
*Lithuanians in Norway: Between 'Here' and 'There'*¹

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This article draws on findings from fieldwork on Lithuanian immigrants in Oslo. The main focus is on the construction of identity of immigrants from Lithuania in Norway using transnationalism as a theoretical approach. It is argued that immigrants' sense of belonging to Norway is influenced by the *Norwegian context* where the concept of *we* (Norwegians) is defined using ethnic categories, meanwhile *others* are seen as different in terms of their ethnicity. This context creates difficulties for Lithuanian migrants regarding integration in the Norwegian society. However, despite the fact they come from the Eastern Europe, the '*white race*' of Lithuanian migrants allows them to be less identifiable as immigrants, and think that their position in the hierarchical structure of migrants is superior compared to others. The fact that immigrants retain their Lithuanian citizenship illustrates the relationship of *transnational* nation with the state (although the migrants from Lithuania permanently reside in Norway, they remain part of Lithuania through maintaining their citizenship and continuous participation in the political life of Lithuania).

Key words: immigration, Norway, Lithuania, ethnicity, citizenship

*'Yes Sir we are legal we are,
though we are not as legal as you.
No Sir we're not equal no,
though we are both from the EU.
We build your homes and wash your dishes.
Keep you your hands all soft and clean.
But one of these days you'll realise
Eastern Europe is in your genes'*

(Excerpt from Lithuania's song for the 2010
Eurovision Song Contest in Oslo)

Lithuanian immigrants are a relatively new group in Norway. Research suggests that sporadic immigration of Lithuanians to Norway began and gradually gained momentum in the 1990s, with only a few isolated cases observed before that date (in sharp contrast with such historically popular destinations as the US and UK).² Norway is now Eastern European migrants' favourite Scandinavian destination (IMDi-rapport 2008: 77).

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² This discussion is based on two fieldworks conducted in 2008 (in Oslo and Halden) and 2012 (in Oslo). The survey from 16 March–13 April 2008 was conducted as part of a project called 'Retention of Lithuanian Identity under Conditions of Europeanisation and Globalisation: Patterns of Lithuanian-ness in Response to Identity Politics in Ireland, Norway, Spain, the UK and the US' (Scientific supervisor: Vytis Čiubrinskas; project funded by the Lithuanian National Science and Studies Foundation). A total of 25 Lithuanian immigrants living in Norway were surveyed during the research. The survey from 4 June–3

According to Norway's official statistics, 28,600 Lithuanians are currently based permanently in the country.³ This is the second-largest immigrant population from the new EU states after the Polish (77,000);⁴ third after the Swedes (35,600).⁵

In 2008, IMDi (*Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet*, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity) published a research report on immigrants from Poland and the Baltic states called 'Vi Bli'r' (We're Staying). This qualitative research was based on a sample of 1,013 respondents, 69% from Poland, 20% from Lithuania, 5% from Latvia and 6% from Estonia. This distribution reflected the immigrant proportions according to official statistics at the time. As the title suggests, one of the survey's key findings was that immigrants from these countries were planning a longer stay in Norway than was initially expected. The survey also identified problems with integration into Norwegian society, highlighting the existing divide between the dominant majority on the one hand and new immigrants on the other.

Using the above research as a starting point, this paper discusses issues involving Lithuanian integration into Norwegian society. There is a particular emphasis on Lithuanian immigrants' attitudes towards and relationships with the dominant Norwegian majority and other migrant groups. The present article also aims to provide a brief overview of immigrants' transnational practices, accentuating citizenship as a bond between the country of origin and the host country.

The problem: Integration and subsequent assimilation are (or used to be) understood as unavoidable stages of absorbing immigrants into a new society. In today's world we speak of immigrants' multi-stranded ties that encompass several countries, thus rejecting full integration and assimilation into the new society and remaining part of their country of origin. The discussion therefore addresses the question of how or whether immigrants integrate⁶ into a new society and at the same time remain part of their country of origin.

As an immigrant-receiving country, Norway is made interesting by the fact that, in contrast with other countries such as France, its nationals tend to construct their image of 'self' and 'other' via innate ethnic categories. This partly explains why immigrants struggle to integrate

July 2012 was conducted as part of a postdoctoral research project (the postdoctoral fellowship is being funded by the European Union Structural Funds project 'Postdoctoral Fellowship Implementation in Lithuania'). A total of 15 interviews were conducted. A criterion of a minimum 3 years' stay was set for survey participants, in order to eliminate seasonal immigrants and ensure that respondents had considerable experience of living abroad. These surveys sought to identify patterns that form migrant identity and the relationships of migrants to Norway and Lithuania.

