ and ‘ever ready for homecoming’ (Van Rennan 1990: 103). This resistance to assimilation rested on the principles of ethnic endogamy and ethnic enculturation — ‘learning to be Lithuanian’. Such identity politics can be understood as providing a ‘generic cultural identity’ (Friedman 1996: 72-73) based on and fuelled by a transmittable living heritage that includes each person as a ‘link in the chain’ and in which culture must be learned, retained and transmitted to the next generation.

This generic and ‘learned’ DP identity has been sustained by homeland nationalism and cultural citizenship in a way that is relatively free from territorial and legal bounded-ness (Levitt

and Glick-Schiller 2004: 1020). It could therefore be compared with the cultural citizenship of the post-socialist wave of economic migration, which is also relatively free from territorial and legal bounded-ness, though nonetheless the differences between these two waves of immigrants are clear. The first wave draws heavily on ethnicity to construct an ethno-cultural citizenship, which the second wave achieves by exploring inter-ethnic ties.

Thus, the second ‘difference’ concerning the more recent post-socialist immigrants is in the use they make of ethnic boundaries, which they use to transcend ethnic lines much more easily compared with the DPs, who shared their traumatic experiences of exile with the other Baltic refugees from Latvia and Estonia almost alone. Recent Lithuanian immigrants easily join the same networks with the other immigrants from almost the whole of post-socialist Eastern Europe, especially with Russian-speaking former Soviet Union countrymen (for example, Ukrainians), or with Poles by using Russian as a *lingua franca* and/or sharing mutually comprehensible discourses, rules of conduct, moral norms and even senses of humour. Such social networks are created as networks of ‘one’s own people’ on the basis of shared experiences of and statuses in the country of origin. These are used especially by undocumented immigrants (those who overstayed their tourist visas prior to the waiving of visas in 2009), who feel marginalised due to their unskilled jobs and usually very limited command of English. Those who count as ‘one’s own people’ usually have strong ties with friends and relatives left behind in the home country. Many move between Lithuania and the USA, running businesses in both.

The third ‘difference’ is in how the notion of belonging is constructed. Instead of enacting the usual diasporic forms of ethnic identity and homeland nationalism, recent immigrants construct a new East European togetherness which is their own out of the shared social space they feel they belong to as ‘Europeans’. Post-socialist Lithuanian immigrants in most of Chicago’s working environments share similar positions with the other immigrants from Eastern Europe. Thus, when they enter into friendships and friendship-based networks, especially with co-workers, they are creating inter-ethnic alliances in local Chicagoan and supra-local transatlantic contexts and environments as ‘Europeans’, not as Euro-Americans. In responding to the question of who they make friends with in Chicago, my informants mainly answered that they are friends with ‘Lithuanians and Europeans but not with Americans’. It is interesting that Euro-Americans and immigrants from Western Europe are not considered ‘European’, only those from Eastern Europe:

*Friends from Europe, mostly Lithuanians, but there are also Poles, zero Americans.*

(Simona, 25 years old, studies and works in a Lithuanian-owned company);

*Friends — Russians, Lithuanians, Poles, because we are different [to compare with those mentioned], we dress differently, we eat different food, we talk differently, we have different jokes. We used to celebrate birthdays together...and also Christmas.*

Thus, significant numbers of post-socialist Lithuanian labour immigrants in Chicago transcend ethnic boundaries and easily enter social networks with immigrants from other post-socialist Eastern European countries, especially Poles, Ukrainians and Russians. They do this by entering the same ‘one’s own people’ circles, using a mixture of Russian, English and Polish

as a *lingua franca*, sharing work places, and usually having strong relations with their friends and relatives back in their home countries. They share social spaces and a certain ‘common culture’, leisure time activities (for example, sharing Russian movies on rent in most Lithuanian shops), patterns of consumption (shopping in the same Polish and Lithuanian or Russian shops), festive cultures and even senses of humour. They are also used to advertisements, other information and discourses coming the local Eastern European media (newspapers, radio channels) in all three languages, namely Lithuanian, Polish and Russian. Many visit Russian restaurants in the northern part of Chicago dressed in a white outfit.

