

**The Vague Feeling of Belonging  
of a Transcultural Generation.**

**An Ethnographic Study on Germans and their  
Descendants in Contemporary Helsinki, Finland.**

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## Abstract

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BREIER, DOROTHEA: *The Vague Feeling of Belonging of a Transcultural Generation. An Ethnographic Study on Germans and their Descendants in Contemporary Helsinki, Finland.*

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Our world has always been shaped by mobility: moving animals and people are crucial for life on earth. Despite this, the overall scale of people moving has changed significantly in the past centuries and decades. The field of migration studies has adapted to this and is no longer only about actual migrants and their seemingly permanent one-way movements. Instead, the perspective has widened and now includes various shades of mobility, both different movements as well as groups of people affected by it.

The study at hand provides an innovative approach and a still rather uncommon research setting. It focusses on Germans and their descendants in contemporary Helsinki and asks about the way they (de-)construct boundaries between German- and Finnish-ness, where they position themselves within such frameworks and what personal consequences could emerge from their background and a particular self-positioning. What makes this study novel, especially in contrast to most migration-related research, is that due to the long and intense connection between Finland and Germany the group in question is not regarded as problematic by the majority society. Therefore their way of positing and feeling

of belonging must be seen and interpreted in this specific light. Such a perspective complements the majority of migration studies that often emphasise questions concerning integration of and discrimination against perceived "exotic" and thus "problematic" migrants.

With the help of 32 qualitative, semi-structured interviews, the author shows how people with a German-Finnish horizon express their often rather vague feeling of (not-)belonging. Taking the interviewees' accounts as a point of departure, it became apparent that belongingness depends on many factors including time, place and social surrounding and that it could change several times in a person's life. The study examines when and how people draw on national categories, only to deconstruct and question them moments later, and furthermore, what impact on a person's life his/her self-identification could have.

By connecting the findings to the relevant literature and to topical issues and discussions, the aim of the study is to emphasise how important it is to see phenomena as part of the big picture, in this case, an intergenerational, societal and historic context. As people's experiences, emotions and behaviour are heavily influenced by such factors, their understanding becomes only possible when all dots are connected and seen as the inter-connected unit they in fact form.

**Keywords:** Mobility, Migration, Belonging, Transculturality, Transnationality, Hybridity, Super-diversity, Mobile mindset

## Acknowledgements

“You’re doing research on Germans in Finland? – Are there that many?!”

- This was the reaction I got numerous times after telling what my PhD project was about. Many people I met over recent years were wondering why anyone would study such a group – what “problem” should there be to solve here?

Now, after four years of doing research, I do know what makes my study meaningful – and I hope after reading this thesis you will agree with me. However, this understanding developed over time and certainly due to the input I got from others over the years. Since I would have never come this far without those people, I would now like to use this space to thank them.

First and foremost, I want to thank my supervisor Prof. Hanna Snellman (University of Helsinki), who supported my research from the first, vague ideas until today. Her advice and support went much further than the academic duty of a supervisor and I doubt that I will ever find the right words to express the gratefulness I feel towards her.

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In addition to these people, many others also contributed to the progress of my research, be it fellow Ph.D. students and scholars at the University of Helsinki,

or researchers I met at national and international conferences.

The fact that I could participate in academic conferences and workshops worldwide was only possible due to the travel grants I received from the University of Helsinki as well as from the Eino Jutikkala Foundation. The latter is to be thanked for enabling me to work and focus full-time on my research as they kindly provided me with scholarships for three years. Last but not least, I want to thank each of the thirty-two interviewees who gave me their time, trust and life stories. Their words form the very basis of my research; without them, this study would not exist.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Changing world, changing views

Looking into the history of the field of European ethnology it becomes apparent that even 100 years ago, at a time when the subject was already relatively established as an own, independent discipline, the idea of the concept of *culture* was significantly different than from what it is today. "Die Volksseele produziert nicht, sie reproduziert.", as Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer put it in the year 1903, while Hans Naumann used the term "gesunkenes Kulturgut" in 1921 to describe culture as something that sinks from a high-culture into folk-culture and gets imitated by it.<sup>1</sup>

Today the scholarly view is quite different from that: culture is usually regarded as something that is constantly shaped and created by each of us, no matter who someone is and what background he or she has. Once methodological nationalism, as Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller proclaimed it<sup>2</sup>, is left

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<sup>1</sup>See Bausinger, Hermann: Folklore und gesunkenes Kulturgut: [http://tobias-lib.uni-tuebingen.de/volltexte/2012/6072/pdf/Bausinger\\_Hermann\\_Folklore\\_und\\_gesunkenes\\_Kulturgut.pdf](http://tobias-lib.uni-tuebingen.de/volltexte/2012/6072/pdf/Bausinger_Hermann_Folklore_und_gesunkenes_Kulturgut.pdf) (accessed 02.04.2014).

<sup>2</sup>Glick Schiller, Nina; and Andreas Wimmer: "Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social science." In *Global networks* 2, no. 4 (October

aside, culture is not seen to be bound to political borders or specific places. It does not end at the frontier of a country, particularly not at a time when words like "globalisation" and "transnationalism" are on many people's lips. In discussions around migration, many different terms are in use; some are clearer than others, some are taken to be outdated. Further below I will give a brief overview of categories like culture, identity, multi-, inter- or transculturality - and if and how they are suitable for my study.

In common with others, Germans have had a long history of moving around, migrating and re-migrating. Living in Germany, one quite often hears of people starting a "new life" far from the place where they grew up. Popular TV channels have been broadcasting series like "Good-bye Deutschland" or "Auf und davon — mein Auslandstagebuch"<sup>3</sup>, based on an obvious interest of a large number of Germans eager to hear about the migration projects of others. At the moment of migration a "piece" of one's own culture moves with the migrant. This is not intended to imply a homogeneous national culture which one can carry around in a rucksack. However, migrants do not leave their habits and customs at the airport, but instead they take them to their new home. With the sometimes drastic change of surroundings, it often becomes a struggle to find one's spot in the new life. People negotiate their position, their connection to the old and the new home, and sometimes find interesting ways of how to live with both "worlds".

The lives of the descendants of migrants, their points of view, their ways of behaviour, their reflections and self-positioning are particularly things that have gained increased importance for today's societies. Despite the fact that migration is not a new phenomenon, nowadays it has reached a scale that was

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2002. 301-334.

<sup>3</sup>Both TV shows accompany individuals or families on their way abroad.

never there before. Thanks to technical innovations and global-political and economical developments over the past decades, increasing numbers of people are involved in transnational practices in one way or another, directly or indirectly. An increasing number of people now move voluntarily or are moved forcibly to other regions, countries, continents, and as the *International Organization for Migration* stated, with 214 million people migrants would be the fifth most populous country in the world if they formed a nation of their own.<sup>4</sup> In their new country of residence, migrants settle down and take part in local life, often leaving family and friends behind. Many found their own families, often with a local partner. For that reason, there are more and more people who might even officially have several nationalities, who were raised to be bi- or multilingual or at least were affected by different cultural frameworks. They are "children of our times": times in which it becomes increasingly normal to grow up in a multinational family, to go to an international school or to visit relatives abroad on vacation. In this context the aforementioned term "transnational" aims at describing precisely those "practices and relationships linking migrants and their children with their home country (...), also embodied in identities and social structures"<sup>5</sup>.

Compared to the lengthy and insecure forms of transnational communication in past centuries, it seems unbelievable how easy it has become for people to stay in touch, even if they live thousands of miles from each other. It would be simply ignorant to say that leading such lives does not affect culture in all its facets. However, migration does not only have influence on those who move from one country to the next, or only on their close families, but in the end it

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<sup>4</sup>See <http://www.iom.sk/en/about-migration/migration-in-the-world> (accessed 09.06.2016).

Also: Wilkes-Karraker, Meg (Ed.): *The Other People: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Migration*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, Robert Courtney: *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2006. 6 f.

affects the largest part of the world's population. In the present research project I will nonetheless try to lay out a more humble framework.

## 1.2 Previous research

Even though some works have been published, mainly on the historical connections between the areas currently known as Finland and Germany, there is not much to be found on the situation of Germans in contemporary Finland. Robert Schweitzer wrote numerous books on German-Finnish relations from a historical point of view<sup>6</sup> as well as on particular groups of Germans living in (former) Finnish territories<sup>7</sup>. Publications on the German Lutheran church<sup>8</sup> or linguistic-literary publications<sup>9</sup> can be regarded as similarly specific, while other works have focused on the cultural connections between Finland and Germany in the Middle Ages and the modern period<sup>10</sup>. In this context, a relatively recent publication by Annette Forsén, which deals with German associations in Finland of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, needs to be mentioned<sup>11</sup>.

Nonetheless, a few publications have examined today's Germans in Finland. Petra Schirrmann and Ulrike Richter-Vapaatalo for instance, interviewed German

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<sup>6</sup>Schweitzer, Robert: *Finnland, das Zarenreich und die Deutschen*. Lübeck: Aue-Stiftung, 2008.

<sup>7</sup>Id.: *Lübecker in Finnland*. Helsinki: Aue-Stiftung, 1991; as well as Id.: *Die Wiborger Deutschen*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Helsinki: Aue-Stiftung, 1993.

<sup>8</sup>Sentzke, Geert: *Deutsche Gemeinde Helsinki-Helsingfors, 1858-1971: Geschichte der ev.-luth. Gemeinde deutscher Sprache in Finnland*. Helsinki: Kirchenrat der Gemeinde Helsinki, 1972.

<sup>9</sup>Hall, Christopher; and Kirsi Pakkanen-Kiliä: *Deutsche Sprache, deutsche Kultur und finnisch-deutsche Beziehungen. Festschrift für Ahti Jäntti zum 65. Geburtstag*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2007.

<sup>10</sup>Ahti, Jäntti; and Marion Holtkamp (Eds.): *Finnisch-deutsche Kulturbeziehungen seit dem Mittelalter.: Vorträge des am Finnland-Institut in Deutschland, Berlin abgehaltenen Symposiums vom 17.-18. Mai 1996*. Berlin: Berlin Verlag Arno Spitz, 1998.

<sup>11</sup>Forsén, Annette: *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles: Tysk föreningsverksamhet i Finland och Sverige 1910-1950*. (PhD diss., University of Helsinki 2012).

women living in various places all over Finland and asked them about their reasons for moving there and their experiences<sup>12</sup>. Even though this was not intended to be scholarly research, those narrations present a kaleidoscope-like picture of the first generation of German migrants to come to Finland for different reasons.

Even though most of the above-mentioned publications have a historic approach towards the theme "Germans in Finland", globalisation and its effects are omnipresent and concern every state and each of its citizens to some extent. Therefore, it is crucial to look at the situation and the points of view of everyone involved, in this case people with a German or German-Finnish background living in Finland. In a time of spreading mobility questions regarding emotional uprooting and the way people negotiate their position *between or within* their interpretations of cultures gain urgency. This fact is also understood in disciplines like European ethnology, as it is reflected in an increasing number of publications on those matters.

These publications draw on certain assumptions and concepts which I will examine in the following chapter. For the moment, let me introduce some of the numerous works that were most inspirational for me and my research.

Especially in the beginning of qualitative research, it is advisable to look at other empirical studies on similar topics, to see how other scholars approached comparable fields of research. The most obvious choices here focussed on Germans abroad, for instance Uwe Schellenberger's dissertation on "Transmigration as a Lifestyle"<sup>13</sup>, which was closely related to Brigitte Bönisch-Brednichs

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<sup>12</sup>Schirrmann, Petra; and Ulrike Richter-Vapaatalo: *Deutschland meine Heimat. Finnland mein Zuhause: Lebensgeschichten deutscher Frauen im Finnland von heute.*, Grevenbroich: Heiner Labonde Verlag, 2014.

<sup>13</sup>Schellenberger, Uwe: *Transmigration als Lebensstil. Selbstbilder und Erfahrungswelten von Pendlern zwischen Deutschland und Neuseeland.* Münster: Waxmann, 2011.

work on Germans in New Zealand<sup>14</sup>. Others like David Johannes Berchem<sup>15</sup> contributed with reflections on concepts like ethnicity, identity, hybridity or transculturalism. Additionally, publications unrelated to the field of German migration proved to be useful by providing material that enabled comparisons and contrasts. Even if the group on which I have focussed for this dissertation and the whole setting was different, works by Harry Goulbourne on transnational families of Italian and Caribbean background in the U.K.<sup>16</sup> or by Susanne Wessendorf on the Italian "second-generation" in Switzerland<sup>17</sup> allowed me to contrast their results and conceptualisations with what I saw in my material. In my literature research it appeared that most of the publications on the descendants of former migrants included groups of people in their study that were often seen as "exotic foreigners" by the majority population, and thus had to face discrimination and inequality. For instance, German literature in migration studies focuses to a great extent on German-Turkish (young) people living in Germany and their struggles in life. However, Germans in Finland and especially their descendants do not really fit into this category of "problematised migrants". They do not stand out from their physical appearance, but blend in easily into *both* German *and* Finnish society and also their reasons for moving from one country to the other must be seen in a different light than that of economic or humanitarian need. If others recognise them as different after all, surely they do not label them as "migrants". This initial situation differs from most of the migration-related literature I read and it goes without saying that

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<sup>14</sup>Bönisch-Brednich, Brigitte: *Auswandern: Destination Neuseeland. Eine ethnographische Migrationsstudie*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Berlin: Mana-Verlag, 2002a.

Bönisch-Brednich, Brigitte: *Keeping a Low Profile: An Oral History of German Immigration to New Zealand*. Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2002b.

<sup>15</sup>Berchem, David Johannes: *Wanderer zwischen den Kulturen : Ethnizität deutscher Migranten in Australien zwischen Hybridität, Transkulturation und Identitätskohäsion*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011.

<sup>16</sup>Goulbourne, Harry: *Transnational families: ethnicities, identities, and social capital*. New York/London: Routledge, 2010.

<sup>17</sup>Wessendorf, Susanne: *Second-Generation Transnationalism and Roots Migration: Cross-Border Lives*. Farnham: Routledge, 2013.

the experiences of people with an "inconspicuous migrant background" most likely differ from those of someone who is more clearly marked and labelled as "the Other" by society. Even at this point, I wish to express my hope that more research will be done on less visible groups, as in future their number will most likely increase, while this does not necessarily equate to an understanding of their situation by the general public. Instead, what we still see, despite a growing mobility of people, is an adherence and maintenance of rigid ideas of exclusive national and ethnic groups - and it demands cautious and sensible research to help to deconstruct them.

It was in empirical studies like the ones above from which I got in touch with different theorisations and concepts. Here I saw how other researchers used, understood and criticised them. Before I reflect on the concepts which I consider to be crucial to my study, let me identify a selection of works I would recommend in order to gain a deeper understanding of the field.

Regarding issues of identity, identification and belonging, I deem Floya Anthias' work on "cultural diversity and social identities"<sup>18</sup> to be valuable. Also works by Franz Höllinger<sup>19</sup> and Daniela Ruhs<sup>20</sup> helped me to question my understanding of "identity". Concerning a critical view on national identification I want to point towards Rebecca Friedmann et al.<sup>21</sup>, and also Steven Dijkstra et al.<sup>22</sup>, whose elaborations made me reposition myself and my personal thoughts

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<sup>18</sup>Anthias, Floya: "Intersections and Translocations: New Paradigms for Thinking about Cultural Diversity and Social Identities." In *European Educational Research Journal* 10, no. 2 (2011). 204-217.

<sup>19</sup>Höllinger, Franz; and Markus Hadler (Ed.): *Crossing borders, shifting boundaries: national and transnational identities in Europe and beyond. Festschrift for Max Haller*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 2012.

<sup>20</sup>Ruhs, Daniela: *Duale Identität: Konsequenzen und Antezedenzen im Kontext gesellschaftlicher Partizipation*. Hamburg: Dr. Kovač, 2009.

<sup>21</sup>Friedman, Rebecca; and Markus Thiel: *European Identity and Culture: Narratives of Transnational Belonging*. Farnham: Routledge, 2012.

<sup>22</sup>Dijkstra, Steven; Karin Geuijen; and Arie De Ruijter: "Multiculturalism and social integration in Europe." In *International Political Science Review* 22 (2001). 55.

on such matters. Related to this are works on transculturality and transnationality, for instance Nina Glick Schiller's reflections<sup>23</sup> in which she suggests abandoning methodological nationalism when doing research. Also scholars like Helen Lee<sup>24</sup>, Alejandro Portes et al.<sup>25</sup> and Gertraud Marinelli-König<sup>26</sup> intend to deconstruct simplified pictures of homogeneous cultures by referring to trans-cultural realities. In this context, classics like Benedict Anderson's idea of imagined communities<sup>27</sup>, Homi Bhabha's view on hybridity<sup>28</sup> or Stephen Vertovec's definitions of super-diversity<sup>29</sup> need to be mentioned as well before I reflect on the concepts I used in the study at hand.

### 1.3 Concepts and terminology

For many years, discussions on migration-related topics have been referring to ideas of a distinct national identity and culture, multiculturalism and the picture of a cultural melting pot, respectively salad bowl. By now some of the concepts have been harshly criticised and avoided in scholarly debates for good reasons. However, even others that at first sight appear to be less outdated, also do not come without compunction. In the following passage I present concepts I decided to use for my research. For me this is not an easy task as terms like "culture", "generation", "German/Finnish" etc. might create pictures I do not necessarily want to create. Nonetheless I often found myself in the position in

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<sup>23</sup>Glick Schiller, Nina: "Transnationality, Migrants and Cities: A Comparative Approach." In Amelina, Anna et al.: *Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Research Methodologies for Cross-Border Studies*. New York/London: Routledge, 2012. 23-40.

<sup>24</sup>Lee, Helen: *Ties to the Homeland: Second Generation Transnationalism*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.

<sup>25</sup>Portes, Alejandro; and Josh DeWind (Eds.): *Rethinking Migration: New Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007.

<sup>26</sup>Marinelli-König, Gertraud; and Alexander Preisinger (Eds.): *Zwischenräume der Migration: Über die Entgrenzung von Kulturen und Identitäten*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2011.

<sup>27</sup>Anderson, Benedict: *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983/1991/2006.

<sup>28</sup>Bhabha, Homi: *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

<sup>29</sup>Vertovec, Stephen: "Super-diversity and its implications." In *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 6 (November 2007): 1024-1054.



which I felt like I *had to* use them to some extent: on the one hand they came into use while gathering my material, on the other hand a certain term at first sight may seem to deliver a message in a direct way - despite being aware of its possible implications in the very moment of using it. This basic problem is something I will try to deal with at several points of the thesis.

To clarify the critical use of certain terminologies I will now reflect on major concepts I drew on in my research, while others will be briefly defined in the particular context of the text. The concepts I deem to be essential in my work are *transculturality*, *hybridity* and *belonging*, however, the following discussion on terms and concepts will not exclusively deal with those.

In introducing the background to my research I already addressed the phenomenon of globalisation, and with this I refer to an ongoing process visible worldwide, in which goods, knowledge and people are becoming increasingly mobile. It needs to be stressed that this is not happening in a balanced way, but includes strong inequalities, as the percentage of migrants in different countries show: According to the *International Organization for Migration* the numbers of people with a migrant background can vary between 88% in the United Arab Emirates and 0.1% in Vietnam. Moreover, patterns of internal and external mobility worldwide show significant differences: regarding border-crossing migration "one out of every 35 persons was considered [to be] a migrant", while in fact every seventh person had moved within his/her country's borders.<sup>30</sup> Despite these facts, it is safe to say that on a general level, the lives of people become increasingly shaped by mobility. Even if they do not physically move themselves, their world is subject to constant, multifaceted influence from elsewhere and also from people in their direct surrounding moving away. As a

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<sup>30</sup><http://www.iom.sk/en/about-migration/migration-in-the-world>

(accessed 10.06.2016).

consequence of people's mobility, geographical and social coexistences become separated, which both defragments and creates connections between places<sup>31</sup>.

In this context, it is useful to mention Stephen Vertovec's idea of *super-diversity*<sup>32</sup>. As Vertovec observed concerning tendencies in British society, it can also be stated at a more general level that there has been a shift from big, well-organised groups of immigrants (in the case of the United Kingdom people from former Commonwealth countries) to a variety of people with numerous places of origin. As a consequence we find "new patterns of inequalities and prejudice", new ways of who to perceive as foreigners, new definitions of whiteness, "new patterns of segregation" and of "cosmopolitanism and creolisation"<sup>33</sup>. This is true not only for the U.K., but also for most parts of the world. In the case of Finland, it became a country of immigration rather than emigration only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today, the face of Helsinki and other cities in Finland is being shaped more and more by the great diversity of people from all over the globe.

The consequences of such super-diversity are also of importance when describing the group I focused on, that is more delicate than it first might seem for various reasons. One difficulty lies in the usage of the term "generation" as this implies a more or less homogeneous group of people with a similar background. Despite this, the participants in my study are far from this research setting. As for the main group of my interest, the descendants of Germans in Helsinki, I consciously decided not to use the concept of a "second generation" as this term tends to be rather imprecise and in the case of some of my discussion partners

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<sup>31</sup>Drechsel, Paul; Bettina Schmidt; and Bernhard Götz: *Kultur im Zeitalter d. Globalisierung: Von Identität zu Differenz*. Frankfurt a. M.: IKO - Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2000. 145.

<sup>32</sup>Vertovec 2007. 1024-1054.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. 1045 f.

simply false. Their family constellations were multifaceted, and could include (adult) children of German couples, as long as they had spent most of their years of socialisation (from age six onwards<sup>34</sup>) in Finland, as well as (adult) children of mixed German-Finnish couples, regardless of whether they had been raised in Finland or Germany, as long as they were living in Finland at the time of the interviews. Also, their age and the time when they moved to Finland varied, depending on the constellation. For the purpose of this dissertation, I have referred to them as the "descendant generation". The reason for doing so lies in the unifying moment of having some German-Finnish background that is related to some of their parents or ancestors having been migrants.

For the sake of simplicity, however, I have used the term "first generation migrant" when referring to Germans who did not have a previous family connection to Finland, who grew up in Germany, but moved for various reasons to Finland. Nonetheless, it needs to be stressed that this group is by no means homogeneous, as they came to Finland at different moments of the past. Of course, timing could have a severe impact on their experiences and explanations. Drawing on Lotta Weckström's idea of defining "generations" by key-experiences<sup>35</sup>, their unifying aspect is having migrated from Germany to Finland without having had any Finnish relatives on their own.

Having the ideas of super-diversity in mind, it is worth reflecting on the idea of culture in connection to transculturality. Even in the 1940s, Fernando Ortiz "coined the term transculturalism in his study 'Cuban counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar' (1940)" when describing the occurrence of "uprooting and deculturation" through "transformative local processes" going on in Cuba.<sup>36</sup> It took about

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<sup>34</sup>See Lee 2008. 7.

<sup>35</sup>Weckström, Lotta: *Representations of Finnishness in Sweden*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2011. 115.

<sup>36</sup>Čeginskas, Viktorija L.A.: *Exploring Multicultural Belonging: Individuals across cultures, languages and places*. Turku: ANNALES UNIVERSITATIS TURKUENSIS, 2015. 30.

fifty years until Wolfgang Welsch re-interpreted this expression, taking Johann Gottfried Herder's (1744-1803) definition of culture as a starting point. Herder stated that every nation has a centre, just like a billiard ball has. Using this comparison, he implies that cultures are made from homogeneous material. At the same time, this implies a clear distinction from other cultures: those billiard balls can only repel each other, but never interfuse. However, what Welsch himself saw was a mixing of cultures; therefore he claimed the existence of nets and meshes instead of cultural billiard balls. According to him, and widely agreed upon, even within a "billiard ball" you will find diversity, subcultures, layers - and those lifestyles *do* cross borders. Welsch refers to the idea of *hybridity*, saying that even within such a ball you will also find everything that exists outside the ball, meaning that the "border" does not exist as such, but instead it is open/porous, allowing influences from outside to enter and mix with what has been inside. In this context, he criticises the concepts of multiculturalism and interculturality as both stick to the idea of more or less solid entities. For him multiculturalism implies that there is one big billiard ball with several small ones inside, which in the worst case scenario, leads to ghettoisation. At the same time, interculturality draws on the idea of several small billiard balls next to each other - it may demand a dialogue between the billiard balls, but as long as people stick to the idea of closed entities, this attempt is bound to fail.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, when talking about national cultures, it is essential to bear in mind that every one of those cultural constructions carries numerous aspects from other influences, from what we might consider to be foreign and to have come from outside or from minorities within, as Agathe Bienfait states<sup>38</sup>. I agree

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<sup>37</sup>Talk by Wolfgang Welsch at the conference "Migration in Deutschland und Europa. Multikulturalität - Interkulturalität - Transkulturalität, Helsinki 06./07.11.2015.

See also: Welsch, Wolfgang: "Was ist eigentlich Transkulturalität?" In Darowska, Lucyna; and Claudia Machold (Eds.): *Hochschule als transkultureller Raum? Beiträge zu Kultur, Bildung und Differenz*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2009. 39-66.

<sup>38</sup>Bienfait, Agathe: *Im Gehäuse der Zugehörigkeit: kritische Bestandsaufnahme des Mainstream-Multikulturalismus*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006. 94.

with Gabrielle Désilets' claim that the diversities and plural characters of modern nation-states are likely to have always been "the norm rather than essentialized versions of national identities", supporting Beck's concept of "inner-globalization" (2000) as well as Vertovec's and Cohen's "intra-state cosmopolitan practices" (2002)<sup>39</sup>.

While working on this dissertation I still had to face the issue of using expressions like "German/Finnish culture", "German-/Finnishness" or also "bicultural", both when gathering my material as well as in the process of writing. Knowing and understanding the critical nature of such terms, it did not leave me without concerns about the impression I would create in drawing on those expressions. However, as I stated above, sometimes it seemed unavoidable, either because the participants in the study themselves used those categories or for the sake of easier comprehensiveness. For this reason I want to take the opportunity to clarify that when using the aforementioned terms I do not want to imply or create an image of a clear and homogeneous German or Finnish culture. I am with scholars like Paul Drechsel<sup>40</sup> and Elka Tschernokoshewa<sup>41</sup> who stress the processual character of culture, which is up to negotiation, closely linked to a specific historic and geographic context. When I am using the term "culture" or anything related to it, it needs to be clear that I am drawing on the *idea* of German and Finnish frameworks that do differ from each other, but as I will try to show, are by no means clearly separated from each other, or "closed containers"<sup>42</sup> as Drechsel called it.

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<sup>39</sup>Désilets, Gabrielle: "Third Culture Kids' as Serial Migrants' Children: Understanding Some of the Impacts of a Highly Mobile Transnational Upbringing." In Benjamin, Saija; and Fred Dervin (Eds.): *Migration, Diversity, and Education: Beyond Third Culture Kids*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015. 145.

<sup>40</sup>Drechsel; Schmidt; and Gözl 2000. 137.

<sup>41</sup>Tschernokoshewa, Elka; and Marija Jurić Pahor (Eds.): *Auf der Suche nach hybriden Lebensgeschichten. Theorie - Feldforschung - Praxis*. Münster: Waxmann, 2005. 20 ff.

<sup>42</sup>Drechsel; Schmidt; and Gözl 2000.

Directly related with these categories are the ideas and the issues behind the term *identity*. Even though I myself used it often when describing my project to people unfamiliar with this field of research, it has to be examined carefully. Floya Anthias even asks us to "abandon the lens of identity"<sup>43</sup> as she expounds while referring to Erel's criticism of a "rucksack view of culture"<sup>44</sup> that the idea of identity is too absolute and generic to be adequate for describing the situation of contemporary migrants. Concerning an ethnic identity, it needs to be stressed once more that culture is nothing people simply possess and inherit by birth. Instead, it is shaped by multiple influences: their socialisation, surroundings, education, media - and last but not least to a great extent it is also imagined, just as Benedict Anderson once stated about the idea of nationalism, nation-states and national identities<sup>45</sup>.

While Welsch criticised Hegel's picture of culture as closed billiard balls, something similar can be said about people as such. Here I want to point towards Tim Ingold's elaborations in his publication "The Life of Lines"<sup>46</sup> in which he claimed humans not to be "blobs" as closed unions and instead insists that it is the lines between those blobs, with which they connect and move, which make social life and life in general possible<sup>47</sup>. Later he reflects on the processual nature of people, drawing on Ramon Llull (born 1232) who invented the verb *homificare*, *to humanify*, describing "humanness (...)" as a productive achievement" and suggests talking about "human becomings" rather than "human beings"<sup>48</sup>. This may be linked directly to what Jan Blommaert meant when he wrote: "People don't *have* identity, but (...) identities are constructed in practices that *produce*, *enact*, or *perform* identity – identity is identification,

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<sup>43</sup>Anthias 2011. 213.

<sup>44</sup>See Erel, Umut: "Migrating Cultural Capital: Bourdieu in Migration Studies." *Sociology* 44, no. 4 (2010). 642-660.

<sup>45</sup>See Anderson 1983/1991/2006.

<sup>46</sup>Ingold, Tim: *A Life of Lines*. Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2015.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid. 3 ff.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. 115.

an outcome of socially conditioned semiotic work."<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, as Anthias rightfully states, a feeling of (ethnic) belonging can vary a lot in intensity between people "of one group" and, I would like to add, even within one and the same person during the different stages of his or her life. For me this term does not imply that people possessed *one identity*, which easily gives the impression of something stiff, fixed, unchangeable and exclusive. "You can not be X, if you are Y." or "You can not feel both German and Finnish." This is not how a person's identification, positioning and consciousness works. Instead, those may be shifting and changing, including various positions which might even seem compelling. Other scholars like Nicole Tressoldi<sup>50</sup> still use the term, but Tressoldi adds that "identity is not static, it does not reach an end-point: it is in continual formation", without boundaries or parameters, but with infinite combinations<sup>51</sup>. Having this in mind, I consciously decided not to organise my research material according to classifications, such as those described by Maykel Verkuyten and Angela de Wolf, who criticised tendencies in psychology studies to conceptualise ethnic minority identification, turning "minority group members into different types or categories of being."<sup>52</sup> Thus, instead of looking at how acculturated, assimilated or separatist a person is, I chose to examine the multifaceted ways in which peoples' self-identification and feelings of belonging (rather than speaking of having a particular "identity") can exist.

In her study on multicultural belonging, Viktorija Čeginskā refers to Hagerty's interpretation of belonging as "the experience of personal involvement in a sys-

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<sup>49</sup>Blommaert, Jan: *Discourse: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 205.

<sup>50</sup>Tressoldi, Nicole: "Nation and Violence. A Path through Identity." In Mansour, Dina; Sebastian Ille; and Andrew Miine: *Identity, Difference and Belonging*. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2014. 73-84.

<sup>51</sup>See Ibid. 83.

<sup>52</sup>Verkuyten, Maykel; and Angela de Wolf: "Being, Feeling and Doing: Discourses and Ethnic Self-definitions among Minority Group Members." In *Culture and Psychology* 8, no. 4, (2002). 372.

tem or environment which enables an individual to feel and be an integral part of that system or environment"<sup>53</sup>. Even though this definition does not implicitly name the changeable character of belonging, it connects it to a "feeling", which by nature is something that is subjective and dependant on personal circumstances. One may link this to Anthias' criticism of the concept of multiculturalism, which, in his words, is based on the "assumption that all members of a specific 'cultural' group are equally committed to that culture"<sup>54</sup>. The concept of multiculturalism is challenged as well by Steven Dijkstra, who states that it actually supports borders and thinking within borders instead of creating continuities<sup>55</sup>. These ideas are of importance for the study at hand as I intend to deconstruct the picture of clear identifications and to show instead how different those feelings of belonging can be in reality.

In this regard the concept of *hybridity* seems suitable since it explains those processes going on within spheres of migration. Once a term in biology to describe racial mixtures, Homi Bhabha reinterpreted it for picturing a "no man's land", meaning the situation when people are speaking of two places, but inhabiting neither<sup>56</sup>. Others like David Joachim Berchem refer to it in more concrete ways, namely as hybrid rituals, when people blend traditions from their or their parent's country of origin with those from the country of residence<sup>57</sup>. This idea is something essential for my study and as Berchem elaborates further, those traditions as well as "genuine" traditions from the country of origin may serve as "**migrantische Bedürfnisbefriedigung**"<sup>58</sup>, taking shape in rituals on big holidays, in everyday life situations and also as "soul food". As I will discuss in the

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<sup>53</sup>Čeginskas 2015. 12.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. 208.

<sup>55</sup>See Dijkstra; Geuijen; and De Ruijter 2001. 62.

<sup>56</sup>Anthias 2011. 209.

<sup>57</sup>See Berchem 2011. 603.