³ Statistics Norway. Available at: <http://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvbfef>, accessed 15 August 2013.

⁴ See n. 3

⁵ See n. 3

⁶ The notion of 'integration' is employed in this paper in order to understand how immigrants are perceived by the dominant majority and other ethnic groups and how they themselves perceive their relationships with these groups.

into Norwegian society and why a fairly clear divide remains between the dominant majority and ethnically- and racially-defined minorities (immigrants). On the other hand, alongside integration processes within society, present-day migration is viewed in theoretical literature as a quantitatively and qualitatively new phenomenon. Multi-stranded ties created by contemporary migrants exceed the boundaries of a single state. Transnationalism holds that the aim of contemporary (im)migrants is not to integrate themselves into a new society, but to do the opposite by preserving and maintaining ties with their country of origin.

Immigrants, Migrants, Transmigrants and Deterritorialised Belonging.

Contemporary transnationalism⁷ studies are based on research which stresses that present-day migrants traverse the boundaries of one national state and simultaneously participate in several national realities (Coutin 2006: 326). The notion of immigrants previously embraced in social science circles was criticised by the transnationalism camp because it primarily referred to people who arrive in another country after abandoning ties with their country of origin, create a home in the new country and adapt to the society (Basch et al. 1994: 3-4). On the other hand, the migrant notion primarily refers to people who temporarily stay in a new country to earn money and then return home after a certain period of time (Basch et al. 1994: 4). In reality, however, both these notions proved ineffective for addressing contemporary migration processes. Present-day (im)migrants maintain ties, patterns of life and ideologies that traverse the boundaries of one or several states. The concept of the transmigrant entered the scene to describe (im)migrants who become part of a new society without abandoning ties with the previous one. This concept seeks to show that existing theories on migration, usually based on an evolutionary model that sees migrants as integrating into the new society and eventually becoming fully assimilated (see Brettell 2000, Eriksen 2007: 179), fail to explain how present-day (im)migrants are able to retain multi-stranded ties with several societies simultaneously against a backdrop of globalisation. This transmigrant concept stands in sharp contrast with the diaspora notion, which has hitherto been popular in the social science arena for describing ‘a permanent state of emergency, an unfulfilled need for rootedness, insularity [...] in an alien context and severed links’ (Eriksen 2007: 177-178). The concept of transnationalism refers, in contrast, to dynamic and changing identities, and, let me reiterate, to creative and selective integration in a host country while

⁷ This article does not endeavour to present an exhaustive analysis of the transnationalism paradigm and its evolution. In its broadest sense, here transnationalism is understood along the lines of the definition given by Basch *et al.*: ‘We define “transnationalism” as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasise that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders [...]. An essential element of transnationalism is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants’ sustain in both home and host societies’ (Basch et al. 1994: 7).

maintaining ties with the country of origin (Eriksen 2007: 178). In this context, transnationalism should be understood as the process by which migrants create social relations that link together their countries of origin and of settlement (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 1) According to Eriksen, contemporary (im)migrants to Europe have four options for joining or remaining outside the dominant society: (1) diasporic identification, whereby people consider themselves to be living in a foreign country and know very clearly what their own country is; 2) assimilation; 3) transnationalism, whereby the country is less important and loyalty to any particular country is uncertain and subject to change depending on the situation; and (4) creole or individualistic identification, whereby migrants forge their identities by mixing certain cultural aspects of their own with elements from the new environment (Eriksen 2007: 183).

The literature on transnationalism attaches considerable importance to various aspects of *detritorialization*. More precisely, it considers the ways in which people, politics and identities are *uprooted* from their local origins and embedded in new contexts affected by globalisation. It may seem that emigrants should be able to free themselves from their country of origin's hegemony after leaving because they are then outside the boundaries of the territorial state where they were born and grew up. However, the situation is rather different from the perspective of transnationalism theory. Despite staying in a new country, emigrants continue to feel as if they still live in their nation-state. It is doubtful whether such individuals identify themselves as transnationals, with their identities more likely to remain bound to their nation-state (Basch et al. 1994: 8). The concept of the transnational state enables us to talk about citizens who socially, politically and economically remain part of their country of origin despite living outside it or, more precisely, within another country's territory (Basch et al. 1994: 8). For this reason, the institution of citizenship is said to be undergoing all kinds of transformations and losing the certainty it once had. Although lack of space prevents a detailed discussion of this institution, it should be emphasised that the question of citizenship is of central importance in transnationalism theory (Castles and Davidson 2000; Vertovec 2009). The notion of post-national citizenship has recently gained widespread popularity (Soysal 1994). This concept is largely based on universal human rights rather than the rights ensured by a single nation-state and the attendant responsibilities. Other authors have discussed civil rights in the absence of formal citizenship in the host country (*denizenship*), which highlights the situation of transmigrants who retain citizenship in their country of origin but also enjoy most of their host country's social and economic rights and some political rights. Various theories also underscore the changed nature of citizenship, which transcends the territory of a single nation (Faist 2007, Baubök 2006, Kaplan 1999). A number of authors have recently suggested viewing citizenship not as a collection of formal rights and duties, but in a perspective that emphasises its social and cultural aspects (Sharma and Gupta 2006, Glick Schiller 2009, Glick Schiller and Caglar 2008). Rainer Baubök (2006: 27) defines transnational citizenship as presence and participation in several political systems. Nina Glick Schiller (2005) views citizenship from the perspective of being in or belonging to a transnational social field, which she defines as transborder citizenship. Such