As we saw in discussing post-socialist immigrants’ images of ‘home’, their framework of identity compared with that of the earlier wave of immigration is different. This comes especially from practices of moral economy and common culture.

### **Rules of Conduct as Common Culture and Comfort Zones**

The America to which post-socialist Lithuanians migrated was a different America than for the previous wave. It was a multicultural America, where cultural diversity was welcome. In this case, therefore, American multiculturalism, which replaced the ‘melting pot’ ideology in the late 1960s, could be a good platform for understanding the immigrant politics of culture and changing forms of cultural citizenship.

As discussed already, the cultural citizenship of the new post-socialist wave of immigrants to the USA is different from that of the previous wave of immigration, which was based on their non-assimilationist homeland nationalism and patterns of ethnic culture. The recent wave adheres to ways of social conduct and ‘culturalism’ inherited from socialism. These take the form of social remittances brought from overseas and ready to be used in the USA as social capital and shared culture in the form of multiculturalist or inter-cultural ‘culturalism’.

Let me reiterate that ‘New’ Chicagoans easily do transcend ethnic boundaries to enter common social networks where Lithuanians, Poles, Ukrainians and Russians get together in the same ‘one’s own people’ circles, using a mixture of Russian, English and Polish language as a *lingua franca*, sharing work places, and usually having strong relations with their friends and relatives left in their home countries. They also share a certain ‘common culture’.

The most resilient ties among these Eastern European immigrants are those established through their work places, usually by being employed in construction, transportation, dispatch, car repair, office cleaning, public food service, cosmetology and care of the elderly. Some of them are even employed in providing legal and medical services or by working in insurance agencies. It is important to note that their work places and positions are often used as social resources by enacting aforementioned social remittances, transplanted from the overseas modes of ‘spinning around’ as focal rules of conduct. This is evident in the manipulation of employment and incomes (usually both legal and illegal), information about profitable jobs, the provision of work orders and clients, tips on how to organise ‘shadow’ financial accounting (‘black accounting’) and so on. Thus workplaces, especially those where many or most employees are of immigrant East-European background, become important arenas for the creation of a new social space. These social spaces are fuelled by the experience and knowledge of practices of informal economy transplanted from the homeland.

The accumulation of such practices of the informal economic sector, based on systems of reciprocity through networking with ‘friends of friends’, became very well established under the former socialist system as a way of managing the interpersonal bonds of trust through which individuals solved their daily living problems (in particular in these economies of shortage) by obtaining resources in the form of a ‘reciprocity of favours’ or *blat*.<sup>2</sup>

My fieldwork in Chicago shows that in Chicago such ‘bonds of trust’ appear to be enacted in the form of social remittances from overseas. This exploits friendships and acquaintances among post-socialist immigrants in order to achieve a public good by prioritizing and privileging ‘your own’ people; that is, relatives, neighbours, colleagues, friends, and so on. This moral economy is exploited to provide useful contacts to help in skirting red tape and other barriers, as well as in providing illegal help or assistance to obtain a good job. Thus, it is not so much a matter of economic need but of socially important cultural habits (Kopnina 2005: 138). According to Kopnina, this kind of informal economy still exists in post-Soviet Russia, and emigrants are inclined to use it:

‘When Russians arrive in Britain or the Netherlands, they are initially inclined to use these informal methods for obtaining legal status, education and medical care, or housing and employment. The experience of living in a Western country, however, often proves that these informal methods are ineffective, especially when long-term provisions, like legal status or professional employment are sought. Still, some of these informal methods prove useful in providing the migrants with ... benefits like social support, short term housing and employment. [...] it may offer emotional support [especially to] senior citizens or spouses of Western nationals. These informal support channels are not necessary exclusively Russian, and also facilitate integration into the receiving country. [...] social relations and the informal economy are culturally important to Russian migrants’ (ibid.: 130-1).