<sup>58</sup>"satisfaction of migrant needs"; See Ibid. 604.



empirical part of this study, unlike the term may suggest, hybridity is not about "melting cultures". Here Agathe Bienfait stresses, while drawing on Gutiérrez Rodríguez, that those cultures can exist side by side, with moments of identification moving and connecting all the time<sup>59</sup>. Or as Elka Tschernokoshewa put it, hybridity is meant to describe a "joining of two distinct cultural phenomena, separated by the epoch or the social differentiation"<sup>60</sup>, but more importantly, this does not result in a dissolution of the differences, but the "borders [between them] become more porous"<sup>61</sup>. Those interpretations of the term hybridity will be tested later in the analysis of my research material.

It is debatable if the world is really becoming a "global village", as Marshall McLuhan proclaimed in 1964<sup>62</sup>, but obviously borders lose at least part of their meanings as more and more people live transnational lives. Despite this circumstance, it is still a common thought that people need the *Other* to build a feeling of group identity. Caroline Hornstein-Tomić describes the process of presenting oneself to others and seeing one's reflection in their judgements as essential in the search for and construction of identities<sup>63</sup>. The question is how this process works for the children of migrants, having grown up with at least two different cultural concepts. As Helen Lee explains, there have been publications since the mid-1990s trying to understand exactly how those people "negotiate their 'in between' position and multiple identities", but as she criticises, those publications usually continued to have their focus on the con-

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<sup>59</sup>Bienfait 2006. 93.

<sup>60</sup>Tschernokoshewa 2005. 15, translated by the author; original text: "Zusammenführung zweier verschiedener, durch die Epoche oder die soziale Differenzierung geschiedener kultureller Phänomene".

<sup>61</sup>Ibid. 15, translated by the author.

<sup>62</sup>See McLuhan, Marshall: *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1962.

<sup>63</sup>Hornstein-Tomić, Caroline: "Zur Konstruktion von Identität und Heimat(-Losigkeit) in Diaspora-Diskursen." *Društvena istraživanja - Časopis za opća društvena pitanja* 20, no. 2 (2011). 424 f.

nection to the host country<sup>64</sup>. I want to contrast the idea of a person being "torn between" two (or more) cultures with more recent points of view on this matter. As Minna-Kristiina Ruokonen-Engler put it, lately there has been a shift in the academic perspectives on migration towards a more positive view of "interkulturelle Zwischenwelten" or "third chairs"<sup>65</sup>. This implies an acceptance of the idea that the so-called "second generation" tends not to be "between the chairs", but rather they have the ability to "sit down on each chair". Combining the metaphor of chairs with Welsch's concept of transculturality, maybe there is no longer a thing like a chair, but rather a circular bench. There would not be separate seats on this bench, but rather one could move freely, decide to stay for a while at this spot before moving a few centimetres or even further to another spot. This idea matches the findings of other studies on the descendants of migrants, who do not "live between two cultures", but can rather "combine and choose the best of both"<sup>66</sup>.

## 1.4 Research questions

It becomes apparent that working on such international topics is of current interest and that there is a lot to explore. Concerning the research at hand, it needs to be said that Germans are the fourteenth largest group of immigrants in Finland<sup>67</sup>, also due to the long and diverse history of a connection between the two countries. According to *Statistics Finland* in 2016 there were 6256 persons registered as having German as mother-tongue, and 4149 possessing

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<sup>64</sup>Lee 2008. 10.

<sup>65</sup>With these terms Ruokonen-Engler refers to Gemende's "intercultural inbetween-worlds" (2002), respectively Badauria (2002): Ruokonen-Engler, Minna-Kristiina: »Unsichtbare« Migration? *Transnationale Positionierungen finnischer Migrantinnen. Eine biographischeanalytische Studie*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2012. 80.

<sup>66</sup>Verkuyten; and Wolf 2002. 390.

<sup>67</sup>[http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2016/vaerak\\_2016\\_2017-03-29\\_kuv\\_002\\_en.html](http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2016/vaerak_2016_2017-03-29_kuv_002_en.html) (accessed 20.04.2017)

German nationality<sup>68</sup>. Despite this, the number of those having a German family background is possibly much higher than the number of "official" Germans, thus it seems even more surprising that there is no major publication on Germans in contemporary Finland. I intend to fill some part of this gap with my dissertation.

Since research in migration studies has long focussed on groups of immigrants perceived as "exotic" or "problematic", it explains why many publications deal with the question of integration, assimilation, multiculturalism<sup>69</sup>, experiences of racism in education, work- and everyday life<sup>70</sup>, language issues<sup>71</sup>, post-colonialism and social capital<sup>72</sup> etc. Often those views include aspects of religion, religious practices, but also stereotypes and biases.

Doing research on Germans and German-Finnish people living in Helsinki seems in many ways different from the "common" approaches. Many times when people asked me about my research project, they showed surprise or sometimes did not understand why this topic should be of any particular value. Possibly this was due to the fact that the migration of Germans and German-speakers into Finland and their influence on various areas of Finnish society has a long history.

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<sup>68</sup>[http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin\\_vrm\\_vaerak/?tablelist=true&rxid=c4cb1312-f5a2-4756-8f4f-e24ed0af0647](http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin_vrm_vaerak/?tablelist=true&rxid=c4cb1312-f5a2-4756-8f4f-e24ed0af0647) (accessed 20.04.2017).

<sup>69</sup>See e. g. Goulbourne 2010.

Juhász, Anne; and Eva Mey: *Die zweite Generation: Etablierte oder Aussenseiter? Biographien von Jugendlichen ausländischer Herkunft*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2003.

Portes Alejandro; and Rubén G. Rumbaut: *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2001.

Ruhs 2009.

<sup>70</sup>See e. g. Juhász; and Mey 2003.

Terkessidis, Mark: *Die Banalität des Rassismus: Migranten zweiter Generation entwickeln eine neue Perspektive*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2004.

<sup>71</sup>See Hall, Christopher; and Sebastian Seyferth (Eds.): *Finnisch-deutsche Begegnungen in Sprache, Literatur und Kultur. Ausgewählte Beiträge der Finnischen Germanistentagung 2007*. Berlin: SAXA, 2008.

Hall; and Pakkanen-Kilpiä 2007.

Portes; and Rumbaut 2001.

<sup>72</sup>See e. g. Bienfait 2006.

Dijkstra; Geuijen; and De Ruijter 2001. 55.  
Goulbourne 2010.

As a result, some well-known companies and many families have a German background so that this is possibly not seen as something "special". Another reason could be that German and Finnish culture are generally regarded as being close to each other — still different, but not in a way that people would expect major problems to emerge that would need to be "solved" by science. For this reason, Germans and people with a German family background tend to blend in, both from their behaviour, but also from their physical appearance. One interviewee of the first generation<sup>73</sup> described himself and other Germans in Finland by referring to a quote by Dieter Hermann Schmitz<sup>74</sup>: unless they open their mouth to say something, they do not stick out, but are *acoustic foreigners*. Other authors came to similar conclusions: Anne-Marie Fortier, for example, uses the picture of "invisible foreigners"<sup>75</sup> when talking about European migrants in the United Kingdom, while Ruokonen-Engler dedicated a whole book to privileged, thus "invisible migrants" from Finland in Germany<sup>76</sup>. Moreover, Tuomas Martikainen suggests doing research on migrants with a Christian background as this clearly marks a gap in the field of migration studies of the past<sup>77</sup>. This indicates a change of focus towards a less obvious scope to which my dissertation intends to contribute.

In my research project, the main focus lay on the descendants of Germans living in contemporary Helsinki, Finland. My aim is to scrutinise their feeling of belonging and to find out whether they see themselves as Finns, Germans, both or maybe in a completely different way. I want to understand what German-ness, respectively Finnishness, means to them, where they position themselves

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<sup>73</sup>See Interview with Dominik.

<sup>74</sup>Schmitz, Dieter Hermann: *Die spinnen, die Finnen*. Berlin: Ullstein Taschenbuch, 2011.

<sup>75</sup>See Fortier, Anne-Marie: *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*. Oxford/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000. 10.

<sup>76</sup>See Ruokonen-Engler 2012.

<sup>77</sup>See Martikainen, Tuomas: *Religion, Migration, Settlement. Reflections on Post-1990 Immigration to Finland*. Leiden: BRILL, 2013.

between or within their interpretation of those two cultures and to what extent they construct or de-construct boundaries between associated aspects of their lives. Furthermore, I am interested to see how they evaluate the specific background with which they grew up and how this influenced their life courses and strategies to find their place in the world.

To condense these ideas, this means looking at

- where Germans and their descendants in Helsinki construct or de-construct boundaries between categories such as German- or Finnishness, drawing on themselves or others,
- what aspects were or are involved in the process of self-identification, and
- what personal consequences could result from having such a background.

At this point I would already like to stress that their ways of self-positioning proved not to be detached from outer influences. For this reason I decided not only to draw on the words and descriptions of the descendant generation, but instead to include the first generation of German migrants in this study. Their points of view and strategies turned out to be highly influential for their descendants, which explains the presence of the "first generation" of German migrants in this work. Nevertheless, the main focus lies on the aspects described above.

## 1.5 Methodology

For my research, I drew on a grounded theory approach<sup>78</sup>, meaning that I tried not to have any hypotheses while gathering my material, but I listened to what

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<sup>78</sup>See e.g. Corbin, Juliet; and Anselm Strauss: *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 3<sup>d</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks/London: SAGE Publications, 2008.

people had to tell me and then analysed my material following interesting aspects therein, before putting it into context with other scholarly works. The main sources of material were semi-structured interviews, conducted in German, during the months from September 2013 until the end of 2014. Initially I planned to do the interviews with the first generation of Germans, but at my first interview session I was confronted with the views of the successive generations, as my interviewee had unexpectedly brought his son. I realised soon that the fate and experiences of children of German migrants seemed more challenging to me than those of their parents, so I decided to shift the focus of my work towards the German and German-Finnish descendants in Helsinki. Nonetheless, I continued doing interviews with the first generation until I had a total of nine such participants, for I felt that explaining about them and their stories was part of the "big picture". This feeling was confirmed when doing the analysis of my interviews, as it showed how much impact the parent's *habitus* had on the descendant generation and also what interesting differences existed between the multiple viewpoints. This serves as an explanation for the parents' generation receiving considerable coverage in the thesis.

In addition to those nine interviews with the first generation of German migrants, I conducted 23 interviews with the descendant generation. Ten interviewees were born in Germany, but came to Finland at some point of their lives, while 12 were born in Finland, but had spent different amounts of time in Germany. If I wanted to apply the term "second generation" to this group I would be in trouble, as those people (so far categorised by the country they were born in) also include some, who would even count as "third generation" if we follow this schematic. Moreover, one interviewee does not have any German family, but was born and raised in Germany, before moving to Finland as an

adult. As his socialisation took place in Germany, I decided to include him in my study. Therefore one could suggest that the group I am interested in does not necessarily consist of who is "Bio-Deutscher", as it was once described at a conference<sup>79</sup>, but who was raised with the influences of Finnish and German backgrounds, regardless of where he grew up and the exact constellation of his family. To refer to this group, I thus decided to use the term "descendant generation", and even though I do not want to create a picture of a homogeneous group, I interpret it as a way to show that their German-Finnish background is what connects them somehow.

At this point one could rightfully question the extent to which it is possible to draw general conclusions from my research, given that the total number of interviews was "only" 32 — and I need to say that this was never my aim. Instead, I hope to show *insights*, possible nuances and impressions of what the transnational lives of a certain group of people *can* look like. Outcomes such as percentages of how many people with German-Finnish background connect to one or the other country, how many would state that they had issues because of the different languages etc. will not be found in a qualitative research like the one at hand. For these, quantitative studies would be the way to go, but the understanding of the field is of a completely different nature for each of those approaches.

I tried a range of strategies for finding interviewees. My very first step was to contact *Goethe-Institut Finnland* situated in Helsinki, which is part of a worldwide institution to support German language and culture abroad, to introduce myself and my project. Thanks to the help of the employees there, I made first contacts with Germans living in Helsinki. Besides those informants, I in-

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<sup>79</sup>"Migration in Deutschland und Europa. Multikulturalität - Interkulturalität - Transkulturalität." Helsinki, 02.-07.11.2015.

roduced myself at the German church and also submitted a post in an internet forum for Germans in Finland, the *saksalaiset*-forum<sup>80</sup> and its corresponding *Facebook*-group, in which I explained my research project and asked for help. As it is often the case, interviewees brought more contacts and a snowball effect evolved. To prevent the participants from being only of the group of those people actively involved in German institutions or associations, I did not follow any plan, but it happened to be naturally balanced. As an example, some contacts were not interested in being engaged in German groups, even though they were recommended by employees of a German institution or members of the German church, while others actively sought contact with other Germans through events at those German establishments or the *saksalaiset*-forum. Others heard through work colleagues or family members of the project and wanted to contribute to it. This enabled me to draw a multifaceted picture of Germans in Helsinki.

Except one interviewee of the first generation<sup>81</sup> I made sure I did not do any interviews with people I knew beforehand. This is something that is not self-evident when permanently living at the place of research, as naturally you get to know others of your nationality. You become friends with them and it might appear to be an easy strategy simply to ask personal contacts to be your interviewees. The reason why I decided against this was that I did not want the line between the interviewer and the informant to get blurred, in order to avoid them saying things they would say to me as a friend, but not as a researcher. Even though some interviewees asked me what questions or topics they could expect prior to the interview, I preferred not to provide them with that information as I wanted their answers to be as spontaneous as possible. While doing the interviews, I followed a general path of a predefined range of topics, but as every

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<sup>80</sup><http://www.saksalaiset.fi/forum/> (accessed 31.10.2016).

<sup>81</sup>Dagmar.



interviewee had their own, individual story, each of those talks followed different lines than the others. However, in retrospect I realised that I could have been even more flexible about the course of the interviews. Even though I did react to what I was told in each interview and adjusted the order and to some extent also content of my questions, I still was eager to keep the interviews as similar to each other as possible. Moreover, reading the doctoral thesis of Viktorija L.A. Čeginskas<sup>82</sup> made me wonder about the extent my education in the field of German *Volkskunde* had influenced the way I conducted the interviews. In her self-criticism, Čeginskas explained her strategy of maintaining objectivity almost artificially as a result of the research traditions of German *Volkskunde* that formed part of her educational background<sup>83</sup>. Being a German migrant living in Helsinki I was part of my own field. It goes without saying that I was aware of this, but when I was doing my interviews at the beginning of my doctoral studies, I did not know how to use this circumstance to my advantage. During my *Magister*-studies<sup>84</sup> I had been told to stay as objective as possible while doing research. In retrospect I see that even though on the one hand I tried to keep the personal influence on the interviews as little as possible, it still happened naturally that I explained something about my own life, my experiences in and with Finland and my perceptions of these. For this reason, I do not regard my material to have solely been interviews as a one-way-strategy of questions and answers in order to gain information. Instead, besides using the term "interview", I see and refer to them as conversations, discussions and talks between two or three dialogue partners<sup>85</sup>. Nonetheless, one has to be aware of the power-relations involved in these situations. Even if some of the

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<sup>82</sup>Čeginskas 2015.

<sup>83</sup>See Ibid. 41 f.

<sup>84</sup>In the course of the Bologna process the German *Magister* and *Diploma* study programmes were replaced by Bachelor/Master.

<sup>85</sup>A similar view on interviews can be found in Snellman, Hanna: *Sallan Suurin Kylä - Göteborg*. Helsinki/Stockholm: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura & Ruotsinsuomalaisten Arkisto, 2003. 11.

interviews felt almost like natural, relaxed conversations, in their essence they were not. The participants met with me knowing that they would be part of a scholarly study and that they would be my research subjects. Even though it felt as if there was a personal connection with some participants, with others the boundary between researcher and research participant remained more noticeable. Nonetheless, I still claim that all interviews had a rather personal atmosphere to some extent, which is why I used the aforementioned terminologies - though having to treat them with caution.

The length of my interviews varied a lot: while some only lasted 30 to 45 minutes, others went on for up to three hours, depending solely on how much a person had to tell. Needless to say, some conversations offered richer data than others, thus in my analysis I draw on certain interviewees more often than on others. Many times I met the participants at their workplace, in cafés or at the conference room of the Department of European Ethnology at the University of Helsinki. Even though setting up the interview at someone's home, as happened a few times, might have been a fruitful supplement to what is being said during the interviews, I never demanded that I get those precious insights in this rather private sphere. Instead, I left it up to the interviewees to suggest a suitable place to meet.

During our talks I tried to move from tangible subjects to more abstract ones. In practice this meant that I usually started by asking about the migration-related history of the family, after which a natural conversation evolved in most cases. Here it became apparent that the aspect of language seemed to be a central one, as the interviewees usually started talking about it themselves from the very beginning. Moreover, the first part of the interview was often spent

by the interviewees telling me about the childhood and youth, about schooling and direct contacts with Germany and Finland, depending on where the person had grown up. At this point, in many cases the array of questions intermingled: memories became unrolled and things the person had missed from Germany were mentioned, especially when being young, and also the things still being missed today. Taking that as a starting point, I often asked for "German elements" in their Finnish every-day life. The problematic nature of imposing such categories through the interviewer is something I had to reconsider. I will reflect upon this below, and contemplated its impact when analysing the interview material. However, when asking this, some peculiarities became visible in the lives of those Germans and German-Finns, particularly regarding big annual holidays and important events in human life which clearly differ from what is seen as "common" Finnish traditions. This picture was completed by seemingly unspectacular aspects related to food culture, media usage and other habits. Talking about social life and with whom someone spends their time, as well as about decisions concerning the lives of their own children (if there were any), was also supposed to indicate a possible tendency in the feeling of belonging. After having discussed those rather pragmatic matters, I tried to shift towards more complex topics concerning belonging and identification in the last part of the interviews. While having previously talked about social life, the aspect of the perceptions by others had been brought up in some cases. If not, it was now time to ask about how Finnish and German friends saw the interviewee and also how the interviewees perceived Germans and Finns, their characteristics and ways of behaviour. Moreover, I wanted to know how the interviewees felt when being in Germany and Finland respectively, and whether they felt at home or felt like tourists. The question about whether an interviewee could imagine living in Germany for longer periods was often taken as an opportunity

to discuss the positive and negative images of the corresponding countries and their inhabitants. Towards the end, I asked what I considered to be the most important question (at that point), which would possibly have been even harder to answer without the "preparation" of the ongoing interview: The question of whether the interviewees regarded themselves as Finnish or German, what they considered the components that made them a Finn or a German to be, and how that showed. Here the perception by and of others often influenced the points of view expressed in the response, but in many of the interviews, it became obvious at this moment that the interviewees had probably reflected for quite a while on this matter, asking themselves "Who am I and why am I the way I am?" especially in relation to the migration history of their families.

Talking about questions of belonging and identification is tricky, and as a researcher I needed to pay attention to the way I asked about those matters to be able to detect how I potentially influenced the answers with my formulations. As each interview was unique and as I somehow followed hints, though more or less sticking to my catalogue of questions, I cannot say what my exact formulation was on a general basis. I tried not to push in any direction, but if necessary gave examples of possible, broadly defined, themes that others had previously talked about. When discussing my research material, I checked the interview situation of the excerpts I used or quoted, adding reflections if I deemed my formulated questions to have influenced the response given.

For the actual analysis of those 32 interviews, I started by transcribing each of them in full, since I was convinced that this is helpful in becoming familiar with the material. As is common when applying grounded theory, I continued coding the interviews with the help of the ATLAS.ti<sup>86</sup> software. This meant that I went through the interview material and gave sequences labels according to their content, helping me to structure the multifaceted material and discover

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<sup>86</sup><http://www.atlasti.com/> (accessed 01.02.2017).

the more fruitful themes. The software then allowed me to detect quantitatively relevant themes and to search for all quotes belonging to a certain code/theme. In most cases, the larger topics from my interview guideline turned out to be quantitatively relevant in the interview material as well. However, this was not the case in every interview. Moreover, I included responses that were shared by a large number of interviewees into my analysis, as well as those of single persons, creating an interesting contrast to the general tendencies. A few topics were brought up unexpectedly, for instance when an interviewee reflected about his belonging in terms of where he would like to be buried. But what struck me most was the degree to which the descendant generation had reflected upon themselves, and also how much the parent generation had thought about what they wanted to pass onto their children.

To make sure that the identities of my informants remained anonymous, I changed their names as is common in qualitative research methods. Nonetheless I wanted to be able to track immediately the basic constellation of a person's family background when looking at their name. For that reason the names in use start with a certain letter that is indicative of the interviewee's background. Since I will be a "German migrant of the first generation", all the interviewees with such a background were given names beginning with "*D*". Laura Hirvi, one of my mentors, is of Finnish-German origin, had been born and raised in Germany, but "returned" to Finland for her studies. Therefore the interviewees who have Finnish-German or German parents, and were born in Germany, but moved to Finland at a later point, were given names starting with "*L*". Finally the names of those, who have German or German-Finnish family background, but who were born and raised in Finland, begin with "*H*". This refers to my supervisor, Hanna Snellman, who was born and raised in Finland, but has a

distant German family history. The names of those, whose parents already had a "mixed" family background and thus could be regarded as "third generation", begin with a "*J*", which follows the naming of Laura Hirvi's first daughter. For choosing specific names following this scheme, I consulted online lists of names sorted according to their first letter and their popularity in different years. In practice this means that I checked the rough age-group of the person in question and what names with the letters D, H, L or J were popular during the years of birth.

With the help of this system the reader is supposed to be able to see the basic background connections more easily.<sup>87</sup> While assumingly the reader does not to know about the popularity of names in different times, at least the fact that a name starts with a certain letter might make it possible to understand without further explanation where a quoted person was born and raised. While working with the interviews in more detail, I noticed that this system of coding the names also helped me as a researcher to keep better track of the number of interviews, interviewees and also their quotes and I hope the same goes for the readers of this work.

For more comprehensibility, I created a tabular list of all the people I spoke to, presenting basic background data on each participant. In order to maintain a high level of anonymity, I used not only the coded names, but also broader age groups as the combination of a precise age and the other information used for the thesis might have carried the risk of making my interviewees easier traceable.

Table 1.1 gives information on the first generation of German migrants. Besides the name and the age-group it presents the age when someone came to Finland

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<sup>87</sup>Hanna Snellman used a comparable scheme in her own research with specific letters referring to groups of interviewees with shared key experiences; See Snellman 2003. 35-52.

and for what reason(s). Moreover, it states if a person has a partner at the time of the interview, of what nationality that partner is and if the interviewee has children.

Tables 1.2 and 1.3 are for the descendant generation. Both tables show the age group of the participants and the constellations of the parents, indicated by a combination of "F" (Finnish) and "G" (German), respectively "GG" or "GF" for those of the "third generation". For the sake of anonymity this does not include information on which of the parents is German or Finnish; this will be discussed in the text, if necessary. Table 1.2 presents those who were born in Germany and shows at what age they came to Finland, if they were raised bilingually, if they went to the German School in Helsinki (DSH) and if they have children. Table 1.3 is about those who were born in Finland and gives insights into their contacts with Germany and then also if they were raised to be bilingual, went to DSH and if they have children.

When I gave information on whether someone was raised to be bilingual, I did not simply put "yes"/"no" in some cases, but instead put the answers in square brackets. By putting [yes], I want to imply that this person was raised bilingually, but that there were struggles. By putting [no], I mean that the person was not raised to be bilingual through their parents, but through other sources like school or the environment. Those things, if relevant, have been discussed when I wrote about the person and sequence in question. If the age was not obviously described in the interviews, I put the estimated age group in square brackets. The age groups used were the following: 0-4, 5-9, 10-18, 19-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-

Table 1.1: Interviewees from the first generation of German migrants in contemporary Helsinki.

Name	Age group	Age > FIN	Reason	Partner	Children
Darius	50-59	19-29	Ex-partner	Finnish	Yes
Dennis	40-49	19-29	Ex-partner	Finnish	No
Dieter	60-	30-39	Ex-partner	Finnish	Yes
Dirk	50-59	19-29	Partner	Finnish	Yes
Dominik	30-39	19-29	Partner	Finnish	Yes
Dana	40-49	19-29	Partner	Finnish	No
Daniela	30-39	19-29	Interest, partner	Finnish	Yes
Dagmar	30-39	19-29	Interest	None	No
Doris	50-59	40-49	Interest	German	Yes



Table 1.2: Interviewees from the generation of descendants of German migrants, born in Germany.

Name	Age group	Parents	Age > FIN	Bilingual	DSH	Children
Lari	30-39	G-F	5-9	Yes	Yes	No
Lasse	19-29	F-F	19-29	[Yes]	No	No
Lennard	19-29	G-F	10-18	[Yes]	No	No
Lukas	19-29	G-G	5-9	[No]	Yes	No
Lutz	50-59	G-G	0-4	[No]	Yes	Yes
Larissa	30-39	G-F	19-29	Yes	No	No
Laura	50-59	G-F	5-9	[No]	Yes	Yes
Lena	40-49	G-F	19-29	[No]	No	No
Linda	40-49	G-F	19-29	No	No	No
Luisa	[40-59]	G-G	5-9	No	Yes	Yes

Table 1.3: Interviewees from the generation of descendants of German migrants, born in Finland.

Name	Age group	Parents	Contacts with G.	Bilingual	DSH	Children
Hans	[50-59]	G-F	worked	Yes	Yes	Yes
Harri	50-59	G-G	regular contact	[No]	Yes	Yes
Hauke	30-39	G-F	regular contact	Yes	Yes	No
Heiko	40-49	G-F	worked	Yes	No	Yes
Henning	40-49	G-F	studied, worked	Yes	Yes	Yes
Henrikki	60-	G-F	childhood	Yes	No	Yes
Holger	[40-49]	G-F	childhood	Yes	No	Yes
Hannah	[30-39]	G-F	vacations	Yes	Yes	No
Helena	19-29	G-F	never lived	Yes	Yes	No
Helga	40-49	G-F	studied, worked	Yes	Yes	Yes
Heli	50-59	G-F	frequent contact	Yes	Yes	No
Jan	19-29	GG-FF	exchange semester	[Yes]	No	No
Jonas	19-29	GF-FF	worked	Yes	Yes	No

When using quotes from the interviews I translated them into English, but tried to stay as close to the original as possible. For enabling a direct comparison, I added the original German text as footnotes so that readers with German proficiency can check the initial formulations.

What I realised was that I seemed to have difficulties in deciding on which tense to use when writing about my interviews. Once that thought had crossed my mind, I reflected on it further and started to see a pattern in my usage of tenses. Apparently I had used the preterite form intuitively when writing about general observations from the content of the interviews, whereas when giving specific examples I automatically changed to the present tense. This happened without much consideration, but in retrospect it makes sense to use the present tense when imagining taking a step into the interview situation, trying to re-imagine and re-feel it. In the end I decided to keep this change of tenses and hope that the reader will get the same feeling I had when writing about the interviews.

When doing qualitative research in the field of European ethnology interviews and participant observations usually go hand in hand. In the case of my study, the interviews with the descendants of Germans in Helsinki were clearly the main source. Nevertheless I went to some gatherings of Germans, for instance at the German Lutheran church, the meetings of the *saksalaiset*-forum or at *Salon Crustum*, a monthly discussion round for Germans and German-speaking people. At that point, it felt to me that those visits would not bring any additional information for my study as it appeared as if mostly first-generation Germans were using those events as a chance to chat in German about seemingly random topics. However, in retrospect, it might have brought more nuanced material if I had gone to those gatherings once the general direction of my analysis was clearer so that I could have read between the lines more of what was said or

remained unsaid.

Another way of doing participant observation would have been to meet more than once with the interviewees I connected with the most, and to join them for certain events. Due to the specific constellation of inconspicuous migrants as well as my own position as one of them, I decided against such method. I will elaborate more on this in the next chapter "The ethnologist in the field".

Instead I decided to broaden my material in a way that meant I could look at the "surroundings" of my interviews a bit more closely. It was not just what and how things were said during the interviews that mattered, but unintentional insights given by how interviewees contacted me, for instance, so how they described themselves in this first approach was also included in my analysis. By doing so I hope to find answers to my questions, not only relying on what people decided to tell me during their interview.

Towards the end of my third year of doing this research, I decided to send my manuscript, which was already quite well progressed, to my interviewees. They were the ones who gave me their time and allowed me, a stranger, to gain insights into their lives, thoughts and emotions. It was up to me to interpret their words and I am well aware of the responsible and sensitive nature of such a task. For that reason I felt that it was only fair to give them the chance to read and discuss what I made out of the interviews before it would become public. I received some feedback via e-mail and met one interviewee in person a few months before submitting the thesis. This feedback was very interesting and enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of what my interviewees had previously told me in our talks. I added those additional reflections to my discussion of the interview material when suitable.

Besides these qualitative methods I was eager to combine my dissertation project

with practical cultural work. For that reason I organised a *German Culture Week* in cooperation with *Caisa*, the international cultural centre in the heart of Helsinki<sup>88</sup>. The culture week was scheduled for October 2015, as October 3 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of German Unity, which I took as a good occasion for the events to begin. Besides gaining organisational skills being of advantage for a post-dissertation career, this culture week was intended to popularise science, to open it up to people outside of Academia.

Primarily the program was designed to introduce different facets of "German culture", showing various faces of German society as well as German influences on historic and contemporary life in Finland. This included exhibitions, cinema evenings, a pop up brunch with home-made food from different regions of Germany, lectures about cultural differences or not-so-big-differences. Of relevance for this study was a presentation I gave on "The transnational generation", based on my interview material from the dissertation project. The 30 minute presentation was followed by 90 minutes of discussion, in which participants described their own experiences as Germans or people with a German family background in Finland. The talk I gave at the *German Culture Week* happened shortly before I started the intensified analysis and writing process of the chapters of the dissertation. In a way it was prework for the task to come, which enabled me to test my ideas, my views on broad tendencies in my interview material on the German-speaking audience living in Helsinki.

While collecting my material, working with it, and analysing it, I followed the ethical guidelines provided by the *Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity*<sup>89</sup>. In practice this meant that all the interviews were made on a voluntary basis. By simply spreading the word about my research project via the

<sup>88</sup><http://www.caisa.fi/> (accessed 14.11.2015).

<sup>89</sup><http://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/ethicalprinciples.pdf> (accessed 09.01.2016).

Internet, German institutions and other platforms, I left it up to volunteers to contact me if they wanted to be part of the research. In fact, if an interviewee thought I might be interested in talking to one of their friends or relatives, I always asked them to suggest this to the person in question and did not contact them myself, because I wanted to avoid putting pressure and pushing them into something they might not want to do.

Before each interview I gave the interviewee a consent form which they were asked to sign - then, or after the interview. I went through each of the points on this form with the interviewees, explained the topic of my research, the purpose as forming the basis for my dissertation and explained that the thesis would be published. I told them that their interviews would be handled anonymously and that the interview material as such would later be given to the archive of the *Migration Institute of Finland* in Turku, Finland.

Besides coding the names, as already explained above, I tried to leave out additional informations about my interviewees unless it was essential for understanding quotations and contexts. In some cases I modified that information, for instance the number of children, or kept it very general if, for example, someone was working in a German environment, but without giving further details, in order to make it harder to trace the identity of the person in question. I decided to pass my interview material only in modified form to the archive of the *Migration Institute of Finland*, meaning that it will not include any real names.

## 1.6 The ethnologist in the field

Having grown up as a German in Germany without having a Finnish family background, then having moved to Finland to do research on Germans and

their descendants there, clearly brought with it both advantages and disadvantages.

As touched upon in the previous chapter, my position as being somehow part of my own field affected my choice of methods. Instead of asking interviewees whether I could join them celebrating certain holidays or family events as it may be otherwise common for ethnologists and anthropologists, I restrained myself from doing so. Only later did I reflect on this decision and realised that I had hesitated due to the constellation of Germans in Finland being an inconspicuous group of migrants and furthermore due to me being one of them. It seemed odd to me to imagine myself asking them if I could join them for their Christmas celebration – however, if I imagined me coming as an outsider to a more distinct group I surely would have felt less hesitant. I deem this a critical point regarding discourses on doing research on inconspicuous groups as well as the insider versus outsider position of the researcher. It would be interesting to discuss this with other scholars who were in similar situations and to hear how they felt about it.

While doing fieldwork one might suggest that especially concerning the first generation of German migrants, I must have been able to relate to their points of view in an encompassing way. To some extent, this was true. In some ways we were in a similar situation: we all came to Finland for some reason and had been living there for a certain amount of time. Taking this as the basis, many things they said sounded familiar to me. At the same time, the *emic* position I had requires that extra attention be paid to how this might have affected the interviews. It is safe to say that an interviewer always takes some influence in the process of doing their job. The way the questions are asked, the intonation,

formulations affect the way the interviewee replies.