citizenship is understood more broadly than a separation between citizens and non-citizens, with a grounding instead in the idea of cultural and social citizenship.⁸

Why Norway?

Why do Lithuanian emigrants choose Norway as a destination? At first glance, the answer might appear simple and straightforward, for Norway is one of the richest countries in the world. However, Lithuanian migrants paint a much more nuanced picture of their decisions which broad generalisations fail to explain. Although one Lithuanian interviewee simply picked a random spot on the map and bought a one-way ticket, for most the choice is much more complicated. For example, networks of migrant friends often influence migration decisions. The following excerpt from an interview of a 26-years-old female emigrant demonstrates the multifaceted nature of migration decisions:

‘I like it here. Before coming, I thought about culture, language and many other things. Take, for example, Norwegian and British culture: Norwegian culture is the much closer of the two to the Lithuanian culture’.

In what way?

‘For me personally, I mean. Norwegians eat potatoes and live in wooden cabins – in a word, they are farmers who all of a sudden turned rich after finding oil. Brits have a very deep culture, etc., and are different people in a way. Theirs is an ancient culture, a culture of stonework, and this is something very different. I just thought that I would feel better here because we would have more in common. And in general Scandinavians have more in common with the Baltic States than the British do. That’s what I think’.

And did this turn out to be the case?

‘Yes, absolutely. I mean when you talk to Brits, you feel the divide between yourself and them because they look at things differently, especially if you’re talking to those who were born there and received a good education. Someone whose past is rich in all respects simply looks differently at himself and others’.

This woman based her decision to migrate to Norway not so much on economic factors as on perceived cultural similarities between Norway and Lithuania. Many informants emphasised the ‘rustic aspects’ of Norwegian culture as something that the country shares with Lithuania. Another important reason is, of course, Norway’s image as one of the world’s richest countries, especially after the economic crisis reverberated across Europe. In 2012, I met people who came to Norway from countries, like Spain and the UK, that were more harshly affected by the crisis. They believed that Norway had suffered much less than other countries, as indicated in the

⁸ Cultural and social citizenship attempts to explain participation in a social field not by referring to formal citizenship rights and responsibilities, but rather by emphasising its non-formal aspects (see Glick Schiller 2005, Glick Schiller and Caglar 2008)

media. However, it is still hard to identify a rational explanation as to why so many Lithuanians have chosen Norway as their new home. In order to begin to answer this question, we must first consider the importance of social networks (one newcomer invites his or her friends, relatives, and so on) and the influence of the media on public opinion, particularly regarding information on the countries where most people go and the problems they encounter. Notably, in this respect, Norway became a destination for Lithuanian emigrants fairly recently. The country was not a major attraction for Lithuanians until a few years ago, with people usually choosing the UK and Spain.

Imagined Sameness: Norwegians and ‘Others’

Immigration trends and attitudes to immigrants are a little different in Norway from those in other Western European countries (Campbell 2007: 108). Norway has no history of colonialism and was not directly involved in the slave trade. The country was fairly isolated and homogenous over the last few centuries (Campbell 2007, Howell and Melhus 2007, Gullestad 2004). It was only in the 1960s that Norway, which now has a population of 4.5 million, began to see a significant rise in immigration from non-European countries. By 1980 immigrants accounted for 2 per cent of the country’s population and the proportion rose to 5 per cent by 1998, with almost half staying in Oslo (Gullestad 2002: 47). The number of immigrants increased to 12 per cent in 2013. Oslo still attracts many immigrants – 30.4 per cent of Oslo’s inhabitants are immigrants or have immigrant parents (189,400 out of a total population of 624,000).⁹