Thus the ‘reciprocity of favours’, as a core part of the informal economy and as a common culture, serves as a model of East European friendship and loyalty, which becomes a communalizing force for immigrants from the region. Understanding cultural citizenship implies understanding ‘cultural loyalties’. In the present case this means loyalty to rules of conduct transferred from overseas, a common culture and loyalties to ‘one’s own people’s’ culture in ‘own spaces’ created as comfort zones that serve as a substitute for the homeland.

In many ways such loyalties and identities used to extend beyond the homeland or national belonging to the state(s), but also to adhere to the circles of *one’s own people* in newly created *own spaces*.

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<sup>2</sup> *Blat* is a moral economy of favours typical for the socialist Eastern Europe which has survived into post-socialism. According to Alena Ledeneva, ‘*blat* is a reciprocal relationship [...] [it] is about using informal contacts, based on mutual sympathy and trust – that is using friends, acquaintances, occasional contacts’ (1998: 33-34). It is a particular form of exchange which involves ‘relationships and not merely goods. It is as gift exchange, received favour is never equivalent to that which the recipient can provide in return’ (ibid.: 35). It is a morally charged exchange of favours, and as Ledeneva puts it, favours are ‘perceived as “sharing”, “helping out”, “friendly support”, “mutual care”, etc.’ (ibid.: 35).

### **Social Networking as Social Spaces for ‘Own People’**

Migration is rarely individual. Although individuals do move, they actually move as members of a family network. Most of my informants who came to the USA actually joined ‘their own people’ — their circles of family, friends, and so on, which gave them a ‘safe vantage point’ that served as a background for transnational relationality, for maintaining and prolonging family and kinship networks, and for establishing new social spaces in the form of new families, friendship, and co-workers’ networks of ‘friends of friends’.

What kinds of trust have East European immigrants built among themselves through these networks, characterised by ‘joining their own people’? This is a kind of bonding, but it does not necessarily involve the construction of familial or patrimonial spaces or building ethnic niches for co-ethnics only.

Ties of family and kinship make ‘own people’ networks the most visible. They are used to produce translocality in the form of translocal networking which binds at least the two locations, in our case Chicago and Lithuania. These networks embrace an extensive field of relations and of moral and cultural values that are significant to those on both sides of the Atlantic, despite their living under rather different social and economic circumstances. This involves maintaining patrimonial properties, running family businesses, bringing up and educating the younger generations and taking care of the elderly. For those who stay in such networks, migration is not usually considered to be a very significant move in their lives as family members. Very few family members who moved abroad describe themselves as migrants per se. Migration is usually considered to be a matter of joining the family (especially among the younger generation), earning a better income or obtaining a better education, and it is generally considered to be a way of helping those left at home. This motivation was the most frequently encountered in my research and is common among those starting a family business in the host country. If this business prospers, family members and relatives from the country of origin will be invited to come and join them. The ethnic Lithuanian catering chain in Chicago, ‘Grand Dukes’, is the best example of this phenomenon.

Practising social networking through the circles of ‘one’s own people’ apart from ties of family and kinship is no less an important marker of an immigrant life-style trajectory. In our case it means building ties of mutual trust, rules of conduct and friendship, but also of loyalty to the network itself formed of ‘one’s own people’. Togetherness in the host country is created within a fragmented social space.

‘Own people’ circles become social spaces that maintain trust beyond patrimonial ties in order to retain patterns of reciprocity and moral economy transplanted from overseas. These social spaces, especially during the first months or year of immigration, also are used as adaptive strategies for the subsistence of newcomers and could be situated as ethnic niches where strategies of the ethnicization of immigrants prevail (Ciubrinskas 2009). Eventually these spaces for networking become primary arenas of social identity used for creating in groups of ‘friends of friends’, which includes sharing a *lingua franca*, a festive culture, gossip and life-styles. This is a way of winning of social prestige by knowing how to ‘spin around’ by being involved in extensive and reciprocal use of social networks of ‘friends of friends’ and co-workers.