Besides those variables, the personal background of the researcher also takes influence on the outcome of the interviews. Knowing that the counterpart has been raised in the same country as oneself, with an assumingly similar socialisation or culture, certainly has an effect on what someone will say. They might leave out certain information, taking for granted that the other knows what they are implying between the lines, or on the other hand they might also say something *particularly because* they expect an understanding of the other. These inter-relations between the ethnic background of the interviewer and the responses of the interviewee were studied and confirmed by Hedda van't Land<sup>90</sup>. Her research on second generation Moroccans living in the Netherlands showed how reactions to "ethnic-related" questions that left "room for subjective interpretation"<sup>91</sup> strongly varied depending on who was asking. In most cases, it showed that Dutch elements were stressed if the interviewer was of Dutch background, respectively Moroccan elements were stressed if the interviewer had a Moroccan background or at least spoke Arabic with them. As Land suggested, a possible explanation could be that the participants wanted to "please the interviewer or to avoid offending" him/her and therefore answered "in correspondence with the supposed opinions" they believed the interviewer could have.<sup>92</sup>

Regarding my interviews, it is likely that certain things might have been said differently if my background had been a different one. Knowing about my nationality and living situation surely influenced the way my interviewees replied to my questions and told their stories. In some situations, it appeared as if in the way someone answered, they were drawing on the assumption of me - a

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<sup>90</sup>Land, Hedda van't: *Similar questions: different meanings: differences in the meaning of constructs for Dutch and Moroccan respondents; effects of the ethnicity of the interviewer and language of the interview among first and second generation Moroccan respondents*. (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam 2000).

<sup>91</sup>Ibid. 97.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid. 90.

German, and especially a German in Finland - understanding things without much further explanation. In others, the opposite seemed to be the case and my interviewees felt the need to explain certain things that they did not expect me to understand. On the other hand, they possibly also said things to me that they might not have told someone with a different background, as if being in the same situation (particularly concerning the first generation, seeing Finland with the eyes of someone who came from outside) made them see me as "one of them", to whom they could speak without much social restriction or caution. However, my specific situation did not only affect the responses of the participants in the study, but also the way I referred to their statements. It would seem logical that I could relate to many things interviewees from the first generation of German migrants told me, but surprisingly, this was also the case for many aspects discussed by the descendant generation. Only when working closely with the interview material did I notice how often I found myself sharing their views, thoughts and perceptions on Germany, Finland, Germans and Finns. Moreover, the feelings they described when being in the two countries sounded very familiar to me - which is why one could suggest that I also adopted some German-Finnish lens, despite my lack of Finnish ancestry. In the empirical part, I will reflect further on those matters, related to the respective context, situation and reciprocal effect.

## 1.7 Structure of the thesis

The underlying structure of the thesis follows the idea of getting from a bigger picture towards the actual focus, comparable to a movement from a macro- to a micro-level. With this the reader will first get a general understanding of the initial situation of the research, before learning about the group I am interested in.



Therefore I begin by giving a basic overview of the history of connections and linkages between German- and Finnish-speaking areas. This chapter is solely based on secondary literature research and is meant as a summary of the main events and interrelations, without going into too much detail.

Only from this historic ground which explains to a certain extent why there are people with a German-Finnish family background living in Finland, the thesis takes another step towards the research topic. With the provocative claim that without the mobility of their ancestors, the actual group which is of interest here, namely descendants of German or Finnish migrants, would not exist, I once started a paper draft I wrote for an e-seminar of the *14<sup>th</sup> EASA Biennial Conference*<sup>93</sup>. While some of the comments within the e-seminar criticised this statement as being too simplistic, I still take it to be a good point of departure for discussion. Even though I wanted to put the main focus of my research on those German-Finnish descendants, I realised how important it is to see their stories in close connection with the experiences of first generation migrants. For this reason, the chapter that follows the historic overview deals with the "parent generation" as their positions and behaviour had direct influence on the positioning and points of view of the descendant generation. This part shows an interesting discrepancy between a personal disconnectedness of many of the German migrants from Germany and a German self-identification, and yet their wish to pass some "Germanness" onto their children. The chapter begins by presenting the various ways in which this disconnectedness became visible in the interviews, from references to the respective nationalism, over the personal self-definition, views on Germans and Finns, to practical aspects of social life. As it turned out, often a change of attitude occurred when the first child was born, which takes the reader to the second part of the chapter

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<sup>93</sup>"The mobility of a transnational generation", <https://www.academia.edu/s/13c31f98e9/the-mobility-of-a-transnational-generation> (accessed 16.09.2016).

as well as the aforementioned discrepancy, namely the question what exactly it was that my respondents wanted their children to inherit from them. Here, the most prominent aspect involved was the German language, difficulties concerning its passing on, but also some holiday traditions the parent generation continues carrying on the way they used to do in Germany.

After this chapter on the first generation of German migrants, the thesis presents analysis of how descendants of German/Finnish migrants negotiate their positioning and sense of belonging, what aspects are involved in this and how they reflect upon those and themselves. Linking directly to the previous chapter, this part begins with the importance of language for a feeling of someone's belonging as it turned out that language could both support or undermine the personal self-identification and connection to the respective country. Thereafter the analysis continues with the next bigger theme addressed in the interviews, through which my respondents of the descendant generation tried to position themselves in German-Finnish frameworks. Often they began with descriptions of what I call "manifestations of belonging", so aspects in their lives like traditions, habits and food culture, but also tangible objects like passports, which they use as indicators of "what they are". From here the next step is to look at more abstract ways of locating oneself, so the ways my interviewees describe themselves, depending on time, place and the (social) surrounding. For the final part of the chapter on the descendant generation of German-Finnish migrants the focus shifts towards the impact of mobility on their ways of positioning, life choices, courses and strategies to find one's place in the world. By referring to phenomena such as the clash between "holiday illusions" and "reality", "trial and error" methods of moving back and forth between Finland and Germany and the experiences and understandings my interviewees gained in this process,

which might result in what I call a "mobile mindset", this chapter can be seen as a way to close the circle of the thesis, and broadly link to where it began: the mobile life of their parents or grand-parents, which had considerable influence on their children and grandchildren.

Following this empirical analysis and as it is common and useful for any scholarly work, at the end I will recapitulate on the findings of the study and reflect on striking aspects, follow-up thoughts and open questions.



## Chapter 2

# German-Finnish history

Finland is often regarded as a country which was isolated from the rest of the world for a long time. Finns themselves see their country as the periphery of Europe, where a unique culture developed without much influence from outside<sup>1</sup>. Despite this commonly accepted picture, there has been a long tradition of immigration to this area, with great numbers of people coming from German-speaking areas. This chapter outlines the history of German migration into Finland, starting from Medieval times until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though many Finnish families and companies have a German background, Finnish migration history as such has long focused on emigration from Finland instead of immigration into this country. The books written on German migrants, such as by Robert Schweitzer or Antero Leitzinger, are usually about rather specific groups of migrants, like those who came from Lübeck or Switzerland, while there is no publication dealing with German migration into Finland in general. The sources which those authors used were from the field of local history, for example from Viipuri, or based on material gathered in church parishes. Neither German

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<sup>1</sup>See for instance Sajavaara, Kari; and Jaakko Lehtonen: "The silent Finn revisited." In Jaworski, Adam (Ed.): *Silence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997. 263.

embassies nor Finnish or Russian administrations kept indexes of the German migrants arriving in Finland. Only after Finland became a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire did systematic research on migrants become possible. After 1809, clearly defined borders to Sweden and Norway as well as trade borders to the Russian Empire existed, which is why a system of documentation of people crossing those borders started.<sup>2</sup>

Before 1832 naturalisation was done by signing into the local guild or citizenship of a town or community, but then, the authorities were obliged first to submit applications to the grand duke. This was meant to be a way to hinder fleeing Russian bondmen wishing to settle in Finland, where bondage never existed, and enabled the creation of a complete set of documentation of naturalisation requests, stored in the Finnish national archives. From 1832 until 1917, there were 681 documented applications, but as Antero Leitzinger points out, there must have been many Germans living in Finland who simply did not apply for citizens' rights and which were therefore not captured in those records. Nonetheless, the records referred to in the literature used for this chapter, manage to give an idea about general tendencies in the history of German migration into Finland.

## Situation of Finland in Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages there were no official "state-connections" between Finland and Germany. Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century Finland had been part of the Swedish realm, whereas the small German-speaking areas belonged to the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. The Finnish part of the Swedish realm was

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<sup>2</sup>See Leitzinger, Antero: "Bayerische Einwanderer in Finnland im 19. und frühen 20. Jh." In Beyer-Thoma, Hermann (Ed.): *Bayern und Osteuropa. Aus der Geschichte der Beziehungen Bayerns, Frankens und Schwabens mit Rußland, der Ukraine und Weißrußland*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2000. 413.

inhabited by about 250,000 to 300,000 people, who lived mostly in the Southwest, more specifically along the coastline, even though there were also some inland areas of settlement. Most people spoke Finnish, but there was not yet a written language, while noblemen and clerks under the Swedish crown were usually Swedish-speaking. Additionally, there had been waves of immigration of Swedes into Finland before the 14<sup>th</sup> century – most of them settling along the coast - so that about one-quarter of the total population of the Swedish realm lived within the area of Finland.

At the end of the Medieval times the economic value of the Finnish area grew significantly. Due to trade, custom and tax revenues from the Southwest, and earnings from the fur trade, located mostly in middle and northern parts, Finland was in no economically weaker position than the main parts of the Swedish realm. Of immense importance for Finland's economy was the Baltic Sea. While Finland had solid contacts with northern Germany and the Baltic countries, contact with southern Germany, Switzerland and Austria was sporadic.<sup>3</sup>

## First German migrants in Finland

The Chronicles of Novgorod (1016-1471) mention "Germans" several times, usually in connection to fights against Russians in Finnish territories. For example, in 1283, Germans came with an army through the Newa into the Ladoga Lake and defeated traders from Novgorod<sup>4</sup>. Often those fights were about the city of Viipuri, which was almost always referred to as "German" in the chronicles of

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<sup>3</sup>See Krötzl, Christian: "Kaufleute, Pilger, Studenten – Aspekte der deutsch-finnischen Beziehungen im Mittelalter." In Bendel, Burghardt von; Clemens-Peter Haase; and Olli Salmiinen (Eds.): *Deutsche Sprache und Kultur – Brücke und Scharnier im Nordosten Europas?* Tampere: Deutsche Studien Tampere, 1997. 95-106.

<sup>4</sup>"kamen Deutsche mit einem Heer durch die Newa in den Ladogasee und schlugen die Nowgoroder Kaufleute". See: Alho, Olli (Ed.): "Deutsche in Finnland." In *Kulturllexikon Finnland*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 1999. 63.

the 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>. Same goes for Korola, a city on Lake Lagado, nowadays part of Russia<sup>6</sup>. This shows the impact of German migrants in some areas, which shall be discussed below.

Apparently there were only few German settlers, meaning peasants and farmers, in northern areas of the Baltic states. Instead, craftsmen employed by the Swedish crown, traders and clerics formed the main group of Germans who exerted great influence in Finland's society. The impact of the craftsmen who brought their knowledge and techniques from Germany to Finland can still be seen when looking at the castles of Turku, Hämeenlinna and Raasepori, which carry traces of techniques similar to those being used in German areas of that time.<sup>7</sup> Those traces of German builders and masons can be also seen at other medieval stone churches in Finland, like the brick decor at the dome of Porvoo, designed by a master-builder from Rostock at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

Few knights and noblemen came from Germany to Finland, but while in Livonia, they managed to rise to become the dominant power and to oust the local nobility, in Finland most noblemen were Swedish and those few, who were of German origin, also stood under the Swedish crown.<sup>9</sup>

"German areas" were mostly located along the coastlines, where German merchants were very active and influential. Here, "Saxons" traded salt and Dutch textiles for fur, tar, wax etc., and the term "**saksa**" used to be a synonym for "traders".<sup>10</sup> As onomastics reveal, there must have been people of German origin living inland, for example in Kokemäki, Huittinen, Tyrvää, Pirkkala and

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<sup>5</sup>Example, 1322: "Großfürst Jurij [ging] mit den Nowgorodern zur deutschen Stadt Wiborg und griff sie mit sechs Wurfmaschinen an". See: Alho 1999. 63.

<sup>6</sup>Example, 1337: "da kamen junge Nowgoroder mit ihren Anführern und bestürmten die kleine deutsche Stadt Korela, verwüsteten das Land, verbrannten die Dörfer, schlachteten das Vieh und kehrten mit Gefangenen zurück". See: Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>See Krötzl 1997. 97.

<sup>8</sup>See Alho 1999. 63.

<sup>9</sup>See Krötzl 1997. 97.

<sup>10</sup>See Alho 1999. 63.



Kangasala, and also in northern Finland along the coastline and rivers, which apparently were trade-related positions<sup>11</sup>. Overall, by far the biggest and most influential group of Germans were merchants of Hansa, who started to oust Swedish merchants in the Baltic trade during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that Finland belonged to the Swedish Realm did not prevent German traders from taking an active part in the development of trade on Finnish territory.<sup>12</sup> Those merchants also played an important role in the process of the founding and shaping of Finnish cities like Turku, Porvo, Rauma and Raasepori, which were often planned according to the schema of Hanseatic cities<sup>13</sup>. Krötzl takes the fact that German noblemen and farmers were almost absent in Finland as a reason why there were no serious tensions between Finnish and German inhabitants in earlier history. Unlike in other Baltic countries, no German upper class tried to suppress local people; at the most, German traders were taken to be competitors.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike in Livonia, there were no direct adoptions of models of German municipal laws for Finnish city constitutions, but nonetheless Germans influence was strong and only declined towards the end of the Middle Ages. Germans took important positions on town councils and even outnumbered their Finnish and Swedish-speaking colleagues<sup>15</sup>. German-speaking inhabitants of Finnish cities were strongly interrelated and maintained close contacts to the bourgeoisie in German Hanseatic cities like Tallinn, Danzig and Lübeck as well as to the German bourgeoisie in Stockholm.<sup>16</sup>

As mentioned previously, one city in which German presence was exceptionally

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<sup>11</sup>See Krötzl 1997. 101.

<sup>12</sup>See Ibid. 98.

<sup>13</sup>See Alho 1999. 63.

<sup>14</sup>See Krötzl 1997. 102.

<sup>15</sup>"Bei den in den Urkunden namentlich nachweisbaren Bürgern, bei den Ratsherren Åbos überwogen die Deutschen (42%) bis zum Ende des Jahrhunderts gegenüber den Schweden (39%) und Finnen (13%).". See: Ibid. 99.

<sup>16</sup>See Ibid. 100.

noticeable, was Viipuri, nowadays located in Russia. Even before the official foundation of the city, there was an important staging post for German merchants active in the trade with Nowgorod, Russia. Until the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Germans formed the second-largest group of councilmen in Viipuri (33 per cent), right after Swedes, who made up 52 per cent. Viipuri was the only city, where a trilingual structure of population, namely Low German, Swedish and Finnish, existed until the modern age.<sup>17</sup> Key positions were mainly held by Germans, who were often related to each other and provided personnel for leading posts in military and civil administration as well as priests and teachers for local schools<sup>18</sup>. Those teachers often ended up in Viipuri, because they were initially offered profitable teaching positions in noble households in Livonia, which brought them closer to Finland. German remained the language spoken in many schools until the 1840s, when it was replaced by Swedish.<sup>19</sup>

Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, besides Swedish, German was the language most often heard on the streets. German influence was much stronger in the Finnish parts of the Swedish realm than in the Swedish motherland. Low German, but since the Reformation increasingly Upper German, was used in council meetings, in the correspondence between Finnish cities and also with the reeves of the Swedish crown in Turku, Raasepori and Viipuri. German was not only a means of communication related to trade, law and politics within Finland, but also between Sweden, Russia and the Baltic countries. Peace negotiations between Sweden and Russia were held and treaties published in German, which influenced the corresponding vocabulary, so that there are still words related to trade, handcraft, judiciary and administration in Finnish and Swedish, which reveal this strong German background.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>See Krötzl 1997. 99.

<sup>18</sup>See Ahti; and Holtkamp 1998. 28.

<sup>19</sup>See Ibid. 52.

<sup>20</sup>See Alho 1999. 63 f.

After the Nordic War, Southeastern parts of Finland, including Viipuri and other formerly Swedish parts on the Baltic region were annexed by the Russian Empire in 1721. During this time, there was a strong inflow of Germans, who moved from the Swedish fortress at Nyenskans, which was the forerunner of St. Peterburg, to Viipuri. Even though Germans were in minority in Viipuri, they kept their importance and influence throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which shows in the fact that the magistrate kept German as its official language and even Russian notifications were translated into German.<sup>21</sup>

## Developments of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

German as a language lost its importance when Alexander I. united Old Finland<sup>22</sup> with the rest of Finland in 1812, during which process Swedish became the administrative language in the Grand Duchy of Finland. In Viipuri, German retained its importance for a bit longer, which was strengthened by German migrants, who resettled from St. Petersburg to Carelia after the Russian Revolution. It was not until 1944, when this area became Russian again, that many of them moved further west into what is nowadays Finland. Bit by bit German migrants in Finland assimilated with Swedish elements, which seemed easier, since the languages are rather close to each other. Also those Viipurian Germans, who moved towards the west during the Second World War, are nowadays mostly Swedish-speaking. In contrast to that, Germans who entered Finland after the war, have a tendency to assimilate increasingly with Finnish.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Germany and Russia competed for the role of the main trading partner of Finland, until Germany outpaced Russia towards the turn of the century and became one of Finland's most im-

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<sup>21</sup>See Alho 1999. 64.

<sup>22</sup>Term for the areas that Russia gained from Sweden in the Great Northern Wars and the Russo-Swedish War 1741-43.

<sup>23</sup>See Alho 1999. 64 f.

portant import countries until the 1930s<sup>24</sup>. Also in a global context Germany was considered to be an innovation centre in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and held a leading position in modern fields like technology, natural sciences and medicine. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century many companies which still exist today, were founded by or with the help of immigrants from German-speaking areas. A lot has been written about companies like Hackmann, Paulig or Stockmann, also about the achievements of the architect Carl Ludwig Engel or the composer Friedrich Pacius, therefore I will not elaborate on this further in my work.

Even though there was an increase in franco- and anglophiliac tendencies in Finland after the First World War, the strong connection between Germany and Finland still remained. Finland had difficult relations with Sweden, Russia and also Estonia, while Germany had helped the Whites to win the Finnish Civil War, so despite the lost First World War, right-wing and conservative Finns in particular still kept their picture of Germany as a friend and hero.<sup>25</sup>

When tourism evolved during the 1920s, German tourists became one of the biggest tourist groups visiting Finland. Like today, Germans came to Finland for its "original and unspoiled nature, its lakes and forests" and the renting of simple cottages relied in those days very much on German customers.<sup>26</sup> After few years of being brothers in arms, the occurrences towards the end of the Second World War caused a cooling down of the relationship between Finland and Germany. The Hitler-Stalin-treaty of 1939/40 and the "abandonment" of Finland as well as the Lapland-War 1945 had negative impacts on the political and emotional relationship with Germany. However, latest since Finland joined the European Union, the relationship between the two countries improved again.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>See Ahti 1998. 77.

<sup>25</sup>See Ibid. 84 f.

<sup>26</sup>See Ibid. 88.

<sup>27</sup>See Tuomi-Nikula, Outi: "Völkerbilder – Entstehungsmechanismen und Funktionen am Beispiel des wortkargen Finnen." In Schweitzer, Robert (Ed.): *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Finnlandbegeisterung. Zur Entwicklung des deutschen Finnlandbildes seit August Thiemes "Finnland"-Poem von 1808*. Berlin: Aue-Stiftung 2010. 101 f.

Today there is still a rich and active German culture in Finland, like the German parish as well as the German school in Helsinki, the German library and a *Goethe-Institut*, which advocates German language and culture abroad. There are many cases when one can notice German influence, starting from the way beer is brewed, the education system, and Santa Claus, even though it sometimes becomes hard to tell whether a tradition or influence came directly from Germany or came via Sweden to Finland.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>See Ahti 1998. 83 f.



## Chapter 3

# The first generation of Germans

As I described in the first chapter, when I started working on this research project, my initial idea was to find out more about Germans in Finland - and admittedly I first thought of "classic migrants", their motivation for coming to Finland and experiences in their new home. After getting in touch with several German institutions, where I introduced myself, my research project and also the idea of organising a German culture event, a classic snowball effect started, through which I found my first interviewee, who was related to an employee of one of those institutions. When preparing the interviews I tried to think of themes which might be interesting regarding migration to Finland and prepared a flexible catalogue of questions.

With this first interviewee we had agreed that I would meet him at his work place. It goes without saying that I was extremely nervous before the interview. It had been about two years that I had last done interviews for my **Magisterar-**

beit<sup>1</sup> and even though I had also been nervous back then, it still felt different. All of a sudden I realised what a big task lay ahead of me - and that did feel quite intimidating.

On my way to the interview I went through all the questions, tried to memorise phrases, especially the first ones, so that we would have a smooth start. "Nothing is worse than a clumsy start!", I was sure - and determined not to let this happen. So I went over and over the set of topics, imagined the ideal order in which I could get from one point to the next in the most elegant, sophisticated and eloquent way possible. The train ride was never that short before and way too early I arrived at my interviewee's workplace!

There - a surprise!

My interviewee had brought his adult son to join us. - Today I am very happy about this, but in the first second I was frozen with shock. There it went, my carefully constructed castle of nicely formulated phrases.

The shock did not have the chance to last very long - to my great relief, this constellation turned out to be helpful in various ways. First of all, a natural, relaxed conversation evolved. Instead of having a stiff one-to-one dialogue, what could have been a possible scenario of the very first interview, it turned out to be a rather natural, relaxed discussion, which lasted for about two hours. There were moments when Dieter and Lari, my two respondents, were talking with each other, where I stepped back and took the role of a passive listener. It became a process with its own dynamic; sometimes I did not even have to ask anything, but Lari asked for the viewpoint of his father, Dieter, and vice versa. Second, and in the long run even more important, it confronted me with the situation of descendants of Germans in Finland. Even during this interview I realised that this might be something I was more interested in, something that

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<sup>1</sup>Comparable to Master thesis.



seemed to be more challenging to me than what my previous idea of the research project had included. - What a nice start for the series of interviews that were to follow.

To a great extent it is thanks to this interview that I gradually decided to change the focus of my project towards the descendant generation of Germans in contemporary Helsinki. My plan was to do about one third of the interviews with Germans who came to Finland without having their own Finnish family background and then the remaining two thirds with "their" descendants (apart from three pairs of fathers and sons none of my discussion partners were related with each other). At the beginning I was simply thinking that showing the stories of those first generation migrants was part of the big picture. I imagined there to be three layers: the basis could be the history of German migration to Finland, which I just wanted to explain briefly by summarising the literature. On top of that would be the experiences of first generation migrants. Without them and their mobility, the descendants would not exist (in the figurative sense), which I considered to be a legitimisation for including them in my research. Today, after having done 32 interviews in total, I deem their presence in my work even more crucial than before. Contrasting their words with what German and German-Finnish descendants told me is interesting in itself, paying attention to the variations between the generations in how they perceive the world. However, an understanding of what descendants of migrants have to say only becomes possible if the experiences of "their parents" (again figuratively) are taken into account. The experiences and decisions of migrants may have a great impact on the children's and even grandchildren's points of view, paths and ways of positioning themselves. This becomes visible in an interview I did with Henning, whose father moved to Finland in the 1960s after having falling in love with his penpal, Henning's mother. Henning, aged in his 40s at the time

of the interview, explains:

Henning: "(...) [My father] experienced this completely differently and I know that he was often accused of having come to Finland and having stolen a Finnish woman. That kind of things. And he is quite sensitive, also generally sensitive, and in any case when it comes to this matter and he – I think it also intimidated him as a person. And in a way, he passed that on to us children, so that we also ended up being careful and — What I myself notice is that many times I felt the urge to write something for a newspaper. And then immediately made a mental retreat, because I was thinking, well, if I sign it with my name — the focus will lie on this and not on the matter of discussion. – What is stupid in a way, but it happened several times that I ended up doing nothing (...)"<sup>2</sup>

This clearly shows how crucial it is not to leave out the parents' generation when doing research on descendants of migrants. Even if they were born in their country of residence, like Henning was, and even if they are even less conspicuous than their parents, whom we could regard as "invisible foreigners" due to their outer appearance, they still impart an undeniable share of their parents' experiences and knowledge. This moulds their character, influences their behaviour and the way they look at things, even though they might not always be as aware of it as Henning apparently is.

While working with the interviews of the first generation Germans in Finland's capital area, I noticed something fascinating: In basically all those interviews I discovered a discrepancy - from the interviewee's perspective - between their

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<sup>2</sup>Henning: "(...) Er hat das sicher ganz anders erlebt und ich weiss es auch, weil ihm wurde oft vorgeworfen, dass er nach Finnland gekommen ist und eine finnische Frau geklaut hat. So, dieses Thema, solche Sachen. Und er ist ja recht sensibel, überhaupt sensibel und in dieser Sache sowieso und er hat - ich glaube, es hat ihn doch so ein bisschen eingeschüchtert auch als Mensch. Und er hat's teilweise auf uns Jungs auch übertragen, dass wir auch eher vorsichtig sind und — Was ich zum Beispiel merke, dass ich viele Male den Drang gehabt habe, vielleicht in der Zeitung irgendwie was zu schreiben. Und dann eigentlich gedanklich auch schon gleichzeitig den Rückzieher gemacht habe, weil ich gedacht habe, na, wenn ich mit meinem Namen unterschreibe, dann — dann geht die Konzentration dadrauf und nicht auf die Sache. - Was eigentlich blöd ist, aber es ist viele Male schon vorgekommen, dass ich dann einfach nichts gemacht habe (...)."

disconnectedness to Germany and being-German and yet having the wish to pass some *Germanness* on to their children. This problematic term is related to what others might call a "German heritage". Being aware of the heterogeneity of German society, I however refer to the *idea* of a mutual culture with values, habits and traditions that, according to this concept, can be passed on to others. This "rucksack view of culture", to culture as something a person carries from one place to the next, was already being contested by Umut Erel<sup>3</sup>. Imagining a "German culture rucksack" implies a static, homogeneous and closed setting. This is certainly not the case, but I would like to adjust the rucksack image in a way that each person carries a rucksack in which they might put the traditions, habits, ways of thinking and attitudes that one has gathered on the path through life. Someone who grew up in Germany might have put certain aspects into their rucksack during those years there. However, those things might be influenced by people of various ethnic and social backgrounds, so when this person migrates, the rucksack is not purely German and will be filled with various other things in the time to come. This links to how Vertovec described a world of super-diversity, in which societies host and consist of people of multifaceted backgrounds and thus can only be seen in the light of heterogeneity. Growing up in a society like this means adopting different aspects, consciously and subconsciously, so thinking of a "German culture rucksack" becomes untenable. Moreover, I agree with Anne-Marie Fortier who criticises the idea that "some cultural practices (...) are seen as resulting from [an] identity, rather than performing [an] identity".<sup>4</sup> As described in the introduction, this is also how I want the term "German/Finnish culture" to be seen, as a performance of something people take to be specific for someone with this background.

Coming back to my initial claim, the way my discussion partners described

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<sup>3</sup>See Erel 2010.

<sup>4</sup>Fortier 2000. 5.

themselves, the way they looked at other Germans or Finns, the lifestyle they were living - all this stood in noticeable contrast to the changes that came after having own children. This is what the following part will be about. Describing the aforementioned discrepancy serves as a thematic bridge to the following chapter about descendants of Germans in contemporary Helsinki.

### 3.1 From disconnection to Germany...

At the beginning of this thesis<sup>5</sup> I delineated my own position within my field of research. Possibly due to the mutual background I share with the first generation of German migrants, it did not come as a surprise for me that many of my interviewees appeared to have a critical relationship to a conscious identification with German nationality. Based on personal experiences, I dare state that this is something quite common among many Germans due to the Germany history of the Second World War. This connection was also established by Thomas Risse who states that the Second World War "resulted in an almost complete transformation of German national identity, leading to its thorough Europeanization"<sup>6</sup>. Also, according to Ben Möbius, Germans tend to have a rather "postnational consciousness", trying to escape "the burden of nation and history mentally" by eagerly following a "cultural globalisation"<sup>7</sup>. From my personal point of view, all my life it seemed unthinkable that one could express national pride and those who did were likely to be viewed as right-wing or at least conservative, linking to the feeling of a negative heritage that should not

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<sup>5</sup>See chapter "The Ethnologist in the Field".

<sup>6</sup>Risse, Thomas: *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2010. 32.

<sup>7</sup>Möbius, Ben: *Die liberale Nation: Deutschland zwischen nationaler Identität und multi-kultureller Gesellschaft*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2003. 349.

be maintained<sup>8</sup>. Even if it was not articulated that radically in my interviews, this problematic attitude towards Germanness was still visible in one way or another. In my interview material I recognised different ways of articulating this complicated relationship to being German.

As the following passages will illustrate, some of my respondents linked their problematic relation to a German national identity by referring to German history or drew parallels to Finnish nationalism. Others articulated this relationship by showing how "un-German" they are or by describing the feelings they had or have when they were/are in Germany. Another way of distancing oneself from a German identity could be seen in presenting a negative view on what my interviewees considered to be typically German, and respectively a positive view on what they regarded to be typically Finnish. Last, this disconnectedness seemed to become manifested in the way people spend their private life, the social circles they choose to be part of - though the latter appeared not to be cast in stone, but for many changed with certain circumstances in life. In the following I will clarify those strategies by drawing on examples from my interviews.

### **Reference to history and nationalism**

Few expressed their personal disconnectedness from Germanness directly, for instance Dieter, my first interviewee who came to Finland about 30 years ago, now being in his 60s. He seems to have what I would consider to be the most common way Germans refer to German nationalism. Dieter explains that he has "nothing against being German", but on the other hand he is "absolutely not proud of being German" either. At this point he literally referred to a war,

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<sup>8</sup>Certainly this depends on my own social background, but also the general tone in society as it is for instance traceable in German media shows a similar tendency. More recently this might have changed, triggered by the so-called European refugee crisis that seemed to have caused a significant shift to the right in many European countries.

in which he did not fight, but which influenced his experiences and the way he had grown up. Here it shows that Dieter is relating the knowledge he takes as something we share: He does not name the Second World War as such, but states that he "did not fight in war", which apparently should make it obvious what he is referring to for fellow Germans, but also fellow Europeans and perhaps even fellow world-citizens<sup>9</sup>. At a later point, Dieter goes a bit further and states that in Finland there is a "certain patriotism that one should not have in Germany, or can not have"<sup>10</sup>. Here again he implies common knowledge about this dark part of Germany's past and as a seemingly logic consequence from this past, Germans should not feel patriotic like Finns do. Most interestingly, there are parallels to other studies, for instance Susan Condor's research on national pride among British citizens. Amongst her interviewees, several expressed shame for Britain's colonial past and were taking this as a reason of rejecting British nationalism, at least superficially<sup>11</sup>. When Dieter was making the statement above, he connected it to sports and him finding himself in the position of "always supporting the Finnish team and not the German", though he himself is not sure if this were for historic reasons or because "Finland is such a small country". This statement made me wonder if those who feel particularly unable to connect to a German national identification, tend to substitute this by identifying with their new home Finland. Unfortunately, within the frame of my research I can not provide an answer, but it is a question worth asking. Anticipating the analysis of the interviews with the descendant generation for a

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<sup>9</sup>Dieter: (...) Ich habe nichts dagegen, Deutscher zu sein, ich kann auch nicht sagen, dass ich auf der anderen Seite nicht — auch absolut nicht stolz darauf bin, Deutscher zu sein, ich war nicht im Krieg, aber man hat natürlich eine andere Einstellung; man ist anders aufgewachsen. (...)

<sup>10</sup>Dieter: Nee, ich weiß es nicht. Selbst wenn ich mir den Sport angucke im Fernsehen, ich bin für die Finnen und nicht für die Deutschen. Ich weiß nicht, ob das daran liegt, weil das Land so klein ist und irgendein bestimmter Patriotismus ist natürlich hier immer als Deutscher höchstwahrscheinlich, den man in Deutschland nicht haben sollte und nicht haben kann auch eigentlich... Weiß ich nicht. Schwer zu sagen.

<sup>11</sup>See Condor, Susan: "Pride and Prejudice: identity management in English people's talk about 'this country'." In *Discourse and Society* 11, no. 2 (2000). 191 f.

moment, I would like to point out that most interestingly, sport and supporting a certain national team was hardly ever brought up<sup>12</sup>. Despite this, participants in Lotta Weckström's study on Finnish descendants in Sweden elaborated at several points on playing *salibandy*<sup>13</sup>, or on becoming "patriots" and "really a Finn" when there is a ice-hockey match in which the Finnish national team takes part<sup>14</sup>. It is hard to explain why those aspects did not come up to such an extent in my data, nonetheless for Dieter - regardless of his own un-Finnish background - sports did in fact form a ground on which he negotiated his position as feeling closer to Finland than Germany.