When considering ethnicity and nationality in the context of migration, Norwegian anthropologists conclude that holding a Norwegian passport (citizenship) is not sufficient to treat immigrants as belonging to Norway (Howell and Melhus 2007: 54). The question of what makes a Norwegian Norwegian is much broader than a formal condition of citizenship and encompasses ‘imagined sameness’ (Gullestad 2002), which refers to ‘the interaction style in which commonalities are emphasised, while differences are played down’ (Gullestad 2002: 47). This notion is based on ideas about locality, origin, belonging, language and identity, on which the ‘imagined moral community’ is constructed (Howell and Melhus 2007: 54). One can hardly speak of voluntarily belonging to the ‘imagined moral community’; this should rather be understood as the ‘unchosen’ (Khefif 2007: 2). This cannot be changed even by the fact that immigrants (in addition to having the country’s citizenship) adapt to social and cultural patterns during the many years they spend in Norway and feel part of its society. The attitude of those around them prevents immigrants from feeling part of the ‘imagined moral community’. The well-known Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad offers a vivid illustration of this attitude towards ‘the other’. In her article (Gullestad 2002), she described a situation in which a university professor was contacted by a woman whom he did not know and who asked him to

⁹ See *Statistics Norway*. Available at: <http://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvbef> - Accessed 15 August 2013.

explain the meaning of the notion ‘innvandrер’ (immigrant): She told him that she ‘had been born and brought up in India but had lived in Norway for many years’. According to the professor, ‘she spoke Norwegian well, but not perfectly’. ‘Now I have lived in Norway for a long time’, she told him, ‘I know Norway and have become a Norwegian citizen. Therefore I want to know if am I still an immigrant (innvandrер)’. ‘Yes’, answered the professor, on the basis of his lexical understanding of the problem, ‘You were born and bred in India, and this makes you an immigrant to Norway.’ The woman, who had apparently hoped to throw off this label, voiced her disappointment and posed a further question. ‘But for how long will I then continue to be an immigrant?’ ‘All your life,’ answered the professor. The conversation then reached its peak, as he later explained, in that the woman became angry. The professor, who is an amiable person, was sorry to disappoint her, but found that the meaning of this word in Norwegian did not allow him to do otherwise. In order both to explain his view and to comfort her, he therefore added: ‘This is the way it was for Norwegians who emigrated to America too. You just have to accept it.’ (Gullestad 2002: 49-50).

This example illustrates very well that ‘imagined sameness’ is based not on becoming, but on origin. This means that one is born Norwegian, that being Norwegian is not something that one becomes. The foreigner or immigrant category in Norway also has a racist guise. As Norway was relatively homogenous until the mid-20th century and intensive migration from non-European countries is a relatively new phenomenon, the appearance of people that look different was initially met with distrust (Howell and Melhus 2007: 54). On the other hand, the ‘foreigner’ category in Norway is understood not only through race. People from neighbouring Scandinavian countries are understood as being more ‘like us [Norwegians]’, just like people from Western Europe and North America; however, the question of the physical similarities with foreigners from Eastern European countries – their looks being, for example, much closer to Norwegians’ than those of African migrants – casts doubt on attempts to explain similarities and differences solely via categories of racial and sociocultural differences (Howell and Melhus 2007: 57).

‘The White Race’ and Belonging to the ‘Imagined Norwegian Community’

The new wave of migration from Central and Eastern Europe has engendered a debate on race. New immigrants are subject to discrimination and are not seen as equals in host societies, following the segregation model in place for immigrants with a different skin colour. But skin colour is of course not the decisive factor here because, as noted above, the immigrants under discussion here are generally white. Theoretical literature defines ‘whiteness’ as a culturally-constructed and privileged social position and as a power mechanism that is represented as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ (Herbert 2008: 34). On the other hand, it is usually clarified that this is not a universal resource in the hands of the whole white population, that it is processual and socially constructed (Herbert 2008: 34, McDowell 2007: 86). This means that although ‘whiteness’ is understood as a hegemonic characteristic in Europe, some ‘whites’, especially immigrants, may

be treated differently and assigned to, or segregated under a different category of 'whiteness' (McDowell 2007: 86).

It may seem that being white (as Lithuanian immigrants are) should facilitate integration into a new society or work as a power resource that leads to privileged positions in the economic and social sphere. Field research suggests, however, that the picture is far more complicated. On the one hand, whiteness is indeed used as a 'natural' and 'normal' power resource; on the other, further mechanisms are in place, such as segregation via culture.