## Social Spaces as ‘Comfort Zones’ Against Marginalisation

New social spaces are built using bridging ties as a sort of ‘comfort zone’ of social security, confronting marginalisation and creating alternatives to the structural and channelled multiculturalism so well described by Gerd Baumann for the South Asian neighbourhood of Southall in London (Baumann 1997).

In our case social spaces of ‘own people’ are created by using bridging ties on the basis of the shared status of immigrants, who usually find themselves in circumstances of frustration, uncertainty and precarity. In fact, though, the uncertainty is actually pronounced on both sides of the ocean, in their lives, in the USA, and also in the lives of their relatives and friends in Lithuania. Such uncertainty prompts strategies of survival and career-building. These strategies do not necessarily exploit ethnicity, as was the case with the immigrants of earlier periods. The expectations and attitudes of Eastern European immigrants in places of employment in Chicago are not only conditioned by their marginal immigrant status, but also by their social capital and experience of how to manage with limited resources, by their not knowing enough English, and for some of them by their lack of ‘fully documented’ status; that is, carrying just a USA-issued driving license instead of proper identification papers. Actually my ethnographic research revealed tax evasion and exchanges of services by concealing various infringements of regulations; for example, I was told of a long-haul truck-driver’s job that required two drivers, though it was actually done by one driver who worked overtime and used to drive day and night from Chicago to California and back.

Some immigrants are still ‘without papers’, in particular those who overstayed their tourist visas before 2009, when the visa requirement was waived. In order to make a living they initially settled in ethnic neighbourhoods by staying in the basements of the earlier diaspora Lithuanians’ homes, taking any job where a command of Russian was enough if one could use it as *lingua franca* with other co-workers who were immigrants from Eastern Europe, especially with Russian-speakers from the former Soviet Union, but also Poles.

Most of those who enter ‘comfort zones’ of security against marginalisation end up in a working relationship with employers or managers from ex-socialist Eastern European countries. This marks a new social space, a ‘comfort zone’ for the new East European job market in Chicago.

These spaces are ones of high expectations on the part of immigrants. They are usually eager to receive abundant, quick and non-taxable incomes by choosing to take work based on the size of the pay packet, not by taking into account whether the income will be earned by paying taxes (as well as providing benefits out of it) or not. As the head of one Lithuanian-owned company in Chicago said:

‘When an American comes to us looking for a job he asks what benefits he will get; when a Lithuanian or a Russian comes, all he wants to know is how much wages we will pay.’

In many ways the East European immigrant legacy of the former socialist life-style and life-ways works as an adaptive strategy that confronts the ethnic communalism of the older diaspora through the cross-cutting ties of inter-ethnic networks. This is clearly seen through the

discursive practices or ‘demotic discourses’ (Baumann 1997) of inter-ethnic networks of Eastern European immigrants in multicultural Chicago. This is how labour migrants (including the ‘brain-drain’ immigrants who started to come to Chicago slightly later) of Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Russian or Polish backgrounds are recreating the region by using Russian as a *lingua franca* and by sharing work places and media. This also helps to minimise the risks of marginalisation and allows some immigrants to deal more effectively with issues related to their illegal status and/or to become established and create a ‘good life’ for themselves.

Such social spaces or ‘comfort zones’ of immigrant social security (if imagined) are producing a particular moral economy-based cultural citizenship by securing the ‘right to be different’, as well as by employing a type of adaptive strategy and loyalty towards the majoritarian society. However, this moral economy is encountered by another, a moral economy learned in the host society by learning social habits.

### **Social Habits of ‘Giving Back’ Learned in Host Society**

Social integration into a host society is usually seen as much less problematic for second-generation migrants. In the present case this is true despite the efforts of the DP wave to create a private space (ethnic family life-style) as a counterpart to a public one dominated by majoritarian Americanism. What is gained from the host country mainly comes from a second generation of immigrants socializing with their peers at school or college and learning institutionally promoted social habits. In addition, local codes of reciprocity, moral economy and rules of conduct are learned through interactions in everyday life and public performances of them (Kuznecoviene 2018).