In the interview with Daniela on the other hand, who was in her 30s and had been living in Finland for about five years at the time we met, another nuance of this complexity becomes visible. After the interview, Daniela and I were still chatting for a while - unfortunately I had already turned off the recorder, but for writing about this passage, I drew on notes I had taken immediately after she left. During this chat, Daniela stated that regarding national pride Germany could learn a thing or two from Finland. According to her, in Germany one was "immediately considered to be a Nazi" if one raised the German flag, "let alone stating that one was proud of being German". She had experienced this completely differently in Finland, where children in school were asked to write an essay on "Why are you proud to be a Finn? What makes you Finnish?" - something Daniela deems "unimaginable" in Germany. It became obvious that Daniela does not share the same attitude as Dieter. She also expresses an awareness of the difficulty of having a German national identity, but unlike him she does not see "national pride" as something negative but instead suggests that Germans should take Finns and their nationalism as an example for themselves.

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<sup>12</sup>Jan was the only interviewee who mentioned briefly that he has the habit of watching German *Bundesliga* with his father, but he also did not elaborate further on it.

<sup>13</sup>Finnish: Floorball.

<sup>14</sup>Weckström 2011. 71.

One thought that comes to mind is that in suggesting this, Daniela might position herself as being closer to Finns than to Germans, as if with the years she had spent in Finland, she had adopted this "Finnish way of thinking". However, at no point did she mention an explicit change of her own opinion on this matter, so this part remains my speculations.

Most interestingly, this Finnish patriotism is something that other interviewees found to be odd, for instance Darius, who was in his 50s and has been living in Finland for decades at the time of the interview. His statement on this matter is particularly interesting as it is hard to find a clear position in it.

Darius: (...) the fact that also others talk about is that Germany's economy is doing well and it being the only country in Europe which is in quite good condition and being completely unwilling to develop any kind of identity or leadership. Because: we have the Holocaust and two world wars and the Germans, they would like to be rich and bury their heads in the sand. (...) Finns are wondering ad nauseam: "Who are we? Where do we go? What is our identity? How will things be for us?" - to the point that it's almost ridiculous!"<sup>15</sup>

First, he gives voice to what "also others", not only himself, were saying about Germans, essentially that they would have reason to have more self-confidence. To put it in Susan Condor's words, he here takes "the role of a *relayer*, establishing a distance between the account that [s]he is producing and '[his] own words'"<sup>16</sup>, something Lotta Weckström interprets as avoiding "problems of accountability"<sup>17</sup>. Immediately after saying this, Darius explains why for Germans, from a German perspective, this is not possible, namely because of its shameful past. Based on this, one could suggest that Darius could be of

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<sup>15</sup>Darius: (...) der Umstand über den auch andere reden, dass Deutschland wirtschaftlich richtig gut dasteht und das einzige Land in Europa ist, das eigentlich in guter Verfassung ist und komplett ungewillt ist, irgendeine Form von Identität oder Leadership zu entwickeln. Weil: wir haben Holocaust und zwei Weltkriege und die Deutschen, die wollen gerne reich sein und den Kopf in den Sand stecken. (...) Die Finnen überlegen sich ad nauseam: „Wer sind wir? Wo kommen wir her? Wo gehen wir hin? Was ist unsere Identität? Wie wird es uns ergehen?“ - so, bis zur Lächerlichkeit!

<sup>16</sup>Condor 2000. 185.

<sup>17</sup>Weckström 2011. 79.



similar opinion as Daniela. However, he continues mocking the way Finns - according to him - reflect non-stop about themselves and their national identity. Furthermore, he adds a bit later in the interview, still referring to Finland:

Well, as a state that lost the war 1945, maybe one should downshift one's nationalism a bit, at least visually.<sup>18</sup>

In light of the aforementioned difficulties Germans have with a distinct German identity, criticising Finnish nationalism can be considered in one way to be a trace of German socialisation. However, this would imply that this criticism is not just about having a strong *German* identity in particular, but is turned against national identities and nationalism as such. Admittedly, this did not show up excessively throughout the interviews, so I will leave this thought at this point.

### **Un-German self-definition**

As the previous examples illustrated, some of my interviewees clearly articulated the problematic nature of identifying as a German national: either personally or on a general scale. Several others expressed their disconnectedness to Germany by stressing how "un-German" they were. Here, some referred to feelings they had back in the days when they were still living there, while others explained from today's perspective. As Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich explained, her respondents described various themes in order to reaffirm both their own position as well as the decision to migrate<sup>19</sup>. From a more general point of view, it does not come as a surprise that a migrant's attitude towards their country of origin tends to be rather negative while they might see their new home, in this case Finland, in a brighter light. Uwe Schellenberger discovered something similar

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<sup>18</sup>Darius: (...) Also als Verliererstaat von 1945 sollte man vielleicht seinen Nationalismus ein bisschen downshiften, optisch jedenfalls.

<sup>19</sup>See Bönisch-Brednich 2002a. 274.

in his study on commuters between Germany and New Zealand. He explained that the country of destination was the main motivation for leading such a life, which is why it tends to be depicted positively while Germany is usually viewed more critically<sup>20</sup>. What became visible in most statements is that while picturing their own un-German character, my discussion partners often drew a line of continuity from the past to the present. In the next paragraph I have had a closer look at the story of a woman called Doris to underline this tendency as she creates the image of continuity at several points of her interview:

At the beginning of my interview with Doris, who was in her 50s, I asked the same question as I did with all the first generation migrants, namely to tell me the basic facts about her background and how she ended up in Finland. What followed, was a longer sequence which included several deliberations between which she hopped from one to the other, sometimes leaving them unfinished, so that I had to direct the process by reminding of the main question. As Doris's talk was not pursuing a straight line, but was instead characterised by rather separate, not explicitly linked, almost situational sequences, I summarise the content for the reader: Apparently "it all started" with Doris's sister participating in a youth exchange in Finland in the 1970s. Doris visited her sister during that time and even though her sister returned to Germany, Doris herself decided to move to Finland in the late 1990s, where she has been living ever since. Within this framework, Doris constructed several continuities. Even before telling me about her sister's stay in Finland, Doris began by stating that she had dreamed all her life of leaving Germany, because as long as she can think, she felt like "being on a strange planet", as if she just does not belong there, "not at all"<sup>21</sup>. When I asked her how she measured this feeling of not-

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<sup>20</sup>See Schellenberger 2011. 25.

<sup>21</sup>Doris: (...) Andererseits hab' ich aber mein ganzes Leben davon geträumt, wegzugehen von Deutschland, weil ich eigentlich mich, solange ich zurück denken kann, da gefühlt habe wie auf einem fremden Planeten, dass ich da nicht hingehöre, überhaupt nicht. (...).

belonging that she had when she was still living in Germany, she draws a picture of destiny-like circumstances: First, her father's family was from East Prussia, "where the landscape resembles here [Finland]" and even though he ended up in Germany, he "has always said" that if one place was appealing for him, it would be Finland. Doris adds that her mother had a Finnish surname and wonders if all this was just coincidence, but in any case, by now "almost the whole family lives here"<sup>22</sup>.

Besides those explicitly historic references, Doris explains the fact that she was almost drawn to Finland with a "certain constitution of her soul" which makes her feel "closer to Finns than to Germans - today maybe more than ever"<sup>23</sup>. She also gives the poor living conditions in the area she grew up in as a reason why she had the urge to leave Germany. Still today she connects her childhood and Germany in general with greyness, darkness and "dead ground", while Finland stood in extreme contrast to this image. However, even though Doris acknowledges that today the area where she spent her childhood has changed a lot and became "incredibly green", she is still convinced that it would not be the right place for her. As a reason Doris refers to a German women's magazine *Brigitte woman* which she had subscribed to until recently:

Doris: And then I read German women's magazines and precisely this is a thing, for example I had subscribed to *Brigitte* and ehm, this, six months ago I cancelled the subscription, when I became aware of, but okay, maybe by now this is also a matter of generations... But there is for example *Brigitte Woman*, there I realised, I am completely different, they are wired totally differently. For example there is this whole feminism-drama, what I basically can't really understand, ehm... Ah, right now there is a huge discussion on, ehm (thinks) this care-under-three, which enables women to work

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<sup>22</sup>Doris: (...) die Familie meines Vaters kommt aus einer Gegend in Ostpreußen, wo die Landschaft sehr ähnlich ist wie hier, und mein Vater hat immer gesagt, wenn es ein – wenn es irgendwas gäbe, was ihn reizen würde - es hat die Leute dann so ins Ruhrgebiet verschlagen – dann wär's wirklich Finnland und meine Mutter hat einen finnischen Vornamen gehabt, was nicht klar war, war es Zufall? Inzwischen ist fast unsere ganze Familie hier.

<sup>23</sup>Doris: (...) Das andere war natürlich auch, dass ich mich — in einer gewissen seelischen Konstitution — Finnen, ja, das passt ganz gut zu mir, fühle mich ihnen viel näher als Deutschen. Also, vielleicht heute sogar mehr denn je.

and this angry fight against everyone who vents a different opinion. Somehow it is all so fanatical and I don't know... (...) And this whole issue is totally exotic for me, again that is something I already had as a child, that really is a strange planet. And for me that is just horror, horror, horror, that makes me think, if I should ever — I would be pre-programmed to be the total outsider. And ehm, it's hard to link it to single examples, ehm, but it all sums up to one thing again: In Germany it has to be like this and that, it ought to be like this and that and other ways are not possible. (...) <sup>24</sup>

In an upset voice Doris tells me about the topics discussed in those women's magazines - and stresses how little she could relate to them, which is why she terminated the subscription six months ago. The way themes are covered in there affirms Doris's impression of her not fitting into German society. By using strong terms like "fanatical" and "horror", which she even repeats three times, she makes clear that the distance between "her world" and the "strange planet" Germany could possibly not be bigger. In this context she tries to imagine returning there and abruptly interrupts the thought of it, stating that she would be "bound to be an outsider" back in Germany.

The way Doris moulds the story of how she ended up in Finland illustrates Gabriele Rosenthal's extension of Fritz Schütze's "Erzähltheorie", his theory of narration, as it is illustrated in Anne Juhasz' and Eva Mey's work on second generation migrants<sup>25</sup>. Rosenthal assumes that the ways life stories are experi-

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<sup>24</sup>Doris: Und dann les' ich deutsche Frauenzeitschriften und gerade das ist eine Sache, zum Beispiel Brigitte hatte ich abonniert und ehm, gerade das, da hatte ich vor einem halben Jahr das Abo gekündigt, da ist mir bewusst geworden, aber okay, vielleicht ist das auch inzwischen eine Generationenfrage geworden... Aber da gibt es zum Beispiel Brigitte Woman, da ist mir klar geworden, ich bin vollkommen anders, die ticken einfach so total anders. Da ist zum Beispiel dieses ganze Feminismus-Theater, was ich im Grunde nicht nachvollziehen kann, ehm... Ach, da ist auch jetzt die Diskussion unheimlich groß um die, ehm, (überlegt) das mit dieser unter-drei-Betreuung, die Frauen ermöglichen, zu arbeiten und dieser wütende Kampf gegen jeden, der eine andere Meinung äußert. Es ist irgendwie alles fanatisch und ich weiß nicht... (...) Und diese ganze Problematik ist für mich die totale Exotik, das ist wieder was, das ich als Kind schon hatte, das ist echt ein fremder Planet. Und das ist für mich so Horror, Horror, Horror, dass ich denke, wenn ich da irgendwann — ich wär' ja schon vorprogrammiert, dass ich der totale Außenseiter bin. Und ehm, man kann es schlecht an einzelnen Beispielen fest machen, ehm, aber man kommt immer wieder darauf zurück: In Deutschland, es muss so und so sein, es hat so und so zu sein und anders geht es nicht. (...)

<sup>25</sup>Juhasz; and Mey 2003.

enced and told stand in a "reciprocally constitutive relationship"<sup>26</sup> to each other, so the past is continuously modified according to the moment of remembering as well as an anticipated future. While Schütze suggested that experiences and memories would be piled up in a linear way and could be recalled in the same way, Rosenthal argues that memories underlie changes and can be "constituted and reconstructed in retrospect, also in the process of remembering and telling"<sup>27</sup>. While the *remembering* can at times be vague and contradictory, the *telling* might be changed to fulfil certain expectations, like making the other understand.<sup>28</sup> This becomes visible in the interview with Doris, as she seems to collect suitable, though not always connected, memories to explain her life's journey.

Doris's remarks are a good example of first generation migrants expressing their dis-connectedness to Germany by presenting themselves as having "always" been rather un-German, not suitable for German society. Like Doris, another interviewee, Dagmar, draws a similar line from her past in Germany to her life in Finland. Dagmar, aged in her 30s, admitted that when she was younger, her family moved several times, making her feel "rootless". Even though she tried to adopt the different dialects of the areas they moved into, still people could hear that she "did not belong there". She could not identify with those places she has not been living for long, and also later, when she "was hanging out with punks", she could not identify with Germany<sup>29</sup>, assumingly for ideological reasons. And

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<sup>26</sup>Juhász; and Mey 2003. 112, translated by the author; original: "dass erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte in einem sich wechselseitig konstituierenden Verhältnis stehen".

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. 112, translated by the author; original: "das Vergangene [unterliegt] entsprechend der Gegenwart der Erinnerungssituation und der antizipierten Zukunft einer ständigen Modifikation".

<sup>28</sup>See Ibid. 112 f.

<sup>29</sup>Dagmar: Sowohl als auch, ja. Ja gut, ich hatte, was ich vorhin sagte, schon als Jugendliche in Deutschland nicht so das große Zugehörigkeitsgefühl. Ich hing eher mit den Punkern ab und wir waren halt so —

I: Anti. (lacht)

D: Ja, 'Wir scheißen darauf, Deutsche zu sein!'

yet, in her own words, Dagmar was "all her life looking for identity". For this reason, since she moved to Finland in her 20s, she "always tried to integrate into Finland" and "hate(s) it" when people can still hear that she was not born in Finland, after all those years of having lived there. Dagmar explains that in Germany she had always been an outsider, also regarding her attitude and lifestyle, while in Finland she finally seemed to fit in and all that she wanted is to "really belong" and not to be an outsider again.<sup>30</sup>

Both Doris and Dagmar allowed me an intimate insight into a sphere of old memories and emotions. Others, like Dieter, stayed mostly in the present situation when describing their un-affinity with Germany. Even though Dieter briefly gave a hint of the past when saying that "*by now* he likes being in Germany *again*" (emphasis added), the rest of the time he refers to his current point of view. At the times he is visiting Germany, Dieter adds, it feels more like being on holiday. After some time of strolling through the streets and sitting in cafés, he is happy to be able to "go back home". According to him the "good feeling starts" with being on a **Finnair** plane again, drinking a cup of **Paulig** coffee.<sup>31</sup> Like Dieter, several other interviewees described the feelings they had

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<sup>30</sup>Dagmar: Ne! Also, ich hab' mich — im Gegenteil, also, ich hab' mich, also, immer nur halt bemüht, möglichst komplett in Finnland integriert zu werden. Also, je weniger mich die Leute mit Deutschland assoziieren, desto besser. Ich hasse es, dass man mir noch anhört, dass ich nicht hier geboren bin. (...) Das ist für mich deswegen, weil ich meinen Lebtage lang Identität gesucht hab. In Deutschland war ich wurzellos, wir sind immer umgezogen, oder nicht immer, aber auch mehrfach halt, und meine Eltern sind aus unterschiedlichen Gegenden. Ich hab' versucht, mir das Schwäbische anzueignen, ich hab versucht, mir das Rheinische anzueignen — man hat immer gehört, dass ich nicht dazugehöre. Und umso wichtiger war's mir — Und an Deutschland an sich hatte ich auch kein Verhältnis zu. Wir hatten früher den Spruch: „Jeden Tag eine gute Tat, heute scheiß ich auf den Staat!“ und solche Sachen — also, ich fand's... (zögert, überlegt) Naja, in Finnland hatte ich einfach das Gefühl, so angekommen zu sein. Und jetzt will ich halt auch mal endlich richtig dazu gehören und nicht schon wieder Außenseiterin sein! In Deutschland war ich Zeit meines Lebens Außenseiterin, so auch von der Einstellung und Lebensart her, hier pass' ich so vom Prinzip, pass' ich perfekt rein, nur wie ich rede, hältst du nüchtern im Kopp nicht aus!

<sup>31</sup>Dieter: (...) Wenn ich das für mich selber betrachte: ich bin ganz gerne in Deutschland, mittlerweile wieder, muss ich sagen. Ich mach das schon ganz gerne, aber eigentlich nur privat. Für mich ist das wie Urlaub machen in einem anderen Land. Ich kenne Deutschland von früher her sehr gut, bin also überall gewesen, aber wenn ich da heute hinkomme, dann ist das für mich wie Urlaub machen irgendwo. Andere fahren nach Österreich oder Italien,

after visiting Germany, rather to being a tourist than being "at home".

At another moment during the interview, Dieter admits that besides his contacts in Germany, he is not in touch with any Germans in his private life in Finland. As his work environment is primarily German, he is mostly referring to experiences from this area when picturing his view of Germans. In doing so, Dieter shows another variation of expressing disconnectedness to Germany and other Germans, namely by contrasting specific attitudes and ways of behaving he regards as typically German with what is considered to be normal in Finland. Other interviewees also followed the same strategy. By articulating particular negative views on Germans some of my interviewees distanced themselves from them and actively placed themselves into the position of outsiders, who are able to see and evaluate aspects in German society that Germans who have never lived abroad might not even notice. When employees from a German branch of the company Dieter is working for come to visit the Finnish office, Dieter realises that he is "quite far away from those people. Or that things that are familiar and normal [to him] are not what are familiar and normal to them"<sup>32</sup>. When I ask if he is pointing towards ways of behaviour and thinking, he confirms and gives the example of Germans getting nervous after few moments of silence in which no one said a word. This is linked to a common stereotype of "the silent Finn" as a contrast to what several interviewees regard as meaningless small talk as they take to be common in Germany. As Kari Sajavaara and Jaakko Lehtonen explained, the picture of "the silent Finn" is both a common

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ich bin dann in Deutschland und sitze dann da irgendwo im Café, das ist dann egal, welche Stadt das ist oder lauf an der Küste rum und das ist für mich wie Urlaub und dann bin ich auch froh nach einer Zeit, der Urlaub ist zu Ende, jetzt geht es wieder nach Hause. Das ist für mich — in einer Finnair Maschine zu sitzen und einen Paulig-Kaffee zu trinken, da fängt das eigentlich schon an, das gute Gefühl.

<sup>32</sup>Dieter: Und da merke ich dann schon, dass ich ziemlich weit weg bin von den Leuten. Oder Dinge, die mir so vertraut und natürlich sind, dass das nicht die gleichen Dinge sind, die denen vertraut und natürlich sind.

I: Ja, so an Verhaltensweisen, oder... Denkweisen,...?

D: Ja, Verhaltensweisen, Denkweisen auch, eigentlich ziemlich viel.

view of non-Finns on Finnish people as well as a Finnish self-perception, which shows in what is regarded as an inherent Finnish communication culture with peculiar conceptions of politeness and ways of proper behaviour that may differ significantly from what is seen to be usual elsewhere<sup>33</sup>. Towards the end of their article Sajavaara and Lehtonen try to deconstruct such notions by acknowledging that Finnish behaviour always depends on the context. Many Finns might be rather passive in public debates but all the more talkative at the pub, in the sauna or at the marketplace<sup>34</sup>. It seems that my interviewees still draw on such stereotypes to a greater extent, and claim to have witnessed their existence in everyday life.

## Views on German- and Finnishness

In numerous conversations during my research, stereotypes came into use when positioning oneself within the frame of Finland and Germany, Finns and Germans<sup>35</sup>. This is something I will get back to regarding the descendants of Germans in Helsinki, but what struck me as interesting was the different tendencies in views and usage of those stereotypes about Germans. While descendants mostly referred to clichés of Germans as being punctual, systematic and organised, those ideas did not occur in the interviews with first generation migrants. Instead they related to personal negative experiences with Germans in Germany as well as in Finland, which apparently made a lasting impression on them. It is interesting to link this to elaborations of other scholars: Jasna Čapo explained that a "(d)efinition of the we-group" is often "a reflection of the concept of other groups with which it comes into contact, and with which it compares itself"

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<sup>33</sup>See Sajavaara; and Lehtonen 1997. 263-283.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. 278.

<sup>35</sup>Regarding specifically stereotypes of Finns and Germans in the eyes of each other see Tuomi-Nikula 2010. 91-114.



and moreover can be expressed through the "attribution of negative identities to other groups"<sup>36</sup>. When connecting this to my interviews, it seems like some of the first generation Germans used exactly this strategy on "their own" group to express that in fact they were *not* part of it.

Going back to the conversation I had with Doris, she mentioned that what causes her problems with German society was that for Germans things "ought to be like this and that and that other ways are not possible". Even though this was related to rather specific discussions about childcare and feminism in women's magazines, she linked it to a principal tendency which from her point of view, is visible in Germany on a general basis. What Doris suggests is that Germans tend to be rather stiff and set on how they think things should without even considering different approaches to something. A logical consequence of this could be that there is much more pressure on the individual, which, as a matter of fact, is something Doris suggested a bit earlier in the interview. At this moment she referred to personal experiences, feelings she had just after having moved to Finland.

Doris: (...) For example, when I moved here, mmm, it was like this, I felt much freer as a woman. All at once I felt released from huge pressure. At the end of the 90s it simply was like that, if you want to get somewhere in Germany - I always had to deal with authorities - and ehm, if I wanted to reach something, if I had contact with people there directly, it was incredibly important, how I appeared there. Well, ehm, not regarding my inner attitude, but regarding how I looked. For example - I then put on some makeup on and that just made a huge difference if I wore makeup or not. Since I came here, I never put any makeup on. - For me, Germany was always more appearance than substance, and here it is more substance than appearance. Here no one gives a shit about how someone looks, no one is judged on that.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Čapo Žmegač, Jasna: *Strangers either way: The Lives of Croatian Refugees in their New Home*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007. 9 f.

<sup>37</sup>Doris: (...) Zum Beispiel war es für mich damals so, als ich hierher gezogen bin, mmm, dass ich mich als Frau hier viel freier gefühlt habe. Es fielen mit einem Schlag – fiel unheimlich

To her, being in Finland means freedom to her personally, but also at a general level "people [in Finland] let others be much more - more themselves"<sup>38</sup>. For a while, Doris outlines her point of view on this and explains why she thinks there is no distance between people in Germany. According to her "all the time people get too close to each other"<sup>39</sup> - a behaviour she finds horrifying. She illustrates this using several examples. By referring to "what other Germans criticise here [in Finland]", namely that no one smiles or greets each other in public, she stresses that if she was looking for some company, she would certainly not go by bus for this.<sup>40</sup> Here she contrasts her own person to "other Germans" in Finland, and re-tells what many foreigners living there have been told by others or have been saying themselves. Doris both signals a negative view on what she considers as German behaviour but also makes clear that she is not "like them". - Most interestingly, in another sequence, the constellation is completely different:

Doris: (...) For example - there is this Finnish word 'Besserwisser', they use that in German, because it can't be translated. And, ehm, that one says: "No! You can't - that's wrong! You must do it that way!" And for example my daughter-in-law, who studied in Germany and speaks German perfectly, ehm, that happens even today, that - for example she told me incidentally that she has such and such problem, some skin rash or so, and I tell her: "Well, you must do this and that." and she - she didn't speak to me for three days. And

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viel Druck von mir weg. In Deutschland war es noch fast Ende der '90er einfach so, dass wenn man was erreichen will - ich hatte ja also ständig mit diesen Behörden zu tun - und ehm, wenn ich da was erreichen wollte, wenn ich mit Menschen persönlich zu tun hatte, war es unheimlich wichtig, wie ich aufgetreten bin. Also nicht, ehm, von meiner inneren Haltung, sondern wie ich ausgesehen hab'. Das war zum Beispiel - ich hab' mich dann geschminkt und das war einfach ein Riesenunterschied, ob ich geschminkt war oder nicht. Ich hab' nie mehr sowas wie Make-up benutzt, seitdem ich hierher gekommen bin. - Und Deutschland war für mich immer mehr Schein als Sein, und hier ist mehr Sein als Schein. Hier ist es so scheißegal, wie man aussieht, man wird nicht danach beurteilt.

<sup>38</sup>Doris: (...) man lässt die Leute viel mehr - mehr sie selbst sein.

<sup>39</sup>Doris: (...) Und ehm, zum Beispiel dieses - mm, das hab' ich immer schon ganz furchtbar gefunden in Deutschland, dass die Leute - treten einem ständig zu nah.

<sup>40</sup>Doris: (...) Und, ehm, das, was von Deutschen so bemängelt wird, dass so jeder für sich ist, und man kann sich ruhig anlächeln und Guten Tag sagen, da hab' ich ja überhaupt nichts dagegen, aber ansonsten - Herrgott-nochmal, das sind fremde Menschen, ich will in Ruhe gelassen werden. Wenn ich Gesellschaft suche, dann fahr' ich doch nicht mit dem Bus deswegen.

I say: "What did I do wrong?" - "Yes, you said 'you must!'" and she gets really upset about it and says: "Good Lord, I am an adult woman, how can she dare to say 'you must'", although of course she knows that it's not meant like that in German and she knows that, but it is simply — It is quite typical that one uses this expression in German when wanting to give a suggestion: 'You could try this and that'.<sup>41</sup>

In this account of a conflict situation between her and her daughter-in-law, Doris does not seem to be as far from German socialisation as she suggested at other moments of the interview. While previously she did not get tired of supporting the picture of her not fitting into German society, here she admits that "it still today it happens" that she uses patterns of behaviour, or in this case, a particular way of phrasing that is common in Germany, but that it can cause misunderstandings and issues with people from a different background. This pattern of German "**Besserwissen**", feeling the need to display knowledge, were it for bragging or also advising purpose, was verified in several interviews, for instance, an anecdote from Darius.

Darius: (...) In Finland no one feels cramped; here there is enough space for everyone and here people let each other be. The Finnish act of courtesy is based on not meddling into other's affairs. And if I go to *Penny-Markt* in Germany to do grocery shopping and complete strangers tell me at the counter: (imitating grumpy grandmother's voice) "I would rather not buy this, I bought this last week, it doesn't taste [good]!" - then I do understand as a German that it is well-meant and corresponds with the communication culture, but as a

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<sup>41</sup>Doris: (...) Zum Beispiel – es gibt ja dieses finnische Wort 'Besserwisser', das sagt man auf Deutsch, weil man's nicht übersetzen kann. Und, ehm, dass man sagt: „Nee! So kannst du das – das ist falsch! Du musst das so machen!“ Und zum Beispiel meine Schwiegertochter, die in Deutschland studiert hat und perfekt Deutsch spricht, ehm, das passiert bis heute, dass zum Beispiel die erzählt mir, so vorübergehend, sie hat dieses und jenes Problem, hat da irgendwie so einen Hautausschlag oder so und ich sag zu ihr: „Ja, musst du das und das machen.“ und sie ist dann – sie redet dann drei Tage nicht mit mir. Ich sag: „Was hab' ich ihr denn jetzt getan?“ - „Ja, hast gesagt 'du musst':“ und da regt die sich drüber auf und sagt: „Mein Gott, ich bin eine erwachsene Frau, wie kann die das wagen, zu sagen 'du musst', obwohl sie das natürlich weiß, dass man das im Deutschen nicht so meint und sie das auch weiß, aber es ist einfach — Es ist schon typisch, dass man einfach im Deutschen diese Wendung benutzt, wenn man einen Vorschlag macht „Du könntest das und das mal probieren“.

Finn, meanwhile, I just want to tell her: "Shut up, silly cow! Stop bothering me!"<sup>42</sup>

At this moment Darius articulates an "as-well-as"-position. When random Germans start giving him advice without knowing him or him asking for it, a part of him, the part which was raised in Germany, where he lived for more than 20 years before moving to Finland, "still" understands the intention behind it. However, as he continues, "by now" he also has a "Finnish part" inside of him and even though his German part might understand the situation, the Finnish part feels irritated and annoyed by what this part considers to be impolite and a rude way of intruding into someone else's business. This position is something one could imagine to be the case especially for the descendants of migrants, where the image of sitting between two chairs or being torn between two cultures<sup>43</sup> dominated the discussion for a long time. This idea is being increasingly challenged, as I will discuss later. It is interesting to see a similar constitution in someone who at the time of the interview has lived more than half of his life "abroad" in Finland. Probably it would be different for someone who migrates at an older age, but in the case of Darius, he moved when he was still relatively young, so even though his main years of socialisation took place in Germany, he still might have been flexible enough to adapt to a "Finnish" way of thinking during all those years of living there<sup>44</sup>.

Darius shows in this sequence that he acquired "communicative competence" in

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<sup>42</sup>Darius: (...) In Finnland fühlt man sich nicht beengt, hier ist massenweise Platz für alle und hier lassen sich die Menschen in Ruhe. Das finnische Gesetz der Höflichkeit basiert darauf, dass man sich nicht gegenseitig reinredet. Und wenn ich in Deutschland im Penny-Markt was einkaufen will an der Kasse und wildfremde Leute sagen: (imitiert grantige Altweiberstimme) „Das würde ich aber nicht kaufen, das hab' ich letzte Woche gekauft, das schmeckt nicht!“ - dann versteh' ich zwar als Deutscher, dass es gut gemeint ist und der Kommunikationskultur entspricht, aber als Finne inzwischen, dann habe ich Lust zu sagen: „Halt deine Klappe, du blöde Kuh! Lass mich in Ruhe!“

<sup>43</sup>See elucidations of Ruhs 2009.

<sup>44</sup>Michael Braun and Walter Müller formulate the same hypotheses, namely that the age at migration and the duration of someone's stay in the country of residence affects his identification with the places in question. See Braun, Michael; and Walter Müller: "National and Transnational Identities of Intra-European Migrants." In Höllinger 2012. 268.

both German and Finnish, something that John Gumperz considers to be of greater importance than bare "linguistic competence" as it allows a person to recognise the social norms and values of a group and to act correspondingly<sup>45</sup>. This "as-well-as"-identity is also described by Schellenberger in his study on commuters between Germany and New Zealand, in which he stated that when migrating, people do not simply give up their "old identity", but instead work on "a simultaneous incorporation in several cultural contexts, thus unite several different identities"<sup>46</sup>. Also, Teresa LaFromboise, Hardin Coleman and Jennifer Gerton acknowledged this as-well-as-position as part of their alteration model, which illustrates that it is possible "for an individual to know and understand two different cultures. It also supposes that an individual can alter his or her behavior to fit a particular social context"<sup>47</sup>, which is exactly what became visible in the interview with Darius but also with other interviewees. This fits into my adjusted idea of a rucksack-view of culture, meaning that Darius filled some of his rucksack with Finnish components, which also goes well with Ilse Lenz' constructivist perspective of an open and flexible identity which is able to change during life-long learning processes<sup>48</sup>.

What struck me as interesting in the context of distance between people, was that even though the majority of my interviewees, regardless of the generation, considered the policy of "Sie vs. Du"<sup>49</sup> to be inconvenient and to show how "stiff" Germans were<sup>50</sup>, Doris adds a different layer to this:

Doris: (...) For example, I think in Germany, addressing people

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<sup>45</sup>See Gumperz, John: *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972. 205.

<sup>46</sup>Schellenberger 2011. 187.

<sup>47</sup>LaFromboise, Teresa; Hardin L. Coleman; and Jennifer Gerton: "Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory." In *Psychological bulletin* 114, no. 3 (1993). 399.

<sup>48</sup>See Ruokonen-Engler 2012. 78.

<sup>49</sup>Referring to ways of addressing the other: while the informal "Du" may be used with family, friends and in any case signals more intimacy, "Sie" is the formal, official way of addressing and should be used with people one does not know (well) or in work-life (if not explicitly suggested differently).

<sup>50</sup>See for example interview with Dagmar.

with "Sie" is still necessary. And I have experienced that several times colleagues or so suggested: "Oh, but we may just use 'Du'!" - I say: "Okay.", but in doing so, yet another barrier gets lifted, even if one uses 'Sie', one still gets too close to people.<sup>51</sup>

Besides the aspect of having to act as one is supposed to act, and the aspect of meddling into someone else's affairs, my interviewees mentioned many other things they disapproved of in Germany, or in attitudes they regard as German. In the following paragraph I chose to present two of them for different reasons. First of all, Darius describes life in Germany through the eyes of Finnish-German descendants. He says:

Darius: I think what — hits children, who are raised here [in Finland] in a German-Finnish way and who then as young adults go to Germany, very hard, is how replaceable every individual is in Germany, how many people there are there and how many of those people are actually redundant or are searching for a spot all the time or for something to eat or something to smoke or something to live in or... So, this struggle for existence — in Germany you just are no longer (incomp.) Here [in Finland] you belong to a small elite, at least you're given that impression, yes and bilingual, trilingual homes, which once in a while move to Los Angeles or Dubai or manage the cultural institute in Berlin, all that is totally normal and in Berlin all of a sudden you're —

I: Nobody.