Lithuanian immigrants have a more or less positive attitude towards the multicultural environment around them. This is especially true of the younger generation. Most people describe their experience of moving from a relatively homogenous environment to an environment with considerably greater cultural and racial variety as rewarding because it teaches tolerance. At the same time, however, they use being white as a resource that enables them to blend in with the dominant society and, thus, expect to be better positioned in the labour market. A 35-years-old female informant described her experience as follows:

Do you meet any obstacles solely due to being an immigrant?

'No, not really. Personally, I have never felt that it was harder for me to, say, get a job, nor was I discriminated against in any way at school. As Norwegians themselves say, whenever the topic crops up, 'you [Lithuanians] look like Norwegians; if your looks were different, perhaps matters would be different as well.'

What do they mean by 'looks'?

'Well, that our skin is white and no one suspects at first glance that we're not Norwegians. Due to my accent – as a matter of fact, both my accent and my surname – I'm often taken for a Finn. So it's not like 'oh, you must be from that second-rate country' – they don't suspect my origin until I tell them.

This example illustrates that whiteness is understood as a chance to avoid being socially identified as 'different' and be perceived as more of 'one's own kind' than migrants with a different skin colour. At the same time, cultural elements such as language and accent or a Lithuanian surname are not easily identifiable as 'distinctly Lithuanian' by the dominant majority, which allows our immigrants to blend in with other, more privileged, white migrants. On the other hand, 'whiteness' is not the only category involved in constructing social relations in a host country. A number of informants mentioned a European mentality or being European in general as important factors in drawing a line between the perception of 'own kind' and 'alien', or 'more of our own kind' and 'more alien'. The excerpt from an interview with 48-years-old man given below illustrates such a way of drawing boundaries, based on presumed differences between European and non-European mentalities.

With whom do you mostly interact? Among your neighbours, for example...

‘I get on with my Norwegian neighbours. There are many Pakistanis here – I don’t spend time with them. Yes, with Norwegian neighbours. Most of my friends are also Norwegians. Some are British, some Americans’.

Why are Pakistanis excluded?

‘No one really talks about it here, but everyone feels that there is a gap between mentalities – what is European is European. People talk to them as much as is necessary; no one talks about this divide because this would mean admitting racial discrimination. But the boundary exists’.

The European/non-European category is usually employed when talking about relationships between Lithuanian immigrants and other immigrants, usually from Asian or African countries. Several informants said that their preference for living further from these latter immigrants and closer to ‘true’ Norwegians was decisive in choosing the area of the city in which to rent or buy a house.¹⁰ During an interview with a 34-years-old male informant, I learned that he and his family live in a ‘Norwegian’ neighbourhood in Oslo and asked him to explain his choice: ‘Take juvenile delinquency, for example. It isn’t as low in this country as one might expect. You wouldn’t want your children to mix with them. They seem to me to be more of ... I wouldn’t say criminals, but that culture of theirs ... I wouldn’t like my children to be influenced by that culture. I want them to be Europeans’.

As the field research material show, Lithuanian immigrants participate in public discourse on migrants in Norway, which is marked by the aforementioned negativity towards immigrants. Although Lithuanian informants see themselves as immigrants, they look at themselves in a more positive light and as belonging more to the ‘Norwegian part of society’. At the same time, ‘other’ immigrants are viewed as a separate segment of society whose impact on the country is largely negative. The interview excerpt given below is indicative:

How do you see the society you live in?

‘Norway is mostly inhabited by Norwegians; there aren’t many foreigners here. There are more of them in Oslo, but here they are mostly Norwegians [...]. My private life is dominated by Norwegians and Lithuanians. So when it comes to the Chinese or Arabs, I practically don’t know them at all’.

Do you think of them as separate segments of society?

‘Yes. They are separate segments and their influence is huge in Norway – and that influence is negative, I think’.

¹⁰ Despite their willing to live in the ‘Norwegian’ areas of Oslo, immigrants from Lithuania don’t occupy any specific parts of the city, that is in a strong contrast from Lithuanians living in London where they have clear priorities in settling in the Eastern part of the city.

What do you mean by negative? Lithuanians are surely part of the same segment, aren't they?

'No no, Lithuanians are not. Lithuanians work; they are a labour force, whereas those others are refugees. Speaking of Pakistanis as a group, they were admitted into Norway in 1970s when the country needed labourers. There are lots of them now, and when you read about their lifestyle, about the ghettos they have created here, their unwillingness to integrate, the fact that forced marriage still exists among them and that they bring many Pakistanis into the country on the basis of family union... There has been research which showed that, in one way or another, on average one Pakistani brings into the country about a hundred more. They do that by means of family ties, etc. You also hear about them defrauding the country, evading taxes and denying equal rights to women; they keep them wrapped in burkas or whatever they're called' (Female, 49).