Examples include informants who prove that ‘learning’ accompanied socialisation into the American middle-class lifestyle, with its norm of ‘giving back’ to others when you are (more) successful. This was mentioned by some of my informants, including Arunas:

‘If you’re successful in your career and have graduated from Harvard, as I have, you have an obligation to give back, to help, to support others... It is popular in America... alumni give a lot to their universities, for example, Harvard, my university, is a good example of this [...] State officials, even Obama, used to work in the public kitchen during Thanksgiving Day.’

According to my informants, however, the idea of supporting those in need was also part of the ‘American way of life’ (for example, collecting for people hit by disaster, or personal involvement in the work of charities). They emphasised that the social value of ‘charitable work’ was internalised through socialisation in secondary schools, through the mass media — in particular TV, and so on.

Cultural capital obtained by living in Chicago consisted of fluency in English, a service mentality, and ‘natural’ knowledge of the basic principles of democratic rules of conduct, as indicated by second-generation informant Laura: ‘It’s all there, but it’s never been taught to me, it’s just in me somehow’ (Herloff-Mortenson 1999: 85). Another informant, Ema, said, ‘By giving you are getting’. This attitude can be developed in some organisations, including ethnic ones, in particular in the *Rotary Club of Chicagoland Lithuanians*, which helps Lithuanian

children and hospitals acquire much needed medical equipment and sponsors many other charitable and philanthropic activities.

The idea of social habits being ‘learned’ in a host country contrasts considerably with the first generation of immigrants’ rules of conduct as expressed in the practice of the exchange of favours for private, sometimes illegal gains, being selfish and thirsty for quick incomes, and being keen to form a sort of parallel society oriented towards ‘own people’ networks and social spaces alone.

## **Conclusions**

New Eastern European urban dwellers in Chicago feel uncomfortable when they are addressed as immigrants. Rather, they prefer to associate themselves with those who ‘did not immigrate’ to the USA but just joined ‘their own people’. Thus, new social spaces in the USA are built on ties of intimacy, and all kinds of bonds used to create ‘comfort zones’ employ social remittances transplanted from overseas.

Translocally lived immigrant worlds are marked by a continuous quest for the recognition of a collectivity’s distinctiveness and difference, which is usually met by the normative legal institutionalisation required to obtain citizenship status. On the other hand, international labour migrants and refugees are highly motivated in getting their cultural distinctiveness recognised and valorised. They therefore claim ownership of their cultural heritage practices and identities by constructing histories of their roots and by shaping their public and political practices of homeland, nationalism and cultural citizenship (Malkki 1992, Olwig and Hastrup 1997, Appadurai 1996, Krohn-Hansen 2003).

My research shows that cultural citizenship is enacted as a framework for recognition extending beyond legal boundaries, as well as through urban social space-making. Cultural citizenship is not a ‘culture’ of immigrants in the sense of heritage or ethnic culture. It is not even just the ‘right to difference’. It consists rather of social habits, rules of conduct, moral norms and loyalties, as well as social capital and social remittances brought from the homeland.

Cultural citizenship appears as a form of transnational belonging, in many ways being seen as de-territorialisation; that is, without formal citizenship agendas, and even without a definite urban setting in which to locate it.

In the present case post-socialist Eastern Europe immigrants’ ways of constructing their togetherness by creating social spaces is a good example of this transnational belonging. New immigrants used to create compartmentalised ‘life-style’ arenas that differed from ethnic enclaves and were open to inter-ethnic networking with other immigrants from the Eastern European region. In particular they create social spaces by sharing workplaces, being involved in inter-ethnic networking and creating their ‘own spaces’ as homes and as ‘comfort zones’ of security against marginalisation based on common socialist experiences, sensibilities and social remittances transplanted from overseas. Conversely, second-generation immigrants, those born in the USA who lack inherited social capital, are acquiring it by learning social habits through socialisation, life-styles and participation in American society. Eventually this creates the basis for the social culture of the first generation to be contested.

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