D: Yes. Get barked at when you don't pay the rent on time... (laughs)<sup>52</sup>

In this excerpt Darius, tries to imagine how it must be for children of German-

<sup>51</sup>Doris: (...) Zum Beispiel, ich denke, dass man nach wie vor in Deutschland das Siezen braucht. Und ich hab' das oft erlebt, dass es bei Kollegen oder so gesagt wird: „Ja aber wir können uns ja duzen!“- Ich sag „Okay“, aber damit fällt wirklich noch eine Schranke mehr, sogar wenn man sich siezt, tritt man den Leuten zu nah.

<sup>52</sup>Darius: Ich glaube, was — Kinder, die deutsch-finnisch hier aufwachsen und dann als junge Erwachsene nach Deutschland gehen, ziemlich hart trifft, ist wie ersetzbar in Deutschland jedes Individuum ist, wie viele Menschen es da gibt und wie viele Menschen davon eigentlich überflüssig sind oder sich einen Platz suchen die ganze Zeit oder was zu essen oder was zu rauchen oder was zu wohnen oder... Also, dass der Existenzkampf — in Deutschland ist man eben nicht mehr (unv.) Hier gehörst du zu einer kleinen Elite, zumindest wird dir das Gefühl vermittelt, ja und zweisprachig, dreisprachige Elternhäuser, die ab und zu mal nach Los Angeles ziehen oder Dubai oder das Kulturinstitut in Berlin leiten, das ist ganz normal und in Berlin bist du dann plötzlich —

I: Niemand.

D: Ja. Wirst angeschnauzt, wenn du deine Miete nicht rechtzeitig zahlst... (lacht)

Finnish families who grew up in Finland and go to Berlin as adults. Darius does not mention if this is how his own children experienced visiting Germany or if it is actually based on his own feelings, as he previously described himself as a "by-now-Finn". However, Dieter and his son Lari also support the image of a struggle for existence in Germany. As Dieter says, in Germany everybody is "always bustling and looking out for number one", while Lari compares it to people trying to pass the other or then trying to block the one who is passing. Even though Dieter adds that there might be also "weirdos and criminals and stupid people" in Finland, there are not as many and if one wants to, it is always possible to avoid them.<sup>53</sup>

A final example of explaining what one dislikes about Germany in order to dissociate from Germany, was given by Dirk, who was in his 50s when we met. Like the previous interviewees Darius and Dieter, Dirk had also been living in Finland for several decades when we met. However, and in contrast to Dieter, who almost consistently expressed a rather negative view on Germany and Germans, Dirk seemed to appreciate certain aspects of life in Germany<sup>54</sup>, still criticising others. As Dirk kept himself well-informed about German society and followed German media, he took position of an expert when saying that what he had observed was "complaining on a very high level" in Germany. According to Dirk this shows in private but also in media.

Dirk: (...) If two Finns in Finland meet and one asks the other: "So,

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<sup>53</sup>Dieter: (...) In Deutschland ist man immer irgendwie so am Wuseln oder muss immer gucken, dass man irgendwo bleibt.

Lari: Man versucht, einen zu überholen, oder man versucht, einen beim Überholen zu blockieren,...

D: Ja-ja, es ist irgendwie — es ist so eine Natürlichkeit eigentlich, wie das hier so ist. Hier gibt es auch Spinner und hier gibt es Kriminelle und blöde Leute, aber das ist doch alles relativ wenig hier. Und man kann den Leuten auch eigentlich hier sehr simpel und einfach aus dem Weg gehen, wenn man das nicht möchte.

<sup>54</sup>Something which underlined this, was that according to Dirk's own words he would not mind moving back to Germany, even though this might be a bigger issue for his family than for him. Most other interviewees of this group could not imagine moving back to Germany and if so for practical reasons like the climate or the Finnish health system. I will not go more into detail, but it is worth mentioning at this point.

how are you?" and the other replies: "Yeah, it's okay." If they would ask "How are you?" in Germany, every second would reply: "Ouh, shit! Ouh, this and that!" and then he will start lamenting. In my opinion it is much more common in Germany than in Finland to have a negative attitude towards aspects in everyday life.<sup>55</sup>

Only moments later, Dirk puts this into a more general frame by talking about his discoveries in German and Finnish media:

Dirk: (...) That sometimes things that actually were no real problems before get whipped up negatively in the German media. "We are at such a bad stage!" or "Everything is so expensive!" and the drop in prices and the inflation and still in comparison with other countries, us Germans were still the ones who were among the better-off economies. (...) Well, especially as a foreigner those things at some point become apparent.<sup>56</sup>

Particularly the last quote shows an interesting way of positioning oneself. On the one hand, Dirk speaks of "us Germans" when stating that Germany's economy was still better off when Germans had already started to complain and worry. Here, he includes himself in the group - but on the other hand he consciously calls himself a foreigner (in Germany), putting himself into an outsider position, which enables him to see and analyse tendencies in German society.

A similar observation was made by Bönisch-Brednich in her study on German migrants in New Zealand. As she stated, after some years of living abroad the perspective changes and one starts to see Germany through the eyes of a New Zealander (or here, of a Finn). Therefore visiting Germany turns into "journeys of comparison" which "confirm their own position in relation to both countries and both ways of life"<sup>57</sup>. In the case of some of my interviewees, this may be

<sup>55</sup>Dirk: (...) Wenn sich in Finnland zwei Finnen zusammensetzen, dann fragt der eine: „Na, wie geht's?“ und der andere sagt: „Ja, ist okay.“ In Deutschland jeder Zweite, wenn sie ihn fragen: „Wie geht's?“ - „Ouh, scheiße! Ouh das und das!“ und da fängt er an, zu lamentieren. Es gibt in Deutschland meines Erachtens eine wesentlich weiter verbreitete negative Einstellung zu Alltagsdingen als in Finnland.

<sup>56</sup>Dirk: (...) Dass also in den deutschen Medien teilweise Sachen negativ hochgepusht wurden, die eigentlich keine wirklichen Probleme waren. „Uns geht's so schlecht!“ oder „Es ist alles so teuer!“ und der Preisverfall und die Inflation und trotzdem im Vergleich zu anderen Ländern wir Deutschen immer noch diejenigen waren, denen es wirtschaftlich mit am besten ging. (...) Also, vor allem, wenn man Ausländer ist, fällt einem das doch irgendwann mal auf.

<sup>57</sup>Bönisch-Brednich 2002b. 228 f.



an "in between" or "within both cultures" position, having both the viewpoint of a German, meaning an understanding of patterns in Germany, as well as the viewpoint of a Finn, perceiving and evaluating what is seen as normal in Finland and Germany.

## Social life

The way my interviewees took a position within or outside categories such as German- and Finnishness also became visible at a different level, namely in how they decided to shape their social lives. Their connectedness or unconnectedness to or from other Germans manifests itself in the extent to which my respondents decided to interact with them and if and how they get involved in "German circles". This links to Linda Duits' idea of a identity as a "narrative of the self", which includes ways of "performing" the particular identities<sup>58</sup>. It is not only about what one tells about himself, the words he uses to position himself, but also the way he behaves, acts, the habits and practices he pursues.

When I asked in the interviews if my discussion partners somehow took part in the activities within German circles in Helsinki, Dieter made a clear statement: "*Zero* interest." and continued: "I don't need any Germans here. Then I could also just stay in Germany."<sup>59</sup>. At other stages of the interview he had already stressed several times how distant he felt from Germany and other Germans, and in this context he made it clear once more by opposing two scenarios:

Dieter: I think I would do that if I were in Germany: I would go to all kinds of events when there is something Finnish. But here I would never ever think of going somewhere where there is a German flag set up on the table.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>See Duits, Linda: *Multi - Girl - Culture: An Ethnography of Doing Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008. 34.

<sup>59</sup>Dieter: *Null* Interesse. (...) Ich brauche hier keine Deutschen. Dann kann ich auch in Deutschland bleiben.

<sup>60</sup>Dieter: Ich würde das, glaube ich, auch machen, wenn ich in Deutschland wäre, dann

This struck me as interesting: Not only that Dieter previously named several character traits and tendencies in German behaviour that he dislikes or that make him realise that he is not at all "like them" - he actually reinforces this Finnishness of his by drawing a picture of him being in Germany, joining events dedicated to Finnish culture, taking part in something he feels close to his heart. Reality, his situation now in Finland, is in direct contrast. Dieter makes it sound as if he *already were* where and with whom he wants to be and as if he felt no desire to change it or to have even temporary contact with things or people related to Germany. While Darius for instance, who called himself a "by-now-Finn", makes use of literal self-descriptions and labellings, Dieter creates the same image of himself in a more illustrative way. However, his initial reaction to my question seemed definite and without any hesitation, suggesting that he has no moments when he might possibly feel different about it. A similar attitude was expressed by Dennis (in his 40s), who came to Finland for love and had been living there for more than ten years at the time of the interview. When asking him if he sometimes goes to gatherings of German groups like the Internet forum *saksalaiset*, he concedes:

Dennis: Yes, I was thinking about it, but at the moment I somehow lack interest in it. (thinks) Don't know, eh, no clue, there... I don't know, in the end I wouldn't know what I should do there. If it is all about speaking German, I just pick up the phone and call my brother or so. Or a friend in Germany.<sup>61</sup>

As a matter of fact, just after having moved to Helsinki, Dennis actually did go to some gatherings at the German restaurant *Zinnkeller*, but only because he "was a complete stranger and only had [his] girlfriend and mother-in-law",

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würde ich auch zu allen möglichen Veranstaltungen gehen, wo es irgendwas Finnisches gibt. Das könnte mir hier nicht im Traum einfallen, zu irgendwas hinzugehen, wo eine deutsche Fahne auf dem Tisch steht.

<sup>61</sup>Dennis: Doch, hab ich mal überlegt, aber irgendwo fehlt mir ein bisschen das Interesse im Moment. (überlegt) Weiß ich nicht, eh, keine Ahnung, da... Ich weiß auch nicht, im Endeffekt weiß ich auch nicht, was ich da soll. Wenn es nur darum geht, Deutsch zu sprechen, dann nehme ich das Telefon in die Hand und ruf meinen Bruder an oder so. Oder eine Freundin in Deutschland.

who were living in a city other than Helsinki. Dennis admits that as he did not "have anybody in Helsinki", "of course it was nice" to go to the meet-ups, but when he met other, "international" people at the language class he attended, seemingly it became unnecessary for him to go to those German gatherings.<sup>62</sup> When looking at his interview as a whole, I consider it to be interesting to contrast his lack of interest in attending organised gatherings of Germans with his view on his social life in general. At other points of the interview, Dennis admits that he finds it hard to establish friendships with Finns. He describes how he tried to find contacts through one of his hobbies, motorcycling, but adds that he actually never meets anyone with whom he is "cruising around in the afternoon" in other contexts than this. Despite the fact that motorcycling is "a seasonal thing", Dennis sees another reason in Finns being "more reserved" so that building friendships takes "a little longer". He acknowledges though that it also needs a personal, mutual connection, two people have to be on the same page - and this is something universal, not specific to living in Finland.<sup>63</sup> To me it seems interesting that even though Dennis admits that still today he has not really succeeded in building a big network outside his girlfriend's family, he still is not interested in going to those German meet-ups. By saying that "if it

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<sup>62</sup>Dennis: Ja, zu Anfang war das natürlich ganz nett, weil ich komplett fremd in der Stadt war und ich hatte im Endeffekt nur meine Verlobte und meine Schwiegermutter wohnt in [Ort], mein Schwiegervater auch und insgesamt die Familie von der Seite in [Ort] – ich hatte in Helsinki gar keinen. Und dann war das natürlich dahingehend ganz gut, da hab ich irgendwo Leute getroffen, hab dann im Sprachkurs auch Leute aus anderen Teilen Europas und der Welt getroffen.

<sup>63</sup>Dennis: (...) Sagen wir's so, über das Internet, Motorradfahren und so weiter hab ich dann versucht, auch selbst Kontakte zu knüpfen. Aber das ist auch so... Das Problem beim Motorradfahren ist, das ist immer so eine saisonbedingte Sache, das dauert ein bisschen und das dauert auch jetzt so... Die Leute, mit denen ich dann durch die Gegend gurke nachmittags, sehe ich sonst auch nicht. Die sind irgendwo anders, arbeiten, ich hab noch keinen eigentlich getroffen, (lacht) mit dem ich durch die Gegend gedüst bin. Aber da kommt einem dann auch wieder so die Sache entgegen, dass die Finnen so bisschen reservierter sind, dass es etwas länger dauert. Es sei denn, man findet wirklich den gemeinsamen Dreh, dass man wirklich so in die gemeinsame Richtung geht sowieso. Aber das, da hab ich bisher wirklich noch keinen in Finnland oder in Helsinki getroffen, wo ich sage „OK, mit dem komme ich super aus, mit dem verstehe ich mich hervorragend.“ - Aber das ist in Deutschland genau das gleiche. Wenn ich jetzt nach Lübeck ziehen sollte oder so oder nach Bremen, hätte ich genau das gleiche Problem, oder nach München oder wie auch immer. Da ich niemanden kenne —

was just about talking German (I could also just pick up the phone and call my brother)", he breaks those gatherings down to the usage of a common language, which apparently is not of sufficient importance for him that it would make him go there.

Other interviewees named more concrete reasons why they did not want to attend any get-together of Germans, for instance Dominik and Dana. Dominik was in his 30s when we met and came to Finland during his studies. He told about going to some meeting of the *saksalaiset*-forum some years ago:

Dominik: We were quite heterogeneous regarding the age structure, I already ranked among the older ones back then; not to the oldest, there were also one or two, who were 60 years old, but besides those, there were mostly young students. And I don't really fit that well in there (takes a deep breath) as a father of a family, who is established in working life. Finding topics to talk about is not that easy then. Because I'm not really into this little game "Griping about Germany". Or the other way round, what is even more popular: "Griping about Finland" - I also don't like to play.<sup>64</sup>

Dana, another interviewee who was in her 40s at the time of the interview and who had already been living in Finland for more than a decade, shares this experience and says that Germans in Finland or abroad generally, tend to have a certain attitude that she does not like. According to her, those Germans, who "wanted to leave by all means" usually have a quite negative opinion about Germany, which she can not really come to term with. Nonetheless she tells me that she has a rather mixed social life, with Finnish, international as well as German friends, but she never really was looking specifically for German contacts.<sup>65</sup> Dominik, who explained above that he also does not like taking

<sup>64</sup>Dominik: Da waren wir ein bisschen heterogen, also von der Altersstruktur her, da zählte ich damals schon zum älteren Ende dann; nicht ganz zu den Ältesten, ein, zwei 60-jährige waren auch da, aber eben vor allem junge Studenten. Und da pass' ich halt (holt Luft) als Familienvater, der im Berufsleben steht, dann nur noch bedingt rein. Gesprächsthemen zu finden, ist dann nicht unbedingt ganz einfach. Weil das Spielchen „Über Deutschland meckern“ spiel' ich nicht ganz mit. Oder andersrum, was fast noch lieber betrieben wurde, „Über Finnland meckern“ spiel' ich auch nicht mit.

<sup>65</sup>Dana: (...) grundsätzlich habe ich sowohl internationale, deutsche und auch finnische Kontakte, also, da habe ich nie irgendwie so nach anderen Deutschen gesucht, irgendwie

part in German meet-ups, indeed has Germans among his friends. According to him, this was related to his children attending the German School in Helsinki though, and might have turned out differently if he had been living somewhere else in Finland, where no such German institutions existed.<sup>66</sup> Dominik added an interesting aspect to this discussion by telling me about a German family who became family friends through their children, who all go to the German School. He told me that the mother of a classmate of his child noticed that they had the same dialect and asked him where he was from<sup>67</sup>. As it turned out, they were from the same area in Germany and that is how they "started having a conversation", from which a friendship evolved. When I asked Dominik whether he thinks that coming from the same region makes becoming friends easier, he replied:

Dominik: Yes, the background is simply similar and of course also the dialect; you know, people sometimes look down to the Swabian dialect in particular, sneering, and if you then meet someone - well, I myself don't speak it that strongly, because my parents were more from the north, but for many it is simply nice, being able to talk and no one smirks and they are understood!<sup>68</sup>

In this citation Dominik refers to a hierarchy of dialects in Germany, in which some are made fun of more than of others<sup>69</sup>, and expresses how relieved people

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aktiv, dass man unbedingt halt so die Grüppchen sucht. - Da sind einige dabei, mit denen ich mich gut verstehe, aber Deutsche verhalten sich auf eine typische Art in Finnland oder allgemein im Ausland. Die, die unbedingt weg wollten, haben allgemein eine sehr schlechte Meinung über Deutschland, das ist nicht so ganz mein - also, mein Bereich, also halt dann nur meckern, dass in Deutschland alles schlechter ist...

<sup>66</sup>Dominik: Naja bei mir muss man schauen, weil die Deutsche Schule natürlich auf meinen Bekanntenkreis etwas Einfluss hat, dadurch kennt man natürlich viele Deutsche. Ich wüsste nicht, wie es sich entwickelt hätte, wenn wir in Turku wohnen würden oder in Rovaniemi, als Extrem dann. Da wäre die Entwicklung vermutlich eine andere.

<sup>67</sup>Dominik: Die Mutter von dem Klassenkameraden meiner Tochter hat dann irgendwann festgestellt, dass meine Sprache doch so einen ähnlichen Dialekt hätte wie ihrer und wo ich denn herkäme und da kamen wir dann ins Gespräch

<sup>68</sup>Dominik: Ja, der Hintergrund ist einfach ähnlich und der Dialekt natürlich auch; gerade auf den schwäbischen Dialekt wird ja gerne etwas herabgeschaut und spöttelnd und wenn man dann jemanden hat - also, ich sprech's ja selber nicht stark, weil meine Eltern eher aus dem Norden kamen, aber für viele ist es einfach nett, wenn sie reden können, keiner grinst und sie werden verstanden

<sup>69</sup>Drawing on Ronald Wardhaugh (1999), Lotta Weckström elucidate that the "idea that there is a close, possibly determining, relationship between language and the people who

with such a "despised" dialect can be if they can talk freely, without having to fear that someone will mock them for the way they speak. Even though Dominik did not look for German contacts and did not feel comfortable at organised gatherings of Germans, once he met someone from the same region in Germany, he did feel a connection, already simply based on this mutual background.

### Change of attitude

A negative attitude towards Germans and German circles in Finland is not cast in stone, even though some interviewees might have made it sound like it is. In some cases even an explicit aversion to "the German community" may change due to various circumstances. This was the case for Doris. Most interestingly, she explains that the reason why she initially contacted me, was because an acquaintance (the interviewee Daniela) thought I might be interested in talking to her as she was "not at all part of German circles"<sup>70</sup>. She continues describing how she saw the German community in her first years in Finland:

Doris: And, ehm, unfortunately I had the experience right in the beginning, I can't even tell you where I actually met them... Probably, yes, there were quite a few, there were meetings of Au Pair girls, even though I was much older, of course. That was mostly related to the German school, the German embassy, where I witnessed - or where I realised quickly that these people were exactly the type with whom I did not, absolutely did not want to be in touch with, where I heard, ehm, that were the kind of Germans, there were harrowing many of those in the 90's, who think they are something better than

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speak it is widespread. (...) This thin line of thoughts brings us very quickly to beliefs about some languages being sophisticated and better developed, whereas others are less developed.", Weckström 2011. 106.

<sup>70</sup>Doris: Nee. Ich hab' bis heute — das war der Grund, weswegen ich zu dir Kontakt aufgenommen habe, das war durch eine Frau, die ich eigentlich nur ganz ganz flüchtig kenne, hauptsächlich durch Facebook, Daniela, die irgendwie die Idee hatte, ich könnte deshalb interessant sein, dadurch, vor allen Dingen, weil ich nämlich im Prinzip überhaupt nicht in deutschen Kreisen bin, überhaupt nicht!

the Finns. Who say that Finns don't have a culture, they are barbarians and so, and so on, a bit like that.

I: M-hm, German elite...

D: *Exactly!* Exactly! (...) And there were so many of them, they still exist today, they live in some sort of — how do you say? Well, you can't call it a ghetto, but they totally live in their own circles, without being in touch with Finns at all. Of course those are families that come here through companies, who know from the beginning that they will return [to Germany] and I wanted to live here. I, ehm, and I wanted to — how do you say it in German? — well, build a home here. And I did not want to have little contact with them. (...)<sup>71</sup>

In this context she still admits how hard it can be to build a social network in Finland, and it seems that she is trying to understand why Germans might end up staying among other Germans. Doris explains that she has "good friends, Finnish friends", but nonetheless she describes it as normal to meet them only twice a year. Even though the way she sees Finns staying in touch with each other was also an issue for her, she tells about "many Germans" she knows in Finland who have a hard time because of a lack of contacts. According to Doris this can go so far that they consider leaving Finland because they find their social situation unbearable.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Doris: (...) Und, ehm, ich hatte leider direkt am Anfang die Erfahrung, ich kann jetzt nicht mehr sagen, wo ich die eigentlich kennen gelernt habe... Das war wahrscheinlich, ja es gab viele, es gab Au Pair Mädchen-Treffen, obwohl ich natürlich viel älter war. Das waren dann vor allem so Deutsche Schule, Deutsche Botschaft, wo ich da mitbekommen habe – oder wo sehr schnell klar war, dass ist genau der Typ, mit dem ich absolut, wirklich absolut nichts zu tun haben will, wo ich dann auch hörte, ehm, das war der Typ Deutsche, die gab es in den '90er Jahren erschütternd viele hier, die sich als was besseres fühlen als die Finnen. Die sagen, Finnen haben keine Kultur, das sind ja Barbaren und so, usw., so ein bisschen in diese Richtung.

I: M-hm, deutsche Elite...

D: *Total!* Total! (...) Und das waren – und es waren viele Leute, die gibt es auch bis heute, die leben wie in einer Art — wie sagt man? Na, Ghetto kann man nicht sagen, aber die leben so total in ihren eigenen Kreisen, ohne auch nur Berührung zu haben mit den Finnen. Das sind natürlich Familien, die durch Firmen hierher kommen, wo klar ist, die gehen wieder zurück und ich wollte hier leben. Ich, ehm, und mich hier — wie sagt man das auf Deutsch? — also, mir hier ein Zuhause schaffen. Und nicht wenig mit denen zu tun haben(...)

<sup>72</sup>Doris: (...) Auf der anderen Seite ist es aber so, dass man natürlich im Laufe der vielen Jahre merkt, das Sozialleben ist hier schon irgendwie anders. Es ist — Freundschaften werden anders – Bekanntschaften werden anders gepflegt. Und es ist für mich auch, aber für die meisten Leu — Deutschen, die ich kenne, ist das ein Problem, dass man im Alltag nicht genügend soziale Kontakte hat. Ich hab' gute Freunde, finnische Freunde, aber das sieht hier so aus, in der Regel, man trifft sich zwei mal im Jahr. (...) Und ich kenne Deutsche, die gesagt

Having in mind what others, for instance Dennis, said about social life in Finland, one may ask if Barry Gurdin was right about his idea of "cross-cultural styles of friendship", as presented by Bönisch-Brednich. According to him, "ethnicity [was] one of the most difficult hurdles for friendship to cross, since cultural barriers are often more problematic than, for example, differences in age and gender (Gurdin 1996. 439 ff.)"<sup>73</sup>. At least in several of my interviews, people explained their difficulties in establishing friendships with Finns by claiming differences in the way Finns and Germans organise their social lives - and in that way built their explanation on generalisations around "Finnish behaviour". Despite showing understanding of how complicated living in Finland can be for some, Doris kept her negative view on German circles until she came into touch with the German church parish through her husband. By accident, he had heard of some events there which he then decided to attend. Doris first did not think well of it, as she told me:

Doris: (...) And ehm, I was not really excited about this, also because all the notifications from the German parish that were sent to us in the first place were in Swedish, and even the address was in Swedish and I was saying: 'What's that all about? Is that somehow again this conceit that it is something better?' - apparently this is related to the constitution of the church, that it is somehow Swedish-Lutheran - apparently it's related to that. <sup>74</sup>

Doris's concerns again centred around the idea of Germans in Finland regarding themselves as "something better", consciously distancing themselves from Finnish society. In this case, Doris saw her preconception confirmed by the fact that notices and information about the German parish were in Swedish, which, as she later-on found out, stems from the organisation of the church as Swedish-

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haben, sie gehen deswegen nach Deutschland zurück, weil sie halten das nicht aus.

<sup>73</sup>Bönisch-Brednich 2002a. 291, translated by author.

<sup>74</sup>Doris: (...) Und ehm, ich war da nicht so sehr begeistert davon, schon deshalb nicht, weil die gesamten Nachrichten in der Deutschen Gemeinde, was da kam, waren in allererster Linie schwedischsprachig, auch die Adresse war schwedischsprachig und da hab' ich gesagt: „Was soll denn das? Ist das irgendwie dieser Dünkel, wieder, dass es was besseres ist?“ - hängt aber, das hängt irgendwie mit der Konstitution der Kirche zusammen, dass das irgendwie schwedisch-lutherisch – es hängt wohl eher damit zusammen.



Lutheran. Through a temporary job in one of the facilities owned by the church and finally through its choir, Doris gradually started to be more in touch with Germans and realised that there are "two kinds of Germans in Finland":

Doris: (...) of course there are two kinds of Germans here. There are those, who, like us, have been here all their life or at least for generations, and then there are those who come here only for few years, who stay separate from Finns, live completely within German circles, in the German School, where there is a completely different — and it is a totally different culture, completely different.<sup>75</sup>

As it becomes apparent in the interview with Doris, it was her sincere wish to become a true part of Finnish society. Earlier she was wondering if it was "just a coincidence" that she moved to Finland, considering her father's affinity for this country and her mother having a Finnish first name. Even though Doris shows understanding of the difficulties a life in Finland may bring to people coming from outside, she still judges Germans who do not try to integrate but stay among other Germans. As shown above, her reactions when sensing that someone or some institution staying inside a "German bubble" seem to be almost allergic and she implicitly positions herself into the group of Germans ("like us") who have been living in Finland all their life or at least for generations. Doris's initial all-negative view on Germans were finally amended as she came to understand that there were different kinds of Germans living in Finland and that one can be part of Finnish society and yet maintain some connection to Germans and Germany.

In Doris's case her engagement with German circles changed with external circumstances influencing her personal point of view on those groups. Comparing this to other interviews, even with the descendants-generations, it becomes clear

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<sup>75</sup>Doris: (...) es gibt natürlich zwei Arten von Deutschen hier. Es sind die, die wie wir eigentlich ihr ganzes Leben oder seit Generationen hier verbracht haben und dann gibt es die, die nur für ein paar Jahre hierher kommen, sich abgrenzen von Finnen, völlig in deutschen Kreisen leben, in der Deutschen Schule, wo ein vollkommen anderes — es ist eine total eigene Kultur, vollkommen anders.

that for a greater number of interviewees actually something else caused a similar shift. I would like to illustrate this with a quote from my talk with Darius:

Darius: On the contrary, [in the beginning] I even avoided having contacts with Germans. (...) I stayed out of the German community, always, because — as a matter of fact I was quite glad to have escaped the country of club mania, I really wasn't up for that and also had better stuff to do than to play skat with members of Lufthansa; I'm not good at this anyway. But once my children were born, (...) all of a sudden I needed the whole infrastructure from kindergarten to — to the German School and ever since that I'm part of it.<sup>76</sup>

This is something I was told by several of my interviewees: They would not have felt the urge to be in contacts with Germans or German institutions in Finland. Nevertheless, this might have changed once their children were born. All of a sudden, they started to wonder about which parts of cultural heritage they wanted to pass on to their children. Those moments in which major changes in life occur remind one of Gennep's concept of *rites de passages*<sup>77</sup>, to points in life where rituals mark the step from one stage of life to another. In the case of my interviewees, becoming parents was particularly a moment of great significance, which had direct and practical impact on how they lived their lives, but it also affected their own sense of belonging. In the next section I will describe the second part of the initially alleged discrepancy between personal disconnectedness from Germany and Germans and the wish to offer their children some Germanness to choose from.

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<sup>76</sup>Darius: Im Gegenteil, ich hab den Kontakt zu Deutschen gemieden. (...) und ich hab mich aus der deutschen Gemeinde komplett rausgehalten, immer, weil — ich war auch ein bisschen froh, in Finnland dem Land der Vereinsmeierei entkommen zu sein, ich hatte wirklich keinen Bock und besseres zu tun, als mit den Leuten von der Lufthansa Skat zu spielen, das kann ich sowieso nicht richtig. Aber als meine Kinder dann kamen, mein Sohn, der erste, da brauchte ich plötzlich die komplette Infrastruktur vom Kindergarten bis zum — bis zur Deutschen Schule hier und seither bin ich auch dabei (...)

<sup>77</sup>See Gennep, Arnold van: *Übergangsriten*. 3<sup>d</sup> ed. Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2005.

## 3.2 ...to passing on Germanness to their children

The last quote from the interview with Darius showed something quite common for German migrants of the first generation: Darius explained that he never wanted to be part of German circles, but once his children were born he "needed the whole infrastructure from kindergarten to the German School", so in the end he became part of the German community. This was similar for several other interviewees, also from the descendant generation. In the following I will present the aspects of a "German heritage" that my interviewees wished to pass to their children.

### Provision of language

Seemingly the reason to send their offspring to the German School of Helsinki was related to concerns about the level of German their children would have if in most cases only one of the parents spoke German with them, while the environment was otherwise Finnish-speaking. This was something Darius made clear when I asked him if he consciously decided to send his children to the German School in Helsinki:

Darius: Of course. That was clear to me from the beginning: my children will be given German on their way, like it or not.

I: Mhm. And why didn't you just speak it with them at home?

D: That would have never been enough. If it's only you who is speaking German with your children and everyone else, including TV, media, everything - that would never work! (...) <sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Darius: Natürlich. Das war für mich von vorne herein klar: meine Kinder kriegen Deutsch von mir mit auf den Weg, ob es ihnen passt oder nicht.

I: Mhm. Und warum jetzt nicht nur, dass du es zu Hause gesprochen hättest?

D: Das hätte niemals gereicht. Wenn nur du Deutsch sprichst mit deinen Kindern und alle anderen, inklusive Fernsehen, Medien, alles – das haut nie hin! (...)

Dominik acknowledges that it was his wife's wish to send their children to a German kindergarten and school, as she had been there as a student:

Dominik: He went - well, our children are being raised bilingually: my wife speaks Finnish, I speak German with them. (...) [About the German School:] Primarily that was the wish of my wife, because she has been there herself, but that is also — we knew what the school accomplishes; we knew that Finnish doesn't get disregarded there, but instead bilingual children are being taught in two mother-tongues and therefore we knew that it would be taken care of, so that there wouldn't be any problems and otherwise we tried — we did also have the idea of giving them also an understanding of German culture. They will pick up on Finnish automatically, but so that they also get the German.

I: To what extent is there a cultural education at the German School?

D: Yes, well, simply language culture! And then in primary school in general studies, geography a lot is [in German] — then — music lessons, voluntary afternoon childcare can be obtained in German and then there is school theatre and such things as well. <sup>79</sup>

For Dominik and his wife, the decision to send their children to the German School was obvious, because they knew that it is not an all-German learning environment, perhaps unlike what the name might suggest. Instead - and this is something that was also explained in detail by other interviewees - there are different lines, depending on the level of German a student speaks. Dominik and his wife were sure that their children, whom they raised to be bilingual, would not be taught only in German, but also in Finnish. This was of great importance for them, knowing that neither of the two sides would be neglected. However,

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<sup>79</sup>Dominik: Der ging – also, die Kinder wachsen komplett zweisprachig auf, meine Frau redet Finnisch, ich rede Deutsch mit ihnen. (...) [Zur Deutschen Schule:] Das war vor allem der Wunsch meiner Frau, weil sie selber dort gewesen war, aber es ist schon auch — wir wussten eben, was die Schule leistet, wir wussten, dass dort auch Finnisch nicht ausgeblendet wird, sondern zweisprachige Kinder haben dann zwei Muttersprachen unterrichtet und dadurch wussten wir, dass sich darum gekümmert wird, dass da keine Probleme aufkommen und ansonsten versuchten — war schon eine Idee dahinter, dass wir ihnen die deutsche Kultur auch nahe bringen. Das Finnische kriegen sie automatisch mit drumrum, aber dass sie das Deutsche eben auch noch mitkriegen.

I: Inwieweit findet da kulturelle Bildung auch an der Deutschen Schule statt?