The supposed Europeanness and diligence of Lithuanians and their willingness more or less to integrate themselves into Norwegian society is contrasted with the unwillingness of 'other' immigrants to become an integral part of their new society. However, although Lithuanian immigrants understand themselves as Europeans, the idea of Europe is itself complex. As one informant pointed out, much depends on where one comes from in Europe:

'[...] the beginning was very tough here. When I talk to other Lithuanians and we share our experiences, it is clear that life is hard here. When I first came here, for example, Norwegians said very plainly to me that I was simply from the wrong part of Europe'.

What did they mean by that?

'Eastern Europe. If I were from Western Europe, things would be different. [...] if I were from Western Europe, all my exams would count and everything would be different. But as an Eastern European, I practically have no rights' (Female, 50).

An even more important obstacle that prevents Lithuanian immigrants from seeing themselves as equals with Norwegians is that being Norwegian is seen as an ethnic category. In other words, immigrants tend to differentiate between Norwegians and 'others' on the basis of ethnicity rather than citizenship:

Who do you consider to be Norwegians?

A Norwegian is a Norwegian – a true Norwegian, of Norwegian origin. When I talk about Norwegian men, I mean true Norwegians, not some Arabs.

But they have citizenship of the country.

So what? To me, citizenship is not nationality.

What exactly is the difference, in your opinion?

Arabs are simply different. This is plain immediately: I don't even ask about their citizenship – I see straightaway that they are not Norwegians, while Norwegians are usually true, pure Norwegians – those I refer to when I say they are Norwegians. (Female 49)

As the research findings show and as anthropologists who research Norwegian society suggest (see, for example, Gullestad 2002, 2004, 2005), the dominant nation (Norwegian nationals themselves) also differentiate between 'people of their own kind' and 'aliens' on the basis of ethnicity. Being white and European does not therefore eliminate the migrant tag, which is perceived as an obstacle to further integration into society.

(Trans)national Citizenship?

Most informants said they currently have Lithuanian citizenship and see no reason to change it to Norwegian, adding that they would do that if this were necessary on practical grounds. I also spoke with respondents who had claimed Norwegian citizenship. One argued that Norwegian citizenship is a must, otherwise you are much less likely to be treated equally. She said:

'I no longer felt second-rate, like some kind of alien entrant. I now feel I have just the same rights as you [Norwegians] do, even though I had them in the past as well; after all, everything that this new passport brings is, in effect, a right to participate in elections – that's the only difference. At least that's how things should be in theory. But to me personally this was something, you know... now I can demand things and now they cannot refuse me for any good reason. They cannot simply say 'oh, I am sorry; unfortunately this is for Norwegian citizens only'. In fourteen or fifteen years you receive more than enough shocks like this'. (Female, 32)

This woman also described the emotions she went through before receiving Norwegian citizenship and just after claiming it. She said. 'Well, I've always wanted it [a Norwegian passport], and I waited and waited... and perhaps I never really thought about what would happen when I got it. When I finally got it, I thought "I'll throw a huge party", just like the Norwegians do [laughs] – oh, for everybody!' Then, she described her feelings on the day she was granted citizenship:

'This was one the saddest days I've ever had, actually [...]. I don't know, at first it seemed like... like everything is just wrong about Norwegians [...] how did this happen?... I've always wanted to be a European. There is the EU, with Lithuania in it, and now I'm not really considered a European in that respect. And those Norwegians around here are drunkards and not very cultured at all. I was very angry. A wave of emotions came rushing over me and I couldn't help it. But then one of my friends, not a true Norwegian herself, told me to take it easy; "You'll gradually feel

better”, she said. “This is only a piece of paper”. And when she said that to me, I calmed down quite a bit. “That’s right”, I thought, “this is really only a piece of paper””.

Calling Norwegian citizenship (passport) a ‘piece of paper’ often contrasts with the emotional ties which informants attach to Lithuanian citizenship. A 40-years-old man remarked:

‘I for one will never waive my Lithuanian citizenship. If the Seimas legalises dual citizenship, then I’ll think again, but not in other circumstances. [...] When you change your passport, you just cut all those ancestral ties, as they say; all your bonds with Lithuania. This happens when you change your passport to a red Norwegian one’.

And you’d rather not do that?

‘No. No, stop kidding me. My mother is there and my sisters, all three of them; and everything else. [...] you dream at night, certain images appear and you remember something and feel shivers inside you. I can’t say anything like that about Norway yet’.

However, respondents indicated that Lithuanian and Norwegian citizenship can easily be swapped. A 40-years-old woman, for example, gave the following explanation for her decision to change from Lithuanian to Norwegian citizenship: ‘From a practical point of view, I’m much better off having this passport in every respect. [...] My only comfort is the fact that, as I found out, we can always reclaim our Lithuanian citizenship if we want or need it, or if change our minds. That’s because we meet all the relevant criteria’. She means that she will be able to reclaim Lithuanian citizenship under the criterion of Lithuanian origin (see Daukšas 2007), should she ever decide to waive Norwegian citizenship. In this respect, one can manipulate citizenship: it is not irreversible and can be strategically and rationally changed if deemed necessary. At the same time, citizenship is seen as a bond linking one with Lithuania and migrants do not hasten to waive it.

The picture becomes a little more complicated when we turn to the matter of children who grew up in Norway and identify themselves as Norwegians.¹¹ One such informant said that she is Norwegian, without a shadow of a doubt. She claimed Norwegian citizenship two years ago and when asked why, she said:

‘Because I wanted it. I don’t know – it just felt like a natural thing to do’.

¹¹ During the research, we spoke to three adults who grew up in Norway after leaving Lithuania at pre-school age and spending all their subsequent lives in Norway. One of the respondents clearly identified herself as a Norwegian, while the other two strongly consider themselves Lithuanians despite intending to claim Norwegian citizenship.

Was it just a wish or a necessity?

‘No, there was no necessity. Only a wish. I intend to live in Norway, so I saw no need to have a Lithuanian passport. I live here’ (Female, 20).

Migrants who grew up in Lithuania feel much more emotionally attached, not to citizenship as such but to their origin and nationality or other ‘innate’ elements. More precisely, they feel attached to something which, unlike citizenship, is irreplaceable. As a 29-years-old male informant said, ‘Born Lithuanian, you will never be a Brazilian. For example, I first came here when I was 25, and by the time I turned 25 I had surely become who I am. What I’m saying is that nobody is forsaking or abandoning anything – that’s not the point. The point is that life is stable and quiet here and therefore I live here. But this is not to say that you’re going to become a Norwegian’.

Only a very small proportion of immigrants with whom I talked have changed or plan to change their citizenship to Norwegian, even though most have the opportunity to do so (for example, they meet the formal criteria). This is probably explained by the fact that Lithuanians feel economically and socially secure in Norway and are satisfied with the rights they are granted there, which are close to the rights of citizens. At the same time, Lithuanian citizenship is perceived as an emotional bond linking migrants to Lithuania and they do not hasten to sever it, despite it being easily changeable. This is also confirmed by Norway’s official statistics: only 1 per cent of Lithuanian immigrants have Norwegian citizenship. According to *Statistics Norway*, this is the lowest figure among European states.¹²

Participation in (Trans)national Politics

As I we have seen, most Lithuanian immigrants in Norway have Lithuanian citizenship. This means that they have a right to participate in Lithuania’s elections; for example, by voting in the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Oslo. Lithuanians who legally work and live in Norway also have a right to participate in Norway’s municipal elections, the only restriction being that immigrants without Norwegian citizenship cannot vote in the national elections.

Field research indicates that Lithuanian immigrants are to some extent involved in transnational politics, participating in both Lithuanian and Norwegian elections. The following excerpt is indicative:

Do you vote?

‘Yes, I do’.

¹² Compare with 6.3 per cent for Polish, 8.3 per cent for Swedish and 12 per cent for German immigrants. (*Statistics Norway*: <http://www.ssb.no/en/innvbeif/tab-2012-04-26-07-en.html>; accessed: 15.10.2012).

Where?

‘We vote in both countries. We vote in Lithuanian elections in the embassy and we also have a right to vote in local elections here in Norway, so we vote here as well’.

(Female, 55)

We can therefore apply the notion of social citizenship when referring to Lithuanian migrants. This means that migrants can actively participate in elections in both their country of origin and their host country, due to formal citizenship (of Lithuania in this case) and rights granted by the host country (Norway). A situation in which someone can participate in politics in two countries is described by migrants as dual citizenship, although formally they only have Lithuanian citizenship. A 49-years-old woman said:

‘Every morning I browse through the main Lithuanian news sites, such as *Delfi* and *Lietuvos Rytas*, you know. I’m just interested in what is going on there and what has happened. I feel like a citizen in both countries’.