D: Ja, also, einfach die Sprach-Kultur! Und dann wird natürlich in der Grundschule im Sachkundeunterricht, Erdkunde wird viel — Dann die — Musikunterricht, freiwillige Nachmittagsbetreuung kann auf Deutsch erhalten werden und dann gibt es noch Schultheater und solche Sachen auch.

as Dominik stated, his children would have "gotten the Finnish automatically", but he still wanted them to know about German culture. Interestingly, when I asked him about ways the German School supports German culture, he took a step back and defined it as "language culture". This is a reminder of what Susan Condor observed in her study on national pride among British people. Condor builds many of her arguments by drawing on Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism (1995), with which he describes the tendency of people consciously distancing themselves from nationalism, but then still using nationalistic terms and reasoning in their everyday speech without questioning them or even being aware of them<sup>80</sup>. The same became visible in Condor's research, and as she illustrated, this tendency could show up in many ways. In one of the excerpts, Condor presented information about behaviour similar to Dominik's. When one interviewee first claimed Britain to be different from other countries, the interviewer did "not allow the respondent's (potentially banal) reference to the 'differentness' of 'this country' to pass without comment"<sup>81</sup>. Instead, she chased it up, which led to the respondent "rejecting the formulation of the question"<sup>82</sup> as well as her own previous statement. This is what I see in the interview with Dominik, though the question remains why he did so. In Lotta Weckström's work on second-generation Finns in Sweden, comparable situations occurred. According to her, on the one hand the participants of her study "challenged the notion of clear-cut borders and maneuvered successfully in the greyzone, [on the other hand] they still made use of concepts actually originating from the dichotomy of us and them." However, Weckström explained it differently than Condor did, stating that people "have restricted ways of talking about particular events available to them", so they tend to draw on the vocabulary they know,

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<sup>80</sup>See Condor 2000. 177.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid. 183.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid. 183.

even if they might intellectually not support the ideas behind those words.<sup>83</sup>

As Dominik previously described, he did not feel comfortable at the gatherings of the Internet forum for Germans in Finland. Even though his social surrounding was "primarily Finnish", he still conceded that "through the German School" he also gradually started having German friends<sup>84</sup>, so he did not merely become part of German institutions, but the influence also took place in the private sphere.

Passing on German language to their children was something every interviewee (with children) at least tried to do, though some admitted not having succeeded in it. Stuart Hall explained that the "act of positioning" in order to affirm and defend an ethnic representation often draws upon "solid points of reference" such as history, language and culture<sup>85</sup>. As I explained previously, for Germans the idea of feeling pride for Germany's history and culture does not come without difficulties, so it is not surprising that none of my interviewees mentioned that they consciously wanted to strengthen the German identity of their children. Instead it seemed very important to them to support their children's language abilities in Finnish as well as German, as if compared to the problematic German history and culture, language appears to be a "safe thing".

### Difficulties concerning language

Admittedly it became obvious in some interviews that raising children bilingually could also create issues and tensions within a family. When I asked Dirk about the way he had brought up his children, he explains that he tried to speak German to them, while his wife spoke Finnish. Somehow they always replied

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<sup>83</sup>Weckström 2011. 122.

<sup>84</sup>Dominik: Mehrheitlich finnisch. Also, über die Schule hat man natürlich schon ein paar Freunde gewonnen, Eltern, aber mehrheitlich doch finnisch.

<sup>85</sup>See Berchem 2011. 614.

in Finnish, which is something also Darius described: The latter told me how a stranger heard him and his child talking in public and approached them, snapping at him: "If you want to raise your son so that he will speak German to you, you have to make him believe that you don't understand any Finnish!"<sup>86</sup>. As Darius explains, he first wondered about the utility of this advice as he knew that his son was well aware of him understanding Finnish. As a matter of fact Darius does not explicitly say that he followed this advice, but expresses pride in having succeeded and that his children now are fluent in Finnish as well as German. Dirk, on the other hand told me that he tried to speak German with his children consistently, which also meant that while he was training his son's football team, he still continued to say things in German, if they were directed at his son. What followed was what Dirk calls an "Aha-experience":

Dirk: (...) when I was football trainer I once said something on the pitch to my son in German and few minutes later I notice: "My son is gone", has disappeared all of a sudden. I didn't know at all what has happened, he was gone. I ask the others: "Where did Leo go?" - "Yes, he left." - I say: "Eh, why did he leave? He can't just have left!" - He was six or seven years old, he had just started going to school, it must have been around that time. (...) And I told the others: "Hey, I'll go home for a second, I'll check if he is home, I have to know where he is!"; go home and there is is, crying at my wife's and I say: "Oh boy, did you hurt yourself or what is wrong?" and then he yells at me, pounds against my chest and tells me in Finnish: "On the pitch you will never ever say anything in German to me!" - And he was angry! He was almost bursting with anger. And what had happened? Someone from the other team must have - not even teased, but made a derogatory comment about me as the trainer saying something to my son that the others can't understand, and blamed him for it. And he felt hurt.

I: But that is understandable, from a logic point of view.

D: Absolutely understandable from a logic point of view! I mean,

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<sup>86</sup>Darius: (...) Kann mich an eine Szene erinnern, da war ich mit meinem Sohn schwimmen, da war er vier oder — Und da war irgend so ein obergescheiter älterer Herr, der hat mich angeschnauzt und gesagt: „Wenn Sie Ihren Sohn so erziehen wollen, dass er Deutsch mit Ihnen redet, dann müssen Sie ihm klar machen, dass Sie kein Finnisch verstehen.“ - „Ich versteh doch Finnisch, das weiß er doch!“ - „Ja, aber Sie dürfen nicht reagieren, wenn er Finnisch mit Ihnen redet.“ und da meinte ich (lacht): „Mein Sohn hält mich doch für einen Vollidioten! Das geht doch gar nicht!“

the boy reacted completely logically, but at that point he told me clearly: "Never ever talk to me in German on the pitch!" and for that reason I was a bit — I then talked Finnish with him, but German at home; my wife knows German very well, but somehow it became established that our language of communication at home was Finnish rather than German and yes, in the end — the result of the whole thing is that my sons have Finnish as their mother-tongue, and have German as a very, very good foreign language, understand German fluently, and speak German if they have to.<sup>87</sup>

This quote shows how difficult it can be to raise children to be bilingual. Even if one has the best of intentions, it may fail due to practical issues, or in this case, the child himself refusing to be spoken to in German, in this case, to avoid negative reactions from Finnish friends. What can be seen in both Darius's and Dirk's stories is a phenomenon that is quite common in bilingual families where a parent speaks both of the languages in question. As Darius said, his son knew very well that Darius would understand if he answered in Finnish. The result can be a much stronger ability to understand than to actually speak German. In the case of Dirk's children, he admits that they might speak "1/4" German and "3/4" Finnish, but when they were in Germany, he did, however, speak

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<sup>87</sup>Dirk: (...) als ich Fußballtrainer war, hab ich zu meinem Sohn mal auf dem Fußballplatz etwas auf Deutsch gesagt und stelle ein paar Minuten später fest: „Mein Sohn ist weg“, war auf einmal verschwunden. Ich wusste überhaupt nicht, was los war, er war weg. Ich frag die anderen: „Wo ist denn der Leo hin?“ - „Ja, der ist weg.“ - Ich sag: „Ja, wieso ist der WEG? Der kann doch nicht einfach weg sein!“ - Da war der sechs oder sieben oder so, da war er gerade in die Schule gekommen, zu der Zeit muss das gewesen sein. (...) Und ich hab den anderen gesagt: „Du, ich geh mal ganz kurz nach Hause, ich guck mal, ob der zu Hause ist, ich muss wissen, wo der ist!“; geh nach Hause und da ist der zu Hause, heulend bei meiner Frau und ich sag „Mensch, hast du dich verletzt oder was ist?“ und da schreit der mich an und trommelt mir auf die Brust und sagt mir auf Finnisch: „Auf dem Sportplatz sagst du nie mehr zu mir irgendwas auf Deutsch!“ - Und der war wütend! Der ist geplatzt vor Zorn. Und was war passiert? Irgendjemand hatte ihn von der anderen Gruppe – gar nicht mal gehänselt, sondern irgendwie eine abfällige Bemerkung gemacht, dass ich als Trainer meinem Sohn was gesagt hab, das die anderen nicht verstehen und haben ihm das angelastet. Und er fühlte sich da verletzt.

I: Aber das ist auch verständlich, von der Logik her.

D: Von der Logik her total verständlich! Ich meine, der Junge hat total logisch reagiert, aber hat mir also klipp und klar gesagt „Red' mich nie wieder auf Deutsch auf dem Fußballplatz an!“ und dadurch hab ich natürlich auch so ein bisschen — dann hab ich da Finnisch mit ihm geredet, zu Hause Deutsch; meine Frau kann zwar sehr gut Deutsch, aber es hat sich dann so ein bisschen eingebürgert, dass zu Hause praktisch die Kommunikationssprache eher Finnisch war als Deutsch und ja, im Endeffekt — das Fazit aus der ganzen Geschichte ist die, meine Söhne haben Finnisch als Muttersprache, haben Deutsch als eine sehr sehr gute Fremdsprache, verstehen fließend Deutsch, sprechen Deutsch, wenn sie müssen.



only German with them. Nowadays, as Dirk told me, seeming both amazed and pleased at the same time, they have what he calls a "German self-confidence":

I: (...) But when you were somewhere else for example, did you then speak German with your children once in a while?

Dirk: Yes, yes, well, when we were in Germany, I always spoke German, yes. Then all of a sudden the language changed. And they also have a German — let's say self-confidence. (...) They are not at all shy, because their language has an accent or so, they have no problem at all with it; so, without hesitation I would just leave them somewhere in Germany and tell them: "OK, now look after yourself!", I am not worried that there would be any problems concerning communication or so.<sup>88</sup>

In the conversation with Dieter and his son Lari, another layer became visible, a problem stemming from one parent not being entirely fluent in both languages. Like my other interviewees, Dieter also tried to speak consistently German with his children. Moreover, he and his family lived in Germany for the first years of life of the two children and after they moved to Finland, both children went to the German School. Dieter describes how even in the first few years after they had moved to Finland, the children were speaking Finnish with their mother, German with him and for a while, when they were playing with each other, they still kept on using German. The latter is something that Lari, now in his 30s, does not recall: according to him, as long as he can remember, he and his brother were using Finnish with each other<sup>89</sup>. As a consequence, they

<sup>88</sup>I: (...) Aber wenn Sie jetzt zum Beispiel irgendwo unterwegs waren, haben Sie dann mit den Kindern trotzdem ab und zu Deutsch gesprochen?

Dirk: Ja ja, also, wenn wir in Deutschland waren, habe ich immer Deutsch gesprochen, ja. Dann auf einmal hat die ganze Sprache sich gewechselt. Und die haben also auch ein deutsches — ich sag mal, Selbstbewusstsein. (...) Die haben da überhaupt keine Scheu, dass da die Sprache mit Akzent ist oder so, die kommen da total mit zurecht; also, ich würde die ohne weiteres in Deutschland heute irgendwo aussetzen und sagen: „Seht zu, wie ihr zurecht kommt!“, da habe ich also keine Angst, dass das da zu Kommunikationsstörungen führt oder so.

<sup>89</sup>Dieter: Als die Kinder damals angefangen haben, die Sprache zu lernen, haben die natürlich Deutsch gelernt durch mich und natürlich auch durch die Umwelt und dann Lari auch durch den Kindergarten, er war in Deutschland im Kindergarten eine Zeitlang, und der Bruder hat dann mit ihm die ganze Zeit, als wir zu Anfang in Finnland waren, auch ziemlich lange noch Deutsch gesprochen. Also, wenn die beiden zusammen gespielt haben, dann haben sie auf Deutsch gesprochen, wenn sie mit meiner Frau damals geredet haben, auf Finnisch, mit mir dann wiederum auf Deutsch, mit anderen Leuten auf Finnisch, aber wenn sie gespielt haben,

turned out to be bilingual and at least concerning Lari, as a native speaker I could not notice any accent or mistakes in his German. As their mother was also fluent in German, Dieter was the only one who might have had a deficit in one of the two languages, namely Finnish. Even though Dieter presented himself as being capable of communicating in Finnish, and is also using it at his workplace, his second son apparently "still today" refuses to speak Finnish with him, but "naturally" uses German, even if this means that his Finnish wife is excluded from the conversation. Concerning this, an interesting discussion between Dieter and Lari evolved:

Dieter: Yes, it's a bit strange. My younger son absolutely doesn't speak Finnish with me, what I find — actually I find that really unsocial, since his wife doesn't speak German of course and his [Lari's] wife doesn't speak German. For me it would be natural to speak Finnish with them, so that everyone gets what we are talking about, but that doesn't work. It is actually a bit sad, because it conveys a certain exclusion from certain social events. One gets then the feeling that one is actually not as integrated as if one had grown up here.

I: Did you address this at any point?

D: Yes, we talked about this several times already, but...

Lari: I think that just comes from the backbone.

I: Yes, yes... Those are just... Habits.

D: Well, no, not habits, it's nature, it is natural for them to talk to me like that.

L: It's not as if one... It's not only about including people in a social context, it's also about interpersonal communication. If the expression is not at the best level, as it is with you [Dieter] in Finnish, then there is also a deficit in communication between us - at least that's how it feels to me. One does speak the same language, but one knows that it is not 100 percent valid.

D: Yes, although... One also doesn't really improve his language then.

L: No! We *can* speak Finnish once in a while, but as soon as it comes to detail, we have to speak German anyway.

D: No, we wouldn't have to, but... One is a bit inhibited somehow,

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das war auf Deutsch, dann weil sie es so gelernt haben. Das war eigentlich ganz interessant.

I: Und wann hat das dann aufgehört?

Lari: Daran kann ich mich nicht mehr erinnern. Soweit wie ich mich jetzt erinnern kann, spreche ich mit meinem Bruder Finnisch.

that might be the reason.<sup>90</sup>

At this point of the interview, it showed how much it bothered Dieter as he experienced this as an exclusion of him, as the only one of the family who was not raised in Finland, whose mother-tongue was not Finnish and thus also as an insinuation of a deficit of language and integration. This points towards what Bönisch-Brednich claimed when stating that transnational migrants might take an "in-between" position between countries and cultures, while a true "inside" position would not be reached<sup>91</sup>. The discussion between Dieter and Lari might illustrate the other side of the shiny bilingualism coin: Indeed it might be desirable to raise children to be bilingual, as this also equips them with beneficial tools and knowledge for life, however, this does not come without some difficulties in everyday life. If both parents are not fluent in both languages, there might be always someone being excluded. This could be either because of an inability to understand what has been just said, or as in Dieter's case, the conflict was caused by experiences of unequal treatment within the family due to possibly exaggerated consideration, though well-meant and with good intentions.

<sup>90</sup>Dieter: Ja, es ist komisch. Mein jüngerer Sohn, der spricht absolut nicht Finnisch mit mir, was ich eigentlich — das finde ich eigentlich sehr unsozial, weil seine Frau natürlich kein Deutsch spricht und seine [Lari's] Frau spricht kein Deutsch. Für mich wär es natürlich, mit denen Finnisch zu reden, damit dann alle was mitkriegen, aber das funktioniert nicht. Ist ein bisschen schade eigentlich, weil es eine bestimmte Ausgrenzung von bestimmten sozialen Ereignissen vermittelt. Man hat dann immer irgendwie das Gefühl, man ist dann doch nicht so integriert, wie wenn man hier aufgewachsen ist.

I: Hast du das mal angesprochen?

D: Ja, da haben wir schon öfter drüber gesprochen, aber...

Lari: Das kommt so aus dem Rückgrat, glaube ich.

I: Ja, ja... Das sind einfach... Gewohnheiten.

D: Ja, nicht Gewohnheit, das ist die Natur, das ist natürlich für die, mit mir so zu reden.

L: Es ist ja nicht so, dass man... Es geht ja nicht alleine darum, dass man versucht, Leute in einem sozialen Kontext zu integrieren, es geht auch um zwischenmenschliche Kommunikation. Wenn der Ausdruck nicht auf dem besten Niveau ist, wie bei dir [Dieter] auf Finnisch, das ist aber auch dann ein Defizit in der Kommunikation zwischen uns – das empfinde ich dann so. Man spricht dann zwar eine Sprache, aber man weiß, das hat nicht so die hundertprozentige Gültigkeit.

D: Ja, obwohl... Man lernt es dadurch ja auch nicht unbedingt besser.

L: Nein! Wir können uns auf Finnisch ja auch manchmal unterhalten, aber wenn es dann wirklich um Details geht, dann müssen wir sowieso Deutsch sprechen.

D: Nee, das muss man nicht, aber... Man ist da befangen sicherlich irgendwo, das ist vielleicht der Grund. (...)

<sup>91</sup>See Bönisch-Brednich 2002b. 271.

Darius has a rather pragmatic view on this:

Darius: (thinks) That is completely normal: who starts having a bicultural relationship and produces children in this relationship, has to somehow come to terms with the situation or accept that he will be excluded. He could have also just learned the language.<sup>92</sup>

Taking those excerpts to a more general stage, it is worth seeing them in the context of Aneta Pavlenko's research on "Emotions and Multilingualism"<sup>93</sup>. Besides providing an overall "technical" approach to multilinguals' use of their languages, she also makes an attempt to understand the reasons behind why someone who is fluent in more than one language chooses to use a certain language over another. Pavlenko includes not only bi-/multilinguals by birth in her study, but also people who acquired another language later in their lives. She suggests that languages "learned in the process of intense childhood socialization seem connected to the body through an intricate web of personal memories, images, sensory associations, and affective reactions, while languages learned later in life, in the classroom, or through limited socialization (for instance, the workplace) do not have the same sensual associations; they do not stir or evoke"<sup>94</sup>. Taking this as a starting point, it seems only natural that even though some of my interviewees became relatively fluent in the Finnish language, they still chose to speak German with their children. In our discussions, they explained that they just wanted their children to know both languages, however, I suppose that it might also be the obvious choice as this may be the language they might naturally feel emotionally more connected to. I will get back to this point when discussing the positions and attitudes of the descendant generation.

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<sup>92</sup>Darius: (überlegt) Das ist völlig normal: wer eine bikulturelle Beziehung eingeht und in dieser Beziehung Kinder produziert, der muss sich entweder arrangieren oder damit abfinden, dass er ausgegrenzt ist. Er hätte es ja lernen können.

<sup>93</sup>Pavlenko, Aneta: *Emotions and Multilingualism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid. 187.

## Maintaining German traditions

Language was a big topic in all my interviews. However, my interviewees with the first generation migrants also mentioned other aspects in their lives that they tried to pass onto their children, mostly related to holiday traditions, but also other smaller things in everyday life. While the latter seemed to be performed by the parent(s) themselves and were not actively transferred to their children, with holiday traditions it became obvious that those were performed *for* the children in particular.

What needs to be stressed here is that even though there certainly are holiday traditions which exist in one country, but not the other, often my interviewees' perception of what is a particularly German and what is a Finnish tradition may differ from historic facts. As Ilmar Talve illustrated in his publication on birthday and name day celebrations in Finland, those traditions originated from Germany, but then travelled via Denmark and Sweden into Finland<sup>95</sup>. Nowadays the name day might even be of bigger significance for Finns than it is for Germans, which could easily give the impression that this were a Finnish rather than a German tradition. The same can be suggested concerning other holiday traditions as described by my interviewees. Despite some of them labelling them as stemming clearly from the German side of their family, in some parts of Finland, people without a German family background might also have similar holiday traditions. When discussing holiday traditions, it thus needs to be kept in mind that it is not about true or false, but about *personal* ascriptions. What matters for both the first and the descendant generation, is that *for them* a certain way of spending a holiday is connected to their German, or respectively Finnish, background - and not if it is actually by definition a German or Finnish tradition.

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<sup>95</sup>See Talve, Ilmar: *Namens- und Geburtstagstraditionen in Finnland*. Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia, 1966. 78.

One of those holiday traditions described in my interviews was Easter and the hunt for Easter eggs or baskets. As Dirk puts it, this is a "real German element" in his family life:

Dirk: (...) OK, real German elements can be found at Easter, so, still today there is no Easter without the hunt for Easter eggs, that's really something that is no particularly strong tradition in Finland. (...) So, even now that the children have grown up, well, one Easter egg still gets hidden and they are supposed to search for it. (laughs)<sup>96</sup>

Most interviewees described following a "mix" of German and Finnish holiday traditions, confirming what Bönisch-Brednich wrote in reference to Homi Bhabha's concept of *hybridity*, namely that migrants actively chose what to pick from different cultures and thus live a "bricolage of cultural elements"<sup>97</sup>. However, Dieter and Lari, who stressed at several points that they considered themselves to be "more Finnish than German", once more told me that they usually tend to follow Finnish traditions on major holidays. Concerning the hunt for Easter eggs, Lari said that indeed they had this when they were children, but for them it was more about "hidden candies" than a conscious celebration of Easter<sup>98</sup>. Still, Dieter and Lari were the exception to the main tendency of actively performing certain traditions. Hunting for Easter baskets was one of the things almost all interviewees mentioned as German parts of their lives. Moreover, many descriptions referred to the other main holidays during the course of the (Christian) year and ways to spend those that Finkelstein described as traditions that are hard to maintain when you are alone<sup>99</sup>.

What I found particularly interesting was the depiction by Daniela, who was

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<sup>96</sup>Dirk: (...) Also wirklich die deutschen Elemente, die finden sich an Ostern, also es gibt auch heute noch keine Ostern ohne Ostereier-Suchen, das ist also etwas, das in Finnland keine so starke Tradition ist. (...) Also, auch jetzt, wo die Kinder erwachsen sind, also ein Osterei wird immer noch irgendwo versteckt und sie dürfen suchen. (lacht)

<sup>97</sup>Bönisch-Brednich 2002a. 15, translated by author.

<sup>98</sup>Lari: Ja. Schokoeier haben wir schon gesucht, aber das waren eher versteckte Bonbons als groß Ostern zu feiern.

<sup>99</sup>Finkelstein, Kerstin: *Ausgewandert: Wie Deutsche in aller Welt leben*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2005. 232.

working at a day-care. As she told me neither she nor her Finnish boyfriend felt associated with church or religion and according to Daniela the same went for her child. Nonetheless, she seemed to be one of the more active of my interviewees when it came to maintaining and spreading German traditions. Not only with her son and her son's classmates, but also with her day-care children she performed activities like crafting lanterns for the St. Martin-parade organised by the German parish in Helsinki each November. Moreover, she told her day-care children about hanging a sock on St. Nicholas (06.12.), which, according to statements from my interviewees, is no tradition celebrated in Finland and even collides with Finnish Independence Day. Daniela told me that she "created her own tradition"<sup>100</sup> of inviting her son's classmates to join them both colouring and hunting for Easter eggs as well as baking Christmas cookies, which did in fact exist in Finland as well, but were of a different kind and with less variety<sup>101</sup>. For Daniela, knowing about those traditions and promoting them in Finland, filled her with pride of being German:

Daniela: (...) Therefore, in that sense I am quite proud of, eh, being German and knowing those traditions and give others an understanding of them.<sup>102</sup>

Daniela's interview shows what Fortier describes by citing Butler (1990) as a "stylized repetition of acts" which produces "an effect of substantialization and naturalization of cultural belonging", meaning that "ethnicity may be lived as a deeply felt, embodied, core identity"<sup>103</sup>. Daniela was one of the few interviewees who consciously performed traditions she knew from Germany and linked them to "being German" and moreover "being proud to be German". Daniela

<sup>100</sup>Daniela: Also, ich hab' das schon, eh, seit einigen Jahren hab ich so eine eigene Tradition ausgerufen, obwohl das ist jetzt nicht meine Erfindung, das macht ja in Deutschland eigentlich jeder, dass man Ostereier bemalt und Osterneester sucht.

<sup>101</sup>Daniela: (...) Und das ist auch wirklich so, ehm, bei finnischem Weihnachtsgebäck ist nicht unbedingt so 'ne Vielfalt, muss man schon leider so zugeben.

<sup>102</sup>Daniela: (...) Deswegen, in dem Sinne bin ich dann schon stolz, dass ich, eh, dass ich eine Deutsche bin und ich diese Tradition kenne und sie anderen nahe bringen kann.

<sup>103</sup>Fortier 2000. 6.

seemed to enjoy consciously living her idea of a German heritage; she even organised a workshop for baking German Christmas cookies in her neighbourhood, which apparently was quite successful<sup>104</sup>. For her, this heritage seemed to be directly linked to the major annual holidays, which are all related to church and Christian faith. Even though she described herself and her family as non-religious, with herself having resigned from church, she took pleasure in telling her Finnish day-care children about the background of for instance St. Martin or St. Nicholas. Somehow this seems to be inconsistent in itself, but apparently Daniela separates a religious faith from the traditions and the stories behind those and considers them to be worth being maintained and spread.

Unlike Daniela, Dominik, who seemed to be as active as Daniela in performing traditions he knew from Germany, did care about the Christian background behind these holidays. In the interview, he went through the different dates following the liturgical year, starting from Easter. He explained that his grandfather was a pastor, which influenced the way he and his family spend certain days of the year. For instance it was important for Dominik to teach his children that Christmas is the "feast of the Lord", which is why the "Christ Child" is coming and not Santa Claus, as is common in Finland:

Dominik: (...) We noticed that at Christmas: to us Christ Child is coming and not Santa Claus. Which stems from my parents' home, since my grandfather was a pastor and my father took that over from him. It is the feast of the Lord and not Santa Claus, it doesn't say anything about him in the bible. So, to us Christ Child came and that's what they had to fight out a bit in kindergarten - so, in the Finnish kindergarten, they had to fight that out a bit.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Daniela: (...) Da hatte ich mich angemeldet, dass ich so einen Plätzchen-back-Kurs mache an einem Sonntag. Und da ist auch ein guter Zulauf gekommen, weil die Leute sehr interessiert waren an deutschen Weihnachtsplätzchen.

<sup>105</sup>Dominik: (...) An Weihnachten haben wir's gemerkt: bei uns kommt das Christkind und nicht der Weihnachtsmann. Was wiederum aus meinem Elternhaus kommt, weil mein Großvater war Pfarrer und mein Vater hat's entsprechend übernommen. Das ist das Fest des Herren und nicht der Weihnachtsmann, davon steht nichts in der Bibel. Da kam bei uns eben auch das Christkind und das haben die im Kindergarten dann ein bisschen ausgehten, also im finnischen Kindergarten, ein bisschen ausgehten müssen.



A bit earlier, Dominik explained that his wife's family was quite atheistic, so "there are not that many traditions from her side", which is why nowadays he and his family might follow more of the traditions he knows from Germany - but "by far not all of them"<sup>106</sup>. However, he acknowledges that they usually try to take "something from both sides", such as having a Finnish traditional dessert **mämmi** for Easter as well as **pasha**, a dish made from curd cheese, originating from Eastern Orthodox areas. The latter was traditionally eaten by his own family, and as Dominik adds, ironically he likes **mämmi**, while his Finnish wife does not.<sup>107</sup> Also, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, his family includes both the "German" St. Nicholas Day *and* the Finnish Independence Day, having a sock filled with candy in the morning and then the student parade as well as watching the president's gala on TV in the evening<sup>108</sup>. This is something we will also come across in the interviews with the descendant generation, which showed that many did not see a reason for deciding for just one of those traditions. Instead there were hybrid moments in which many interviewees crafted a new or at least combined way of doing things and simply included several aspects into one day. In this context, Dominik mentioned something that also arose in other discussions:

Dominik: (...) Yeah, that is an observation I have made quite often, that here in Finland many customs do exist at least in outline all over the country, while, when Finns ask me: "How is it in Germany?", I can just shrug - it's different: A classic example is Christmas.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup>Dominik: (...) Am Ostersonntag mach' ich gerne Eier in Senfsoße, das ist auch von mir zu Hause und da — mein Elternhaus moderat religiös war, mein Schwiegervater war absoluter Atheist, sind da von ihrer Seite weniger Traditionen da; da mach' ich eben aus meiner Familie ein bisschen was. Auch nicht – bei weitem nicht alles.

<sup>107</sup>Dominik: (...) Ostern haben wir jetzt. Da wird von beiden Seiten was genommen, also Mämmi, diese Osterspise. - Schmeckt mir, meiner Frau nicht! (beide lachen) (...) Dann machen wir manchmal Pashka, diese russische Osterspise. - War bei mir zumindest zu Hause üblich, dass man die gegessen hat.

<sup>108</sup>Dominik: (...) Das wird beides gemacht. Morgens hängt dann der Nikolaussocken an der Tür und abends wird dann das ganze Programm – erst die Parade und dann der Empfang am Schluss.

<sup>109</sup>Dominik: (...) Ja, das ist eine Beobachtung, die ich oft gemacht habe, dass hier in Finnland viele Sitten zumindest in Grundzügen landesweit vorhanden sind, wohingegen, wenn

This point was raised in several interviews, even with the descendant generation. When being asked if they spend certain holidays in a particular Finnish or German way, many were wondering for instance "what a German Christmas" would look like. This links to what Steven Dijkstra, Karin Geuijen and Arie De Ruijter described, namely that despite a common view of "one nation - one culture", reality looks different. Considering the history of European nation states, the fact that they were often incorporating several formerly independent states with a great variety of regional cultures<sup>110</sup>, serves as an explanation for heterogeneity within each of our contemporary nation states. In Paul Drechsel's, Bettina Schmidt's and Bernhard Gözl's publication on culture in the age of globalisation the authors reflect on this aspect in a very compelling way, saying that what "makes" a culture is the difference between its ingredients. By this, they refer to the idea of Bavarian culture being part of German culture, just as Hessian and Swabian cultures also are. However, they are not identical with it and also not identical with the other local cultures taken to be German. Therefore, what unites them is the difference between them - something that disagrees with "common assumptions" of culture, but answers the "logic of the differentiation of modern societies"<sup>111</sup>.

An awareness of this heterogeneity was contrasted by Dennis with what he perceives as homogeneity in Finnish holiday rituals:

Dennis: (...) First of all you have to know that the celebrations for Christmas... even in Germany there is no uniform ritual. Okay, there is the distribution of presents, but even that differs between all families (...) I'm more into Finnish Christmas.

I: In what way?

D: There is one thing one can say about Finns: if they know how to do anything well, it is to keep Christmas traditions. And that countrywide.

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mich die Finnen dann fragen: „Wie ist es in Deutschland?“, kann ich nur mit den Achseln zucken – unterschiedlich: Klassiker Weihnachten.

<sup>110</sup>See Dijkstra; Geuijen; and De Ruijter 2001. 55.

<sup>111</sup>Drechsel; Schmidt; and Gözl 2000. 17.

I: Mhm. Like what for example?

D: Christmas dinner. It doesn't matter if you are in Turku or in Utsjoki, on Christmas you have the same things on the table. Without those it is not Christmas dinner, every Finn will tell you that. (...) it's those casseroles and the ham, that is the Christmas dinner. And if you want to sell Christmas dinner without any ham to a Finn... Even vegetarians would rebel. It's something written in stone somewhere.<sup>112</sup>

He continues by naming two German Christmas dishes, fried goose, and carp, and explained that depending on where someone comes from in Germany, they will eat either of those for Christmas dinner. Several of my interviewees, regardless of their generation, expressed uncertainty when it came to a "German Christmas". In contrast to this, it is even more interesting that not only Dennis, but all interviewees claimed the existence of a homogeneity of Finnish Christmas traditions. It is debatable whether the fact that my respondents, especially those from the descendant generations, had a hard time picturing a German Christmas suggests a stronger affinity to a "Finnish" than a "German identity". Instead some hinted that it could be that in Finland, Christmas does in fact have certain fixed components which thus turn into common knowledge, while the way Germans celebrate Christmas is more diverse and harder to generalise, as the regional cultures in Germany were shaped by multiple and highly different outer influences. However, another interpretation could be that while the participants of the first generation of German migrants had a more distinct knowledge of traditions practised in Germany, respectively an awareness of the

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<sup>112</sup>Dennis: (...) Erst einmal ist es so, dass du die Feiern an Weihnachten... Die ist selbst in Deutschland nicht wirklich ein Einheitsritual. Es gibt, ja, die Bescherung, aber die ist in jeder Familie anders (...) Ich bin eher der Typ, der so in Richtung finnische Weihnachten geht.

I: Inwiefern?

D: Das muss man über die Finnen sagen: wenn sie eines können, dann ist das Weihnachtstraditionen beibehalten. Und die landesweit.

I: Mhm. Was zum Beispiel?

D: Das Weihnachtessen. Das ist egal, ob du in Turku sitzt oder in Utsjoki, du hast die gleichen Sachen auf dem Tisch stehen, an Weihnachten. Ohne die ist es kein Weihnachtsfest, sagt dir jeder Finne. (...) das sind die Aufläufe und der Schinken, das ist Weihnachtessen. Und wenn du einem Finnen Weihnachtessen verkaufen willst ohne Schinken... Da sind selbst Vegetarier, die rebellieren. Das ist so eine Sache, das ist festgeschrieben irgendwo.

heterogeneity of those traditions, they lacked similar detailed insights into traditions in Finland.

Feeling affiliated to a country and what one regards as its culture certainly affects the perceptions and evaluations of the experiences one has there. As shown previously, Dieter and his son Lari actively created the image of themselves feeling closer to Finland, Finns and Finnishness than the German equivalents. When Lari and his brother were children they did hunt for Easter baskets and also had "Nicholas stockings" on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December as "an exception to the otherwise Finnish holiday traditions", but as Lari stressed, this simply meant "more candy than usual" for them<sup>113</sup>. Furthermore, he explains that he might know of the concept of **Fasching**, a carnival at which both children and adults wear costumes and originally tried to chase away winter, or also other traditions like the lantern procession on St. Martin's Day, but only due to his years at the German kindergarten and School. Lari argues that attending a German school was not all about the language but also "a certain cultural integration". However, to him those activities always felt more like a show, a performance made for others: "those are festivities, they are celebrated like this in Germany" - and he adds that "one participates in them a few times and that was about it", meaning that he did not carry on with it after graduating from school.<sup>114</sup> What I suggest here is that Lari's personal perception stands in direct correlation to his disconnectedness from his German background. This will get clearer

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<sup>113</sup>Lari: (...) Wir haben eine Ausnahmeregelung an den ansonsten finnischen Feiertagen mal gehabt, dass wir als Kind immer einen Nikolaus-Strumpf bekommen haben. Das ist etwas, das man in Finnland nicht macht eigentlich. Der Nikolaustag ist ja hier auch der Unabhängigkeitstag, da passt das ganz gut zusammen. Sprich, wir haben mehr Bonbons bekommen an einem bestimmten Tag.

<sup>114</sup>Lari: (...) Ich weiß, dass es Fasching gibt, gab es im Kindergarten, dann gab es auch Laternenfest im Kindergarten. Natürlich, wenn man hier in einer deutschen Schule, in einem deutschen Kindergarten gewesen ist, man wird — es ist nicht nur Lernen auf Deutsch oder Lernen nach dem deutschen Schulbuch, es gibt auch eine gewissen kulturelle Integration. Aber das ist irgendwie auch eher so Vorführung, wie: das sind Feste, die werden in Deutschland so gefeiert. Und dann macht man das ein paar Mal mit und das war's. Das hört dann auch in der Schule dann auf, das wird dann nicht so durchgezogen.

once put into context with statements of other interviewees of the descendant generation in chapter 4.

According to what has been divulged during the interviews with the first generation of German migrants, language and holiday traditions were the two major things they actively tried to pass on to their children as part of some sort of German heritage. However, there were other small aspects in everyday life that they "brought" from Germany: habits, but also thoughts and attitudes. Obviously, those things shape their lives, even if they are not always aware of it, and thus can be taken to have an impact on their children also.

Interestingly, those small, everyday life habits were not mentioned on a large scale in the first generation interviews but can be found primarily within those with the descendant generation. Besides Dirk, who told me about a "family tradition" of watching **Bundesliga**<sup>115</sup> with his son every Saturday as well as a classic crime series **Tatort** with his wife, the only other field discussed was food. In the introduction I mentioned the idea of "soul food" - something Hanna Snellman referred to as "heritage food" for migrants and "a way of remembering the land of their birth and their homeland". Drawing on Holak (2014), Snellman goes so far as to picture heritage food as a "direct link to a person's cultural identity".<sup>116</sup>

Having this in mind, it is worth paying attention to Dieter's and Lari's discussion around food: For a longer sequence, the two were chatting about having sweet breakfast with rolls and jam as something for instance Lari's Finnish girlfriend and Finns in general "just don't get"<sup>117</sup>. Talking about breakfast habits

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<sup>115</sup>German football.

<sup>116</sup>Snellman, Hanna: "An Ethnography of Nostalgia: Nordic Museum Curators Interviewing Finnish Immigrants in Sweden." In Koskinen-Koivisto, Eerika; and Hanna Snellman (Eds.): *Journal of Finnish Studies* 19, no. 2 (2016). 158.

<sup>117</sup>Lari: Ich esse immer noch wochenends süßes Frühstück.

Dieter: Hm... Brötchen und so... Aufgebackene Brötchen.

L: Brötchenvariationen, solche Sachen, aber mit Marmelade. Das ist etwas, das meine Fre-

makes Dieter pondering about missing German bakeries:

Dieter: (...) Okay, what I do miss is for instance a bakery that sells those buns and not like here a tiny piece of cake for four euro eighty or so.

Lari: There I'm once more a Finn, I don't need buns, I'd also take pulla<sup>118</sup>. (laughs)

D: I also prefer pulla, now that I'm thinking about it. I like eating pulla, but I also like eating Berliner<sup>119</sup> in Germany or — this coffeehouse atmosphere, that for example is something I miss here. That is actually something I like a lot in Germany. Or not only in Germany, actually in Europe. Just to go somewhere and to sit of course preferably outside in the sun.<sup>120</sup>

Here, Dieter's talk refers to something I call the "culture of missing", as he admits missing German bakeries with their variety of buns. At this point his son Lari butts in, stressing that he was "a Finn" in this matter, as he would prefer Finnish **pulla** over German buns. Interestingly, Dieter then withdraws his previous point and states that he would also prefer **pulla**, yet liking certain German pastries and missing what he calls a "coffeehouse atmosphere" which he sees in Germany and Europe, but apparently not in Finland. Taking this quote as a starting point, one could suggest that what someone eats, drinks, misses or consumes in other ways can be linked to how he perceives himself. So, if Lari defines himself in this moment as "a Finn" *because* of his food preferences, and if Dieter then adjusts his previous statement in order not to be seen as "a German", this seems to confirm my assumption. For this reason, it does not come as a surprise that other interviewees also related to similar themes when

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undin überhaupt nicht versteht: etwas Süßes zum Frühstück, das geht bei den Finnen nicht in den Kopf rein.

<sup>118</sup>Finnish pastry.

<sup>119</sup>Filled German pastry.

<sup>120</sup>Dieter: (...) Also, was ich vermisse, ist zum Beispiel ein Bäcker, der also Teilchen hat und nicht wie hier ein kleines Eckchen Kuchen für vier Euro achtzig oder so.

Lari: Da bin ich wieder Finne, ich brauche keine Teilchen, ich nehme auch Pulla. (lacht)

D: Ich esse auch lieber Pulla, wenn ich das so sehe. Ich esse gerne Pulla, ich esse aber auch gerne Berliner in Deutschland oder so — diese Kaffeehaus-Atmosphäre, sowas fehlt mir hier zum Beispiel. Das ist eigentlich etwas, das ich sehr sehr gerne hab in Deutschland. Oder nicht nur in Deutschland, eigentlich in Europa. Mal irgendwo hin zu gehen und natürlich möglichst dann draußen in der Sonne zu sitzen.

trying to work out and label Finnish and German aspects in their life and their person. However, those small "German influences" turned out to be much more present in the interviews with the descendant generation. They were the ones who pointed out minor but noticeable aspects in their lives that differed from what they could see in their friends' families, which could be linked to having a German-Finnish background. As I will get back to their point of view and the way they negotiate their own position between or within German and Finnish culture later-on, I will now end this chapter with few summarising words.

### **3.3 Summarising reflections**

As initially claimed, in the discussions with first generation migrants from Germany I found a discrepancy between a personal disconnectedness to what I described as Germanness and the wish to pass some of this Germanness on to their children. Feeling distant from Germany, Germans and a conscious identification with those showed in different ways. While some of my interviewees expressed this directly, sometimes describing the difficult relationship Germans have with a German identity, others did so in reference to Finnish nationalism. Another way of demonstrating disconnectedness from Germanness was to stress how "un-German" someone was, often linked to revealing a negative view on Germany, Germans in general and more specifically in Finland. Here, another aspect came into the picture, which was the extent to which someone interacted within "German circles" in Finland. It showed that in many cases, my respondents consciously avoid(ed) organised gatherings of Germans or German institutions in Helsinki, for instance. However, some changed their mind at some point of their lives. For different reasons some of them came in touch with those groups and institutions and realised that their presumptions had been

wrong. One of the main motivations for seeking contact with German facilities was the birth of the first child, which, to put it in the words of one interviewee, made them require "the whole infrastructure, from kindergarten to the German School". Having children, and this leads us to the second part of the before-mentioned discrepancy, is connected to passing some Germanness to them. Even if most of my interviewees did not feel attached to Germany, Germans or being German, apparently it was still important for them to provide their children with the German language and cultural assets they "brought" from Germany. As well as the two major themes, language and holiday traditions, my discussion partners also described smaller aspects of their lives which, despite all the disconnectedness, still stem from a German socialisation. Certainly much more remained unmentioned, possibly because the first generation migrant interviewees were not aware of them. However, traces of those could be found in the conversations with the descendant generations, which is where this work will proceed.



## Chapter 4

# Descendants of Germans in Helsinki

Few interviewees of the first generation German migrants explained exactly what the reasons for wanting to pass some Germanness on to their offspring were, but nonetheless they did. Most important reason seemed to be the aspect of language and certain holiday traditions, but as the discussions with descendants of Germans showed, they received much more German socialisation than the parent generation might be aware of.

In this chapter I want to focus on ways German descendants in Helsinki negotiate their own position between the cultures, or rather within the cultural frameworks surrounding them. Several aspects are involved in this process that Ina-Maria Greverus calls a "persönliche[s] Identitätsmanagement[s]"<sup>1</sup>, a personal identity management. Berchem describes it as a common concept in social and cultural sciences to see "ethnic identity as a perpetual socialisation process (...), in which knowledge about group-specific culturality, own

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<sup>1</sup>Berchem referring to Ina-Maria Greverus (1981:224); In Berchem 2011. 61.

and strange, is developed through situation-dependent in- and exclusion of specific cultural features or traditions. This knowledge is oriented towards the living environment and results in the emergence of convergent as well as opposing identities.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the role of the *Other* can not be stressed enough. As Ralf Richter explained by drawing on Carl-Friedrich Graumann's "Identifikationskonzept" (1983), one may distinguish between three modes: First, the ability of humans to categorise their surrounding, which is described by the term *identification of*. The second mode Graumann names is *being identified* by others. We are "confronted with role expectations" which we have to grapple with and which influence our identity. Last, Graumann describes the *identification with* as "the most individualistic pattern". If people see their expectations being represented by "groups, objects and ideas", those can become "models of their mindscape".<sup>3</sup>

Those interpretations imply that the way someone sees themselves is neither given nor unchangeable, but rather it depends on and is shaped and influenced by multiple factors. What those factors were in the cases of the people I talked to, will be discussed in the course of the following chapters.

## 4.1 The importance of language for belonging

As became apparent in the previous chapter about the "first generation German migrants" in Helsinki, language was of major importance in the interviews.

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<sup>2</sup>Berchem 2011. 63, modified translation for a better understanding by the author; original: "ethnische Identität (als) ein immerwährender Sozialisationsprozess (...), in dem anhand von situationsspezifischer In- und Exklusion bestimmter kultureller Merkmale oder Traditionen ein an der Lebenswelt orientiertes Wissen über gruppenspezifische Eigen- und Fremdkulturalität entwickelt wird, so dass konvergente sowie oppositionelle Identitäten entstehen".

<sup>3</sup>See Richter, Ralf: "Ortsbezogene Identität: Die kognitive Repräsentanz von Orten im Zeichen zunehmender Wohnmobilität." In Hömke, Maik: *Mobilität und Identität: Widerspruch in der modernen Gesellschaft*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2013. 18 f.

Even though many of the respondents of the first generation could not relate to Germany or Germanness and even avoided Germans and German circles in Finland intentionally, their attitude often changed once their children were born. Similar tendencies could be observed when talking to descendants of Germans living in today's Helsinki. One longer sequence from the interview with Henning showed this descriptively:

Henning: (...) But there was a specific moment in which I, when the German inside me became exceptionally important and more and more important. And this is something I only understood afterwards and that was basically when my first daughter was born. Until then, I always thought it was something nice and a blessing that I am German and Finnish and I am very happy that I have both nationalities nowadays, because that describes me best. Back in the days I had phases, when as a student at the German School, I was rather German and then strong phases in which I was rather Finnish and it was kind of a search, until as an adult, as a young adult I finally understood: "You are stupid! Why do you make things complicated, you are simply both! You *are* both!" – I am *both*! That's why it is so incredibly important to me to have both nationalities and I will never give up either one of them. If I had to choose, it would be – ehm dramatically difficult, that would be really bad! And that is why it was so important for me that my children have both. They do, fortunately. But as I said, this point when my daughter was born – until then it was normality for me. I know German and I can consume things in German, TV, radio, music, the whole culture we get from Germany. I know how to behave in Germany, with Germans – I know exactly how to behave in Finland... And in Finland I am German, in Germany I am Finnish – these are exactly those things and that was totally normal and I knew how it is. But when the children were born – all of a sudden I had to make a decision, what are you going to do and how important is it for you? And then I had to think, is this the language of your heart? Should you use German or Finnish with your children? What should you do? – And then I just decided – if it is not the language of the heart, it will become it. I don't really bother, but it is important for me that my children learn to speak German. And from the first moment onward I spoke German. Consequently with my children and I went through with it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Henning: (...) Aber es gab einen bestimmten Moment, in dem ich, wo plötzlich das Deutsche mir ausserordentlich wichtig wurde und immer wichtiger wurde. Und das hab' ich jetzt erst im Nachhinein kapiert und das war eigentlich, als meine erste Tochter geboren wurde.

Henning was born and raised in Finland, even though he had spent several years for studying and working in Germany. He was in the lucky situation of being able to choose freely between the two languages, as his German father had ensured right from the beginning that he got a balanced education, both in German and in Finnish. His feeling of belonging changed several times in his life though. It took him a while to realise that there was no need for him to decide between feeling Finnish and feeling German, that instead he is just both and that there does not have to be a conflict in this. This confirms what Stefan Wolff claimed about bilingualism, namely that it creates the opportunity to "construct a plural identity that manages to overcome traditional ethnic boundaries"<sup>5</sup>.

However, for Henning the birth of his first child meant a conscious decision about what the "language of his heart" was, which would be the one he would speak with his child(ren). In our second meeting, after he had read one of the

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Weil bis dahin hatte ich immer gedacht, das ist eine schöne Sache und ein Segen, dass ich Deutscher und Finne bin und ich bin sehr froh darüber, dass ich beide Staatsangehörigkeiten habe heutzutage, weil das mich am allerbesten irgendwie beschreibt. Ich hatte früher meine Phasen, hier auch an der Schule als Schüler, wo ich eher deutsch war und dann ganz starke Phasen, wo ich eher Finne war und das war so ein Suchen, bis ich dann als Erwachsener, junger Erwachsener kapiert habe, "Du bist ganz blöd! Warum machst du dir solche Schwierigkeiten, du bist eben beides! Du *bist* eben beides!" - Ich bin *beides*! Ich bin sowohl Finne als auch Deutscher und so fühle ich mich auch! Und deswegen ist es auch für mich wahnsinnig wichtig, dass ich beide Staatsangehörigkeiten habe und ich werde sie auch nie weggeben. Und wenn ich wählen müsste, wär's für mich - ehm dramatisch schwierig, das wär' ganz schlimm! Und deswegen ist es auch wichtig für mich, dass meine Kinder beide haben. Haben sie zum Glück. Aber wie gesagt, dieser Punkt, der war - als meine Tochter geboren wurde, bis dahin war's ja für mich eine Normalität eigentlich. Ich kann ja Deutsch und ich kann Sachen auf Deutsch konsumieren, Fernsehen, Radio, Musik, die ganze Kultur, die wir aus Deutschland kriegen. Aber genauso gut das Finnische. Ich kann mit den deutschen Leuten - ich weiss, wie ich mich benehme in Deutschland, mit den Deutschen, gegenüber einem Deutschen oder Deutscher - ich weiss genau, wie ich mich in Finnland benehme... Und in Finnland bin ich ein Deutscher, in Deutschland bin ich ein Finne - das sind gerade diese Sachen und das war ja ganz normal und ich wusste, wie es ist. Aber als die Kinder dann kamen — Plötzlich stand ich vor der Wahl, was machst du jetzt und wie wichtig ist dir das? Und dann musste ich natürlich überlegen, ist das jetzt die Sprache deines Herzens? Sollst du mit deinen Kindern Deutsch sprechen oder Finnisch sprechen? Was sollst du machen? - Und dann hab' ich mich einfach entschlossen, dass — wenn's nicht die Sprache des Herzens ist, dann wird es die. Ich kümmer mich nicht drum, aber es ist für mich wichtig, dass meine Kinder Deutsch lernen. Und ich hab' vom ersten Moment an, hab' ich Deutsch gesprochen. Konsequenter mit meinen Kindern und ich hab's durchgezogen.

<sup>5</sup>Wolff, Stefan (Ed.): *German minorities in Europe: Ethnic Identity and Cultural Belonging*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000. 10.

last drafts of my thesis, he elaborated on his previous quote: Henning expressed strong disagreement on his brother's choice of speaking Finnish to his first child for it being the language of his heart. Henning explained to me that for him as well, Finnish was his stronger and more natural language, however, he knew already back then that his children would benefit from being raised bilingual and *therefore* he had consciously decided that "if [German] [was] not the language of the heart, it [would] become it". During our second meeting he continued telling me that it by now is like that, but *only with his children*.

In Lotta Weckström's study on "second-generation" Finns in Sweden, a similar phenomenon became visible. She referred to statements by Burck and Kramsch who claimed that threats from outside could "trigger a fight for survival and lift languages on a pedestal", while Weckström objects by stating that "language can become accentuated in an individual's life for other reasons, such as childbirth, migration, or other changes in the social environment."<sup>6</sup> As a matter of fact, some participants in her study were talking about one of their languages being the "language of the heart", even though they linked this to only one language being the one with which it feels natural to express affections. Tuomi-Nikula's article on Finnish descendants in Germany presents a surprisingly similarity in how people refer to their languages. As one of her interviewees explained, German was more her "head language", the language of her thoughts and in which she had studied at school, while Finnish was the language of her heart, the language that was "more emotional" for her<sup>7</sup>. However, as Weckström stresses, these differentiations between the domains of the languages had nothing to do with being more proficient in one of the two.<sup>8</sup> It was certainly the same with

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<sup>6</sup>Weckström 2011. 55.

<sup>7</sup>See Tuomi-Nikula, Outi: "Se suomalainen puoli minussa - Suomalais-saksalaisten perheiden lasten näkemyksiä Suomesta, suomalaisuudesta, identiteetistä ja muutosta Suomeen." In Tuomi-Nikula, Outi; Riina Haanpää; and Tarja Laine (Eds.): *Takaisin Suomeen? Euroopan ulkосуomalaisien ja heidän lastensa ajatuksia Suomesta maahanmuuton kohteena.*, *Kulttuurituotannon ja maisemantutkimuksen julkaisuja* 42 (2013). 102.

<sup>8</sup>See Weckström 2011. 87 ff.

Henning, who seemed fluent in both languages and yet decided in favour of German to be the language he would use with his children.

Coming back to Aneta Pavlenko's study on "Emotions and Multilingualism" that was mentioned earlier when the first generation's choice of language use with their children was discussed, it is interesting to contrast Henning's statement with her findings. Pavlenko listed three factors influencing the "language choice and use in emotional expression", namely an individual, contextual and linguistic one. According to those, a person's choice and usage of language may depend on their proficiency, multicompetence and the age in which they acquired the respective languages, but moreover also their "emotionality" and their "perceived language prestige and authority".<sup>9</sup> Having this in mind, I wondered about how to position Henning's decision within these factors. Having been born and raised in Finland, with a German father and a Finnish mother, and having gone to German School and moreover studied for some time in Germany, he certainly was equally fluent in both German and Finnish. Therefore, his own language proficiency could not have determined his decision, and also his own emotional positioning between a German and a Finnish identification was coined by shifting orientations. Henning does not give an exact reason or explanation of what exactly made him decide that German would just become the language of his heart, but as Pavlenko acknowledges, there might be also a "freedom of self-expression"<sup>10</sup> of people speaking several languages, regardless when they acquired them.

Here it is interesting to draw parallels to findings from other studies, above all Viktorija L.A. Čeginskas' doctoral thesis about "multicultural individuals"<sup>11</sup>. Unlike my respondents, Čeginskas' participants were not raised in the countries of their parents, who were of both different national and linguistic background.

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<sup>9</sup>Pavlenko 2005. 148.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. 148.

<sup>11</sup>See Čeginskas 2015.

According to Čeginskas, a person can not transmit multiple languages to their children and thus has to focus on one. This consequently means that this person is "limiting her-/himself to predominantly one culture"<sup>12</sup>, possibly causing conflicts both in themselves, but also with their social environment. In a way it seemed that this decision about which language and therefore also culture to pass on to one's children, was at least less complicated for the people I talked to. As all of them were living in Finland at the time of the interview, they could be sure that the child's environment would be Finnish-speaking, so proficiency in Finnish was ensured, while their children's German was up to them. The environment often seemed to be a determining factor on the language spoken in my interviewee's families. For instance Lennard, who was in his mid-20s at the time of the interview and who had moved to Finland when he was twelve years old, told me that his Finnish mother always spoke Finnish with him while living in Germany, but as soon as they moved to Finland, this switched to German.<sup>13</sup> This attempt to stay fluent in the language which is not surrounding you in your everyday life caused several interviewees to look for strategies of how to maintain or even improve their other language skills, for instance through longer stays in the country in question. Now I would like to elaborate further on the link between language and a feeling of belonging.

As previously mentioned, all interviewees who had children endeavoured to raise them to be bilingual; sometimes more, sometimes less successfully. The importance of language did not necessarily always show as obviously as in Henning's interview, but came more disguised in the interviews with other participants.

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<sup>12</sup>Čeginskas 2015. 75.

<sup>13</sup>Lennard: (...) Es ist lustig: in Deutschland haben wir Finnisch gesprochen, aber an dem Tag, als wir nach Finnland gezogen sind, haben wir plötzlich Deutsch gesprochen.

I.: Ah! Dass sie drinnen bleibt, wahrscheinlich, oder?

Lennard: Ja, das kam aber irgendwie automatisch, wir haben da nicht drüber geredet, plötzlich war das dann so rum. (...)

It became visible in the first E-mail with which people contacted me and introduced themselves as having been raised bilingual or - as was the case for a few - as "one of that generation that was not raised bilingually"<sup>14</sup> on the recommendation of the paediatricians their mothers consulted. This was one of the first things my interviewees mentioned, even without me asking for it specifically. Instead, I began each interview by asking them to introduce themselves, when and where they were born, where raised - their background stories. In this context, different memories related to language were unveiled, both positive and negative ones.

Some told me of having had problems at school because of the language. Lennard for instance admitted that during his first years at a Finnish school, he was mocked because of his pronunciation, while Harri (in his 50s), who was sent to a German boarding school once a year for several weeks, explained that as a child he mixed up languages so that he ended up repeating grades. Several others told me that especially as children they used to speak a mixture of Finnish and German that "no one understood"<sup>15</sup>, something that Lasse, the only Finnish-Finnish person I interviewed, who came to Finland as an adult, compared to Creole. As he put it:

Lasse: (...) And my Finnish was for a long time just a — I don't know, one could compare it almost to some sort of Creole (laughs), so a weird kind of Finnish, that, ehm, well, that is grammatically not at all correct.<sup>16</sup>

Lasse got back to his usage of language at several other points of the interview. He explained that with his siblings he always used Finnish, which soon became

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<sup>14</sup>See first E-mail of Lena in which she introduced herself: "(...) aufgewachsen in Deutschland, seit 1999 fest in Finland, die Generation die nicht zweisprachig aufgewachsen ist."

<sup>15</sup>Heli: Zweisprachig, ja. Und das, also, ich weiss noch, es gab Probleme, weil als wir klein waren, da hat uns keiner verstanden, also, wir haben Deutsch und Finnisch dann gemixt.

I.: Ach! (beide lachen) Eine eigene Sprache draus gemacht!

Heli: Eine eigene Sprache, ja.

<sup>16</sup>Lasse: (...) Und mein Finnisch war lange Zeit nur so ein — ich weiss nicht, man könnte es eigentlich fast mit so einem Kreolisch vergleichen (lacht), also komisches Finnisch, das, ehm, also, das also grammatikalisch überhaupt nicht richtig ist. (...)



a "Geheimsprache", a secret language that as a matter of fact "no Finn understood"<sup>17</sup>. Lasse seemed to evaluate language as something very central for having a certain identity. In the next excerpt from his interview something interesting gets visible:

Lasse: (...) I would say, by now I belong to a third culture. That's what my girlfriend said during our discussions about Germany and Finland, since I feel that I belong to neither Finland nor to Germany completely. First of all language is a really important point, of identity, because I speak better German than Finnish. It took quite a while for me to admit that my Finnish is not that good. Ehm, the funny thing is that I am somehow a language-chameleon: I am really good in communicating through sayings and phrases. That also means that people don't immediately under — don't immediately notice - don't *immediately* notice that *I am not a Finn*.<sup>18</sup> (Last emphasis added by author)

As explained previously, Lasse was the only person I talked to who had no German family background as such, but who had lived all his life in Germany, before he moved to Helsinki as an adult. For that reason, his comment that (due to him using a lot of phrases) people in Finland didn't notice immediately that "he is not a Finn" puzzled me, especially since he also did not try to relativise it after having said it. After explaining that people in Finland usually take him to be Finland-Swedish, assuming that his main language would be Swedish and therefore he might not be that fluent in Finnish, he reasons that he is "more of a Germany-Finn than a Finland-German"<sup>19</sup>. What is particularly striking here is

<sup>17</sup>Lasse: (...) Und mit meinen Geschwistern - ich hab' vier Schwestern - hab' ich immer Finnisch gesprochen, das wurde so zu einer Geheimsprache.  
I.: Weil's keiner versteh sollte...

Lasse: Aber kein Finne hat uns verstanden!

<sup>18</sup>Lasse: (...) Ich würde sagen, ich gehöre zu einer dritten Kultur inzwischen. Es hat meine Freundin angebracht, also, in unserer Diskussion über Deutschland und Finnland, weil ich fühl mich nicht zu Finnland und auch nicht zu Deutschland komplett zugehörig. Einmal ist die Sprache ein ganz wichtiger Punkt, von der Identität, weil ich sprech' besser Deutsch als Finnisch. Es hat lange gedauert, bis ich mir das eingestanden habe, dass mein Finnisch nicht so gut ist. Ehm, lustigerweise bin ich auch ein bisschen so ein Sprach-Chamäleon: Ich kann sehr gut in Floskeln und in Phrasen kommunizieren. Das bedeutet auch, dass Menschen nicht sofort verst — nicht sofort erkennen - nicht *sofort* erkennen, *dass ich kein Finne bin*. (Last emphasis added by author)

<sup>19</sup>Lasse: (...) Jetzt, wenn ich so genau überlege, ehm, — doch, ja, ich würd' sagen, ich bin glaub' ich jetzt immer so ein Deutschland-Finne, mehr als ein Finnland-Deutscher.

that for Lasse, belonging to this "third culture" seems to be something exclusive. It seems likely that Lasse's girlfriend, who brought up this term, was familiar with Ruth and John Useem's concept of a *third culture* as the "shared lifestyle of the expatriate community" which differentiates from a person's "first" (home) and "second" (host) culture<sup>20</sup>. Ruth Useem in particular amplified this with the widely known term *Third Culture Kids (TCKs)* to describe "children who accompany their parents into another society"<sup>21</sup>. While this first seems to suit some of my participants as well, the original definition actually focusses on a rather specific group of children of missionaries, diplomats and expatriates for instance, who know beforehand that they would be going to a country for a specified amount of time and expected either repatriation or to be moved further at some point. As scholars like David Pollock, Ruth Van Reken and the authors in Saija Benjamin's and Fred Dervin's publication<sup>22</sup> discussed, the concept of TCKs comes with several weak points and also for my own study it is only applicable to some extent. Nonetheless, I will refer to it or its criticisms at several points as it serves as an interesting background of comparison.

Regarding the passage from Lasse's interview above, he demarcates his "third culture" from "Finnish" and "German culture" by saying that "he is not a Finn". This matches Useem's idea of a third culture, as described above, and moreover can be linked to what David Gutiérrez calls a "third space", enabling migrants to "escape the grasp of the nation-state and the host or home societies"<sup>23</sup>. This is something no other interviewee did, even though all of them could also fall into the category of at least *Cross Culture Kids (CCKs)*, a progression of the TCK concept by Ruth Van Reken "to include all children grown up deeply

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<sup>20</sup>Pollock, David C.; and Ruth E. Van Reken: *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston/London: Nicholas Brealey, 2009. 15.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. 15.

<sup>22</sup>Benjamin, Saija; and Fred Dervin (Eds.): *Migration, Diversity, and Education: Beyond Third Culture Kids*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015.

<sup>23</sup>See Smith 2006. 6

interacting with two or more cultural worlds during childhood"<sup>24</sup>. Most of them had a similar tendency of having both aspects they considered to be of German and Finnish origin, and furthermore told me of having mixed the German and Finnish language either as children or still today. However, they still did not seem to regard it in a way that this would make them *not* belong to the Finnish and/or German group. Reminding us of what Henning mentioned above, positioning oneself in these complex ideas can be also a process. Henning understood only with time that the German and Finnish parts do not have to be absolute, but that instead he may also feel related to both of them at the same time. So even though most of my interviewees told me about having an "as-well-as"-position in which they blend aspects stemming from different sources, they still felt like being part of *both* Germanness *and* Finnishness.

Not all of my discussion partners of the descendant generation were bilingual in the way many people understand it to be, namely that both languages were equally strong. As I mentioned earlier, some introduced themselves as being part of a generation which was raised with only one language as the paediatricians their mothers consulted believed that being brought up with two languages would cause harm to the child's development. As a matter of fact, until the 1960s, psychology and linguistics held the belief that bilingualism and cognitive development were negatively associated and saw bilingualism as "the cause of immigrant children's mental retardation" they thought they saw. Only gradually and through different studies this changed until a "positive association of bilingualism with cognitive development has become commonly accepted in the contemporary literature."<sup>25</sup>

Not knowing both languages of the parents caused obvious problems in every-

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<sup>24</sup>Pollock; and Van Reken 2009. xiv.

<sup>25</sup>See Portes; and Rumbaut 2001. 115 ff.

day life, for instance not being able to understand relatives, but especially when someone then decided to move to the other country in question. Besides bare practical aspects, this inability to communicate in both languages triggered negative feelings in some of the people I spoke to. For instance Linda, in her 40s, was raised in Germany with her Finnish mother speaking German to her. During the summer months, she often went to see her Finnish relatives with her mother. She explains:

Linda: (...) And ehm, I soon started to be quite annoyed that I didn't know any Finnish, because people always approached me in Finnish, because I also look so Finnish and eh, I always had to answer "En ymmärrä suomea", so "I don't understand any Finnish" and eh, also with the relatives, so, eh, that I had to use cousins as translators and then again had to use English, because the older generation, for example my aunt and my grandmother, they didn't know any foreign language, neither German nor English.<sup>26</sup>

Also at another point Linda emphasises her Finnish appearance, saying that she looks "100 percent Finnish", which could hint that the perception of others played (plays?) an integral part in her feeling of belonging, considering how much it apparently bothered her that she could not answer the expectation of others assuming her to be Finnish. A reverse picture was given by participants of other studies, for instance Verkuyten's and de Wolf's research on Chinese descendants living in the Netherlands. They, who have lived all or most of their lives in the Netherlands, described it as disturbing that even though they were fluent in Dutch and partly even felt more Dutch than Chinese, they were still perceived as Chinese, solely based on their outer appearance<sup>27</sup>. Unlike Linda, for them there was nothing that could be done about this mis-conception. Linda,

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<sup>26</sup>Linda: (...) Und ehm, mich hat das dann schon relativ schnell genervt, dass ich kein Finnisch konnte, weil ich angesprochen wurde immer auf Finnisch, weil ich auch so Finnisch aussehe und eh, ich immer antworten musste "En ymmärrä suomea", also "Ich verstehe kein Finnisch" und eh, auch in der Verwandtschaft, also, eh, dass ich Cousinsen benutzen musste als Dolmetscherin und dann wiederum Englisch benutzen musste, weil doch die ältere Generation eben zum Beispiel meine Tante und meine Grossmutter, die konnten keine Fremdsprache, also weder Deutsch noch Englisch.

<sup>27</sup>See Verkuyten; Wolf 2002. 371-399.

on the other hand, thought to herself after high school graduation: "Either you learn Finnish *now* or it will never work!"<sup>28</sup>, which is why her first attempt to settle down in Finland brought her there as an Au-pair. Thereafter it took her several years with stages in different European countries before she finally moved to Helsinki to stay. During the interview she expressed pride of being by now fluent in Finnish to the extent that she is able to "produce several sentences without any mistakes"<sup>29</sup>. Obtaining Finnish fluency meant more for Linda than learning a language, but rather it was a confirmation of what she always considered to be part of her. When introducing herself she said: "(...) but somehow I realised quite early that I was not really a typical German, because, eh, my mother is from Finland"<sup>30</sup>. At a later point when describing the time she first moved to Finland, Linda told me that she then had what she called "a click-experience, like an 'A-ha, here are your roots!'"<sup>31</sup>. Even though she felt related to Finland as the country where her roots lie, she suffered because people did not perceive her as a Finn, due to the lack of linguistic capital<sup>32</sup>. As Hurriyet Babacan states, "identity is two-pronged"<sup>33</sup>, meaning that it is shaped by self-perception and the perception of others. Linda might have always perceived herself as "not totally German", maybe she felt even closely attached to Finnish self-identification, however, the perceptions by the Finnish reference group was

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<sup>28</sup>Linda: (...) und dann hab' ich mich entschieden: "Entweder, du lernst *jetzt* Finnisch oder es funktioniert nie!"