You’re really burning to know what is going on in Lithuania?

‘Yes, I want to know what’s happening in Lithuania. I care about everything that is taking place there and I often see, by the way, that I’m even better informed about its situation than people who live in Lithuania. When I’m in Lithuania, sometimes people start telling me that this and that happened and I reply that I already know everything!’

Migrants not only follow political events in Lithuania, but say that they also care about Norway’s political situation. As a 55-years-old female informant remarked, ‘The political situation also encompasses laws that have been passed, such as the pension law for example. This is important to us. Developments such as new and changed tax laws and changes to working arrangements directly affect us and our daily lives. So in effect we’re more interested in what’s happening here. But of course we also want things to improve in Lithuania too’.

Events in Norway are followed more often because migrants’ daily lives and future are affected by them, while news from Lithuania is only an area of interest that does not have a direct effect on their wellbeing. Migrants sometimes point out that Lithuania’s news matters to them because of relatives living there. On the other hand, an interest in news does not necessarily imply active participation in decision-making such as participation in elections. The following exchange with a 29-years-old man is exemplary:

Whose news matters more to you - Norway’s or Lithuania’s?

‘Lithuania’s’.

But you mentioned that you’re not going to return there?

‘No, I’m definitely not going back. But I’m curious’.

But shouldn't you be concerned more about what's happening here in Norway?

'Well, the truth is that nothing much happens here. Events take their calm course and that's all. There is no commotion here, while Lithuania is always a stormy sea'.

Do you go to vote?

'In Lithuania? No, not for many years now'.

What about local elections here?

'No, neither'.

Most respondents said they are not interested in political events in Lithuania because they believe changes are too rapid there and they find it difficult to stay up to date. 'I'll be honest with you', a 45-years-old female informant said, 'I'm not very interested in politics because it makes me sad to see what has recently been happening there. I'm trying not to think too much about it and not to burden my mind with it all. Things change very quickly there, as well as the people in power, and quarrels are very frequent'. She added that she does not follow Norwegian politics or participate in elections there either, as she does not think she knows enough or understands the country's political situation. 'Hell', she said, 'they should be able to elect their governments themselves without me, without my one vote'.

Calling Norwegians 'them' and saying that they can 'elect their governments themselves' says quite a lot about Lithuanian immigrants' attitudes towards actively participating in Norwegian political life: participation is reserved for 'them' because migrants feel they do not know enough about the country's political situation and are therefore reluctant to vote. Similar reasons are given for abstaining from politics in either country:

Do you ever vote at all?

No, I don't vote. I don't see anyone to give my vote to. If I use my vote in Lithuania, it may turn out for the worse: I may [unwittingly] vote for somebody like those in power now... (Male, 34)

This interview excerpt suggests that physical absence from the country of origin (Lithuania) and residence in the host country (Norway) creates a situation in which participation in the two countries' politics becomes a difficult task. This is primarily conditioned by migrants' physical absence from their country of origin; people perhaps feel that they are out of touch with the country's political situation and are therefore reluctant to participate in elections. Moreover, immigrants may not have managed completely to fathom the country's way of life. Therefore, they may not all feel they have a right to make decisions by voting, often leaving this to 'them' (local Norwegians).

Conclusions

Lithuanian immigrants are a relatively new group in Norway, though now one of the largest among migrants from new EU countries. There has been no historical tradition of migrating to this country in the past, in contrast with countries such as the US and UK. The immigration-

related attitudes of residents of the host country (Norwegians) that I have discussed in this article, – more precisely, the ‘imagined sameness’ between ‘people of their kind’ and ‘others’ – point to an ethnically-determined notion of ‘belonging’ among Norwegians. ‘Others’ are perceived as ethnically ‘different’. Such an ethnically-determined concept of Norwegian society results in integration difficulties for immigrants. However, being ‘white’ is used as a resource to blend in and thus be less easily identifiable as an immigrant or at least imagine being higher up on the social ladder, even if coming from Eastern Europe.

However, despite their desire to be treated and seen as equals in Norway, Lithuanian immigrants are reluctant to waive Lithuanian citizenship. There are some exceptions especially among children who grew up in Norway. However, as at the moment there are few such people, it is too early to draw any conclusions about this matter. Lithuanian citizenship is not seen as a practical necessity, but more as an emotional tie with Lithuania. As the examples that I have given suggest, a decision to change to Norwegian citizenship is often experienced as a personal drama. Alternatively, the whole notion of citizenship is rethought; citizenship is called ‘a piece of paper’ and bonds with Lithuania are constructed through ‘innate’ categories.

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