<sup>29</sup>Linda: (...) und mein Finnisch ist so gut, dass, ehm, dass ich es sogar schaffe, mehrere Sätze hintereinander ohne irgendeinen Fehler zu produzieren (lacht kurz)

<sup>30</sup>Linda: (...) , aber irgendwie ist mir schon relativ schnell klar geworden, dass so eine ganz typische Deutsche war ich dann doch nicht, weil eh, meine Mutter aus Finnland kommt

<sup>31</sup>Linda: (...) ein "Klick", das war wie so ein Kick-Erlebnis, so "A-ha, hier sind deine Wurzeln!"

<sup>32</sup>With this I draw back to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social capital. He considers cultural identity as part of a person's capital, which consists among others of incorporated aspects like clothes, language, accent, manners, taste and education. Often those are taken to be of uneconomic nature and part of a person's character. However, they are shaped by early imprinting, often in relation with financial and social status of the parents. See Bienfait 2006. 112.

<sup>33</sup>Babacan, Hurriyet: "Immigration, Nation-state and Belonging." In Babacan, Alperhan: *Migration, belonging and the nation state*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010. 14.

a different one. Not sounding Finnish meant exclusion from this group, which stood in sharp contrast to how Linda saw herself - or to phrase it differently: the reflection in the "mirrors of the judgment of others", as Caroline Hornstein-Tomić puts it, were mismatched with how Linda thought she would present herself<sup>34</sup>. Becoming fluent in Finnish as her *meant-to-be-mother-tongue* denoted a completion of Linda's bicultural (self-)identification.<sup>35</sup>

We all know how much language and emotions are interlinked. Sometimes it is hard to formulate what we feel, to find the right words to express our thoughts. Sometimes a specific word can bring us to tears, make us laugh, set us in a certain mood. Indeed, words are powerful and referring to Henning's excerpt in which he described his decision to pass German onto his children, each of us has a language of the heart. Does the language we use when we think or dream say something about the constitution of our soul? Does someone with a bilingual background thinking in only one of their languages necessarily feel more related to the corresponding country? As Čeginskas suggests, the degree to which someone is fluent in a language does not always determine how strong they feel emotionally connected to it, neither does the age at which they obtained it<sup>36</sup> - something that supported also by other scholars such as Weckström<sup>37</sup>. However, it seems safe to say that having been brought up with a language does mean much more than knowing the vocabulary. Everyone who has learned or is learning a foreign language is well aware of the fact that knowing the words does not equal understanding the language. How often do we understand the literal content of what has been said, but still we do not get the actual message (jokes

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<sup>34</sup>See Hornstein-Tomić 2011. 425, translated by the author.

<sup>35</sup>Similar findings became visible in Čeginskas' doctoral thesis: Her interlocutors did not simply feel in-between, thus when people detected a "foreign" accent, this set them "apart from cultures to which they feel connections", Čeginskas 2015. 87.

<sup>36</sup>Čeginskas 2015. 62.

<sup>37</sup>See Weckström 2011. 89.

are the best example for this). How it feels for someone who was raised with both a German and a Finnish background as well as language, was explained by Larissa, who moved to Finland in her mid-20s:

Larissa: And basically when translating I also have — when I speak the language, I also think German and then I also have the whole cultural background. And when I speak Finnish, I also think Finnish and, eh, my emotions are then also Finnish. So, let's say I would translate from German to English, I would consider English to be just a tool to make people understand something, but somehow, ehm, simply translating from German to Finnish, so much more comes along with that, because one has to switch somehow, somehow while translating, that is actually quite exhausting sometimes. (laughs)<sup>38</sup>

Larissa grew up in Germany and another European country in which she learned an additional Germanic language, so as a matter of fact, for part of her life she was even trilingual. However, in this sequence and also during the whole interview, she referred to German and Finnish as her mother-tongues. She explains exactly what I also feel about my mother-tongue and my foreign languages. Even though I was reared monolingually, I can express myself in English. However, for me as well it feels that I might be able to deliver a message, but the small nuances, implications, cultural references - all this I only have in my mother-tongue, German. In this language I can put things straight - and if I am missing words, I might also just invent some new ones that supposedly only other natives can understand. Taking what Larissa said as a basis, it seems that in principle this is equally true when being bilingual. The difference becomes apparent when Larissa has to translate from German to Finnish and vice versa. She describes it as tricky and exhausting, as those two languages are not bare

<sup>38</sup>Larissa: Und ich hab' auch beim Übersetzen im Grunde — wenn ich die Sprache spreche, dann denke ich auch Deutsch und dann hab' ich auch diesen ganzen kulturellen Hintergrund. Und wenn ich Finnisch spreche, dann denke ich auch auf Finnisch und, eh, meine Emotionen sind dann auch finnisch. Also, wenn ich vielleicht vom Deutschen ins Englische übersetzen würde, dann würde ich das Englische nur als ein Werkzeug empfinden, um den Leuten was klar zu machen, aber irgendwie, ehm einfach nur so vom Deutschen ins Finnische übersetzen, da kommt so viel mit dann irgendwie gleichzeitig, weil man dann irgendwie so umschwitchen muss, irgendwie beim Übersetzen, das ist richtig anstrengend zum Teil irgendwie. (lacht)

tools for her as it is the case for English. She has both cultural backgrounds, she knows about the unnamed meanings in both languages. When translating from one to the other, her mind has to do additional code-switching. For Larissa those two languages are closely linked to their cultural background. Language therefore can be regarded as a way not only to express your own thoughts, but also as a way to personalise the socialisation that has influenced us to an extent that we sometimes are not even completely aware of. I consider socialisation as something that is continuously "implanted" from outside into us, even though it is also not an all-passive process, but is to some extent subject to our choice of what we want to adopt or reject. We are not born with the values and ways of thinking that we develop later on. What remains unclear is the degree to which the development of opinions and ways to see the world is shaped by our surroundings and the society we live in at certain stages of our lives. However, in situations like the one described by Larissa, the interconnection between how to express oneself and one's background manifests. This links back to what John Gumperz describes as a communicative competence, which enables us to detect the norms and social values of a group and to act accordingly<sup>39</sup>. Putting Larissa's statement into another context, I adduce Bernardino Di Croce's work about "second generation migrants in Germany". He quotes a German-Turkish woman who describes something her grand-father always said to her: "Bir dil, bir insan, iki dil, iki insan.", equals "One language, one person, two languages, two persons", which points out that in every language one is another person, with varying personalities.<sup>40</sup> For Larissa this would mean that when switching from one (cultural) language to the other, she simultaneously switches between two personalities, which might serve as an explanation why it feels exhausting

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<sup>39</sup>See Schellenberger 2011. 178.

<sup>40</sup>See Di Croce, Bernardino; Manfred Budzinski; and Verein Migration & Integration in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e. V. (Eds.): *(Nicht) Auf Augenhöhe. Erfahrungen und Lebensgeschichten zum Thema Migration und Zweiter Generation in Deutschland*. Karlsruhe: von Loeper Literaturverlag, 2009. 33.



at times. Using the image of language as a "tool" reminds of Lotta Weckström's reference to Mantila's elaborations on the different levels of language awareness. From such a point of view, Larissa's description can be positioned within the second and the third, possibly also the fourth level. While English serves solely as a tool to transport a message (second level), Finnish and German are closely linked to emotions and expressing emotions (third level), and can be seen as a "signifier for one's identity and personality"<sup>41</sup>. Nonetheless, as Weckström continues, one should not regard those levels as exclusive or one being superior over the other, as often several of them may be involved simultaneously in the evaluation of a certain language.<sup>42</sup>

Putting this sequence in another context by comparing it to Čeginskas' results as presented in her thesis, some differences become visible. Apparently Čeginskas' interviewees, who have grown up with multilingual family backgrounds, "claimed to be most comfortable when able to switch from one language to the other" as they described it "as a normal experience, (...) as a typical family experience"<sup>43</sup>. In those *multilingual* families seemingly it was normal to speak more than two languages in everyday life, even between members of a family, so having to switch from one to another language was not problematised by them. Looking at my interviews with the descendant generation, almost half of the participants told me that they either spoke German exclusively at home, or at least more German than Finnish. Seven out of those eleven persons admitted having (had) issues because of this, though not all were related to switching languages. However, those who explained about having trouble with this, were also part of the group, in which one language was dominant within the family. Of course research on such a small scale can not serve to give definite proof on this matter, but still I suggest that the degree to which someone is familiar with

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<sup>41</sup>Weckström 2011. 82

<sup>42</sup>See Ibid. 82.

<sup>43</sup>Čeginskas 2015. 63.

switching between languages determines how they feel about this act.

As was shown in the sequence from Lasse's interview in which he reflected on his own language (un-)proficiencies, language can be regarded as a central component of an identification, as both a self-perception or a partner perception. Drawing on Gumperz (1992), Weckström states that "language and ethnic identity [are] reciprocally related. Thus language use influences the formation of ethnic identity and ethnic identity influences language attitudes and language use."<sup>44</sup> Sometimes the sound of a language is enough to remind us of something, of a memory, of a place, of "home". One interviewee, Lukas, who came to Finland aged six, told me that whenever there is something German on television, even if "it is something completely dorky", he has to watch it, "just to hear the language"<sup>45</sup>. He explains that nowadays most of his surrounding is Finnish-speaking, and as he puts it:

Lukas: (...) and when one hears German somehow, then, then, eh, reminds that of one's other side and one likes to listen to it (...).<sup>46</sup>

Having those "two sides" to choose from was considered as a "blessing"<sup>47</sup> by several of the people I talked to. Helga (in her 40s), who had lived in Germany a few times as an adult, even calls it "an abundance" having grown up with two languages and two cultures:

Helga: (...) I think, it has always been rather an abundance to be able to do many things and many are envious about this, especially those who would have had the opportunity, but didn't get having the two cultures and two languages. I know many who for example have a totally German name, don't speak one word of German, so

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<sup>44</sup>Weckström 2011. 91.

<sup>45</sup>Lukas: (...) Aber wenn jetzt irgendwie deutsch - im finnischen Fernsehen was deutsches kommt oder so, dann schau' ich mir das gerne an, auch wenn auf anderen Sendern irgendwas interessanteres — auch wenn's irgendwas total beklopptes ist, einfach nur, um die Sprache zu hören, oder...

<sup>46</sup>Lukas: (...) und wenn man dann Deutsch irgendwie hört, dann, dann eh, erinnert das einen immer an die andere Seite noch und man hört da gerne zu (...).

<sup>47</sup>See interview with Henning.

they basically only got the name and so to say this 'Explain this, why do you have such a weird name!' (laughs), but then didn't get all those good things, the advantages, that come with it. <sup>48</sup>

This links to the experiences of Linda, and also Lasse, both of whom have either a "Finnish look" and/or a Finnish name, but for a long time lacked the benefit of also being bilingual, which would have confirmed the expectations of others. The constellation described by Helga was also familiar to some of the participants in Čeginskas' study: they experienced a "serious mismatch between [their] personal self-representation and the ways others perceived [them]" and therefore occasionally "challenge[d] their social worlds' more rigid definition of belonging"<sup>49</sup>. Nevertheless there are more ways to feel a certain belonging than just language. In the next chapter I will analyse multiple ways my interviewees negotiated their own positions and identifications more into detail.

## 4.2 Drawing and de-constructing boundaries, negotiating positions

In the previous chapter, it became clear that for many people I talked to, language was of essential importance for a certain feeling of belonging. Moreover, this feeling of belonging turned out to be very vague in nature. During the same conversation, several ways of positioning oneself could become visible. While taking a position, one often draws boundaries, in this case between German and Finnish identification, between what one considers to be German and Finnish culture, between Germanness and Finnishness.

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<sup>48</sup>Helga: (...) ich denk', es ist eher immer ein Reichtum gewesen, dass man viele Sachen kann und viele beneiden einen auch, vor allem die, die die Möglichkeit gehabt hätten, aber es nicht bekommen haben, die zwei Kulturen und zwei Sprachen zu haben. Ich kenn' auch Viele, die haben zum Beispiel einen völlig deutschen Namen, können aber kein Wort Deutsch, also haben sozusagen nur den Namen bekommen und sozusagen die "Erklär das mal, wieso hast du so einen komischen Namen!" (lacht), aber dann nichts von den guten Sachen, von den Vorteilen, die da mit kommen.

<sup>49</sup>Čeginskas 2015. 80.

Moments where this constructing and de-constructing of boundaries showed were often related to habits in everyday life, traditions on holidays, but also more interior aspects like attitudes, manners and ways of thinking. A comparable differentiation was made by Nina Glick Schiller, who distinguished between "ways of being" and "ways of belonging" in a transnational social field, with the former describing "actual practices and social relations individuals engage in" and the latter referring to "emotional connections to persons or localities that are elsewhere and to practices that signal a conscious connection to, or identification with, a particular group"<sup>50</sup>. This categorisation between an "inner" and an "outer" expression of belonging has already been described by Birman (1994), although he referred to it as "psychological acculturation" and "behavioural acculturation". According to him, the latter would mostly occur with first generation migrants, while their descendants would be more concerned with "questions about identity constructions" as an identification with both cultures might not be taken for granted.<sup>51</sup> Despite this, when it comes to the interviews I did with descendants of Germans in contemporary Helsinki, they did talk to a significant extent about aspects that could fall into the category of Birman's behavioural acculturation. While some interlocutors expressed their feeling of belonging on a general basis, others used the aforementioned aspects to approach a self-definition, describing the way they considered themselves to be Finnish and/or German. Furthermore, some positioned themselves by using stereotypes or referring to the way others perceive them as a tool to illustrate their position within or between the two cultures. Sometimes my discussion partners expressed an "as-well-as" position, and a resentment at having to decide between a German and a Finnish side, suggesting that they be both. First I was drawn to consider this as a trace of hybridity and understood it as a way to take existing cultural

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<sup>50</sup>Wessendorf 2013. 51 f.

<sup>51</sup>Ruhs 2009. 28 f., translated by author.

aspects to create something new from it. After further reconsideration, I realised that even if they said they are both and wanted to position themselves *within both* cultures, simultaneously they still used categorisations and thus maintained the boundaries it first seemed they would de-construct. This made me wonder about the term and according to what my interviewees presented, I started to imagine rather hybrid tendencies, not a blending of the two cultures, but of mixing them. Thinking of the well-known picture of cultural melting pots, I would describe the situation as being something of a fruit salad - a unit in which one still sees the single components, rather than a smoothie or pulp in which one could only guess what the ingredients are. Using the category of hybridity certainly depends on the definition, which I will try to discuss and clarify in the excerpts in question.

What remains certain is that the elements involved in the process of positioning are complex and unstable. As Laura Hirvi wrote, with recourse to Sherry Ortner, "cultural frameworks offer people a script for how to navigate through their everyday lives, what habitus to display, and what roles to enact"<sup>52</sup>. However, she adds, those "scripts underlying a performance" can be modified over time, which Hirvi considers to be of particular importance for migrants who "deal with several, sometimes contradictory, cultural maps that compete for the right to guide their behaviour" and need to develop tactics for fulfilling this task.<sup>53</sup> In the talks I had with descendants of Germans in Helsinki, this shift of behaviour and attitudes became visible as well: it was addressed, but in most cases not problematised. In the following I want to use examples from my interviews to illustrate strategies of my interviewees in negotiating their position between or within what they see as German and/or Finnish culture, starting with tangible aspects in their lives and continuing with more interior processes related to self-

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<sup>52</sup>Hirvi, Laura: *Identities in Practice: Trans-Atlantic Ethnography of Sikh Immigrants in Finland and in California*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2013. 27.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. 27.

identification.

### 4.2.1 Manifestations of belonging

When being asked how Germanness and Finnishness possibly showed in their lives, most of my discussion partners first thought of rather practical matters, before they tried to analyse their character and self-positioning. This is in line with Floya Anthias' observations on "belonging", in which she stresses the link between a personal feeling of belonging and cultural practices by explaining that "we articulate our belonging through our practices, and our practices give rise to our sense of belonging"<sup>54</sup>. Also Harry Goulbourne found in his study on Caribbean and Italian migrants in the U.K. that the "participation in transnational family rituals, cultural practices and activities was a key means of maintaining understandings of ethnic identity, and notions of home and belongingness"<sup>55</sup>. This points towards what Anne-Marie Fortier described by stating that if we take identities to be performative, it equally means "that they are constructed by the very 'expressions' that are said to be [their] results"<sup>56</sup>. Following these ideas, the section at hand will begin with presenting those "manifestations of belonging", linking to my interviewees' descriptions of everyday life practices, habits as well as the meaning of concrete objects like a passport. Only then I will proceed to how they positioned themselves between or within German and Finnish frameworks, how they reflected on themselves and evaluated their transcultural background.

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<sup>54</sup>Anthias 2011. 208.

<sup>55</sup>Goulbourne 2010. 100.

<sup>56</sup>Fortier 2000. 6.

### Food culture and holiday traditions

When it comes to tangible matters, it seems only consistent that - like in the interviews with the parent generation - the most discussed aspects circulated around food culture and holiday traditions. If those themes were of central importance for the parent's generation, even if most were not literally related to the participants of the descendant generation, it appears as a logical consequence that we will find the same topics to be of importance for the children's generation. Regarding those, some interviewees presented rather distinct viewpoints on what seizable parts of their lives they considered to be of German or Finnish background, while others found them harder to define, or then claimed to have a mixture of both.

Like other participants<sup>57</sup>, Helena gave several precise examples of food stemming from her German part of the family. Mostly those were linked to Christmas, for instance *Weihnachtsstollen*<sup>58</sup>, *Marzipankartoffeln*<sup>59</sup>, red cabbage and food related to the regional background of her father. However, Helena also told me of food practices in everyday life, like eating jam on bread or the whole family having breakfast together, in which she dissociates herself from other Finns. Helena, in her 20s, had never stayed in Germany for longer than to visit relatives. Even though she links certain traditions clearly to having a German respectively Finnish background, she admits:

Helena: (...) Ehm — that we actually always have breakfast together - I don't know if that — It's hard to tell, because I never lived in a Finnish family or was raised [there], therefore it all seems normal to me. (...)<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>See for instance interview with Linda and Hannah.

<sup>58</sup>Christmas stollen, a baked yeast bread with raisins and spices.

<sup>59</sup>'Marzipan potatoes', Christmas candy.

<sup>60</sup>Helena: (...) Ehm — dass wir immer eigentlich zusammen frühstücken - ich weiss nicht, ob das — Das ist schwer zu sagen, weil ich noch nie in einer finnischen Familie gewohnt hab' oder aufgewachsen bin, deswegen kommt mir alles ganz normal vor. (...)

Concerning specific aspects Helena appears to be sure about how to label them, while at other moments of the interview she hesitates, acknowledging how subjective her viewpoint is. Later in the interview, when describing her experiences when in contact with Germans, both when she was an exchange student in countries other than Germany and Finland as well as when visiting her relatives in Germany, she distances herself from what she considers to be typical German eating habits, namely consuming a lot of bread, pastries and hearty meals. In this context, Helena tells of "the fitness rush" that hit Finland few years ago, within which she positions herself, having salad for lunch with Finnish friends and bringing own, healthy food when visiting her German grandmother<sup>61</sup>. In Helena's account, something becomes visible that I deem to be quite common for many of the people I talked to: even though most of my interlocutors *do* use labels and *do* consider certain aspects in life to be there precisely *because* of their mixed family background, still they find it impossible to draw absolute and definite lines. Using Helena's interview to illustrate this, it shows that she does regard certain aspects of her life to be of German or Finnish origin and also distinguishes between German and Finnish lifestyles - yet she acknowledges that since she has never lived in a Finnish-Finnish family, she can not be absolutely sure about the accuracy of her words. Having this in mind, it might be worth thinking of "family" culture rather than "national" cultures, as also showed in other interviews in this study.

Instead of taking clearly separated positions between German- and Finnishness,

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<sup>61</sup>Helena: (...) vor ein paar Jahren hat's ja diesen Fitness-Boom und so gesunde Ernährung, sowas, angefangen. Das ist jetzt in, also ist es normaler, sowas leichtes zu essen, Salate - auch wenn ich mich hier mit Freunden treffe, essen wir immer nur - gehen wir zu Teatteri oder Esplanade, essen einen Salat, ganz normal! (lacht) Und das ist auch ein, ja, Essen. Und in Deutschland isst man eher richtig deftige Sachen. (lacht) (...) Ehm, aber immer, wenn wir nach Deutschland gehen, unsere Oma besuchen, gibt's immer Brötchen und nichts anderes. In den letzten Jahren haben wir auch selber angefangen, unser eigenes Essen dort zu kaufen, mehr Salat und mehr Joghurt und so gesunde Sachen.



many of my interviewees preferred explaining that their practices in everyday life are more of a mixture of habits they regarded to be Finnish and German. Čeginskas' study on people with multicultural background reported on similar tendencies. As Čeginskas puts it, by "producing their personal myth of mixed origin and belonging", her interlocutors "contribute[d] to de-constructing dominant myths of cultural exclusivity and purity, belonging, and identity", having plural attachments which Čeginskas described as social and cultural capital<sup>62</sup>. Throughout my interview material, most interestingly with the first generation migrants as well as their descendants, something similar became apparent. Based on what I was told, a division of the statements into broadly speaking two groups became visible: On the one hand, some interviewees pictured a combination of elements they defined as either German or Finnish. On the other hand, some claimed having blended traditions, but admitted not being able to name the components.

When being asked directly about the holiday traditions they practise, participants like Linda and Laura both told me of having a mixture, with Linda even emphasising the deliberate and personal composition of "her" mix<sup>63</sup>. Laura, in her 50s, starts and also concludes by saying she had "mostly Finnish traditions". However, when she intermittently briefly describes specific holidays, she uses different categorisations, namely her Christmas to be Finnish, Easter as "a mixed thing" and her children "still insisting on celebrating St. Nicholas".<sup>64</sup> In contrast to this, which appears to be a differentiation between single holidays

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<sup>62</sup>Čeginskas 2015. 91.

<sup>63</sup>Linda: Also, ich denke, ich hab' mir da so einen, so einen eigenen Mix zusammengestellt, der aus verschiedenen Elementen besteht. (...)

<sup>64</sup>Laura: Hauptsächlich finnische Traditionen, also, wir halten uns an Ostern - naja gut, mein, vielleicht, Ostern ist so ein gemischtes Ding. Also Weihnachten feiern wir finnisch, Ostern mit Osterhase und mit Eier-Bemalen. - Osterhase gibt's hier nicht, aber Eier werden hier auch bemalt und an Ostersträucher oder wie auch immer, dieser ganze Osterschmuck, das ist wahrscheinlich eher dann die deutsche Tradition. Nikolaus bestehen die Kinder immer noch drauf, dass der gefeiert wird oder — dass an Nikolaus gedacht wird, aber sonst eher die finnischen Traditionen.

with either German or Finnish attributions, Linda's way of spending holidays seems to be a more balanced mixture of traditions she deems to be German or respectively Finnish. Taking several holidays as a point of reference, Linda describes a colourful combination of for instance German culinary traditions, but then also a *simultaneous* existence of German *and* Finnish holiday decoration. At other moments of her description she distinguishes between her own way of spending a day and things she performs for her niece and nephew. For this, she is taking 6 December as an example, when on the one hand she usually participates in decidedly Finnish traditions such as putting two blue-white candles in the window and watching the president's gala on television, gossiping about the guests' dresses, but on the other hand, she also prepares Nicholas-stockings for the children.

Going through the sequences in which my interviewees described having a mix of German and Finnish traditions, one gets the impression that they seem to have *chosen not to choose*. Wherever a holiday tradition exists, regardless of its cultural background, and given they consider it to be worthy of the celebration, they adopt it, incorporate it into their lives. Bönisch-Brednich stated that migrants are "no longer seen as passive creatures moving from one culture to the next", but instead decide themselves for themselves what part they want to adopt, therefore craft some sort of "bricolage of cultural elements that vary depending on the situation in life"<sup>65</sup>. Even though she primarily referred to first generation migrants in New Zealand, same can be said about "my" descendants of Germans in contemporary Helsinki. Despite this, Laura Hirvi, who studied Sikh immigrants and their descendants in Helsinki and Yuba City (California), argued that people with migrant background are by no means free to pick whatever seems suitable for them, but their choice is "conditioned by the particular

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<sup>65</sup>Bönisch-Brednich 2002a. 15, translated by author.

historical, political and cultural contexts"<sup>66</sup>. I certainly agree with this, and am sure that this is particularly true for groups of migrants with a visible foreign background, who might feel repelled and discriminated against by the majority population. Certainly such experiences have considerable impact on the way people with migrant backgrounds live out their cultural practices<sup>67</sup>.

In my study, this showed in a different nuance: Few described moments of discrimination, such as Henning, who explained to me how the negative experiences of his father and his own childhood still influenced him today, resulting in him not writing a 'letter to the editor' of newspapers or lowering his voice when publicly speaking German to his children. However, most of my interviewees claimed that they never had been discriminated against for being of German descent, and taking this as a starting point, it is not surprising that they indeed made it sound like a deliberate choice of who they wanted to be and what they wanted to do. In most of the passages where the study's participants talked about how they created a mix of traditions and habits, they described it either as an active and deliberate choice, like in the interview with Linda, Laura and also Helga later on in this chapter, or made it sound like a natural thing that just happened. I suggest that the fact that few of my interviewees experienced something negative on account of their German-Finnish background might have rather led to them actually having the freedom of decision about what they want to adopt, similar to what Bönisch-Brednich described in her study and moreover also to what Vertovec and Rogers (1998) referred to as "multiple cultural competences" a person can choose to use<sup>68</sup>.

At the beginning of this chapter I was pondering about the extent to which my interviewees expressed hybrid behaviour and mentioned that using the label of

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<sup>66</sup>Hirvi 2013. 25.

<sup>67</sup>See for instance the reflections of Wessendorf 2013. 35; also Weckström 2011. 68, 150; and Verkuyten; and Wolf 2002. 383.

<sup>68</sup>Wessendorf 2013. 107.

hybridity certainly depends on the exact definition. Thinking of it as a way to take aspects of German and Finnish backgrounds and crafting something new from them, one could ask how many of my interlocutors this was actually the case for. However, if we take Agathe Bienfait's definition as a starting position in which she explained that hybridity does not mean a "fusion of cultures", but instead a "juxtaposition and a non-stop shifting, coalising moment of identification"<sup>69</sup>, we could call these tendencies a kind of hybridity as well. Moreover, Bienfait stresses that hybridity "emerges in dialogue [and] is based on the negotiation of identity positions in interactions"<sup>70</sup> - something which can be traced in my interviews, as I tried and try to show. This inclusion of different elements is something that became verbalised in the interview with Helga, who pictures the way they spend the aforementioned sixth of December in her family:

Helga: (...) and to us St. Nicholas comes as well, even though it is also the Finnish Independence Day, that all has to — Every celebration and every chocolate egg has to (laughs) has to be utilised!

I.: Yes. And how did you then celebrate this with St. Nicholas, I mean, did you —

Helga: St. Nicholas comes in the morning. And the Independence Day is in the evening, so one can combine that very well.

I.: Doesn't overlap, no.

Helga: No, no no and I mean, children don't even think like that, I think. And I'm not that patriotic that I somehow think that this is a holy day, where you're not allowed to do anything else.<sup>71</sup>

As Helga puts it, she does not see a reason to decide between Finnish and German traditions, neither when it comes to the sixth of December nor on

<sup>69</sup>Bienfait 2006. 93, translated by author.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid. 93.

<sup>71</sup>Helga: (...) und bei uns kommt auch der Nikolaus, obgleich es ja der finnische Selbständigkeitstag ist, das muss ja alles — Jede Feier und jedes Schokoladenei muss ja (lacht) genutzt werden!

I.: Ja. Und wie habt ihr das dann gefeiert mit dem Nikolaus, ich meine, habt ihr —

Helga: Nikolaus kommt ja früh. Und Selbständigkeitstag ist ja am Abend, also kann man das ja schön kombinieren.

I.: Überschneidet sich nicht, ja.

Helga: Nee, nee nee und ich mein', Kinder denken da auch gar nicht so dran, denke ich. Ich bin auch nicht so patriotisch, dass ich da irgendwie denke, das ist ein heiliger Tag, an dem man nicht irgendwas Anderes machen darf.

other occasions, briefly pointing towards Easter and the hunt for chocolate eggs which many of my interviewees considered not to be part of a original Finnish Easter, even though this turned out to be debatable, as will be discussed below. Here, I want to point towards Bienfait's criticism of Pierre Bourdieu's idea of an actor coined by society, by which he lay focus on the restricting nature of society for the individual freedom. According to Bienfait, this "habitual coining" only "sets the range of possibilities and the way how practices are performed".<sup>72</sup> As a result, the way people act and behave and perform might be influenced by the society in which they grew up, however, they might very well be able to modify, adapt and individualise it. Moreover, Pirkkoliisa Ahponen refers to Vertovec when she explains that a "positive use of multicultural differences demands that the designers have the capacities to self-consciously select the aspects that can be used to form new cultural constellations"<sup>73</sup>. This links to what Susanne Wessendorf illustrated by drawing on the work of Hollinger, Gans and White, saying that "individuals make 'ethnic choices' and pick particular types of cultural practices that best fit the context"<sup>74</sup>. This dependency on the context will also show in chapter 4.2.2, but going back to the interview with Helga, when being asked later what other aspects of her life she considers herself to be German, she once more emphasises the option of being able to choose and combine:

I.: Yes. And are there other things in your every day life, that in some way are related to Germany? Well, those could be certain habits, eating habits or when one thinks of your apartment - are there certain things through which one can see, OK, that's not a typical Finnish household, but things go a bit differently there, or...?  
Helga: Well, I guess for this someone else would have to come and have a look at it...

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<sup>72</sup>Bienfait 2006. 110, translated by author.

<sup>73</sup>Ahponen, Pirkkoliisa; Päivi Harinen; and Ville-Samuli Haverinen (Eds.): *Dislocation of Civic Cultural Borderlines: Methodological Nationalism, Transnational Reality and Cosmopolitan Dreams*. Cham/Heidelberg/New York/Dodrecht/London: Springer International Publishing, 2016. 185.

<sup>74</sup>Wessendorf 2013. 10.

I.: Hm.

Helga: I think so, I think, probably there is quite a lot, because one does take the best aspects of everything that one got to see. What could there be...?<sup>75</sup>

In this quote, several aspects show out. First, Helga articulates a personal choice of what one considers to be best from all that one has seen so far, while not explicitly referring to her German-Finnish background. Secondly, Helga's words link to what I tried to show previously by citing Helena, namely the awareness of a remaining uncertainty about what makes oneself or one's life different from that of "normal" Finns or Germans. When I asked Helga about her home and if she or others would describe it as typically Finnish, she hesitates, obviously finding it hard to tell herself by stating that an outsider would probably be more likely to spot possible differences. After giving it a thought, Helga continues by talking about food practices, but she does so by referring to how her daughter sees her cooking in comparison to her (Finnish-Finnish) father's way of preparing food. Here again it seems to be impossible for Helga to autonomously detect aspects that distance her from the German or Finnish reference group, possibly due to her insider-position within both groups.

This inability to define clearly the German or Finnish aspects in one's life also showed in discussions I had with Heiko (in his 40s) and Heli (in her 50s). Like Helga, they were born and raised in Finland with only temporary and relatively short stays in Germany. While Heiko describes some holiday traditions and related aspects he regards as German, he still admits that sometimes he might

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<sup>75</sup>I.: Ja. Und gibt's bei dir im Alltag dann andere Dinge, die dich jetzt, die in irgendeiner Form mit Deutschland zu tun haben? Also, ob das jetzt gewissen Gewohnheiten sind, Essensgewohnheiten oder wenn man an deine Wohnung denkt - gibt's da bestimmte Dinge, an denen man sieht, OK, das ist jetzt kein typisch finnischer Haushalt, sondern da laufen die Dinge ein bisschen anders, oder...?

Helga: Tja, da müsste jemand anderes reinkommen, wahrscheinlich...

I.: Hm.

Helga: Ich denke schon, ich denke, wahrscheinlich ziemlich viel, weil man nimmt sich ja die besseren Seiten von Allem, was man so gesehen hat. Was könnte es da geben...?

not know whether something has a German or a Finnish background and states that they "took a bit of everything"<sup>76</sup>. When being asked what "things in life" she regards as German or Finnish, also Heli expresses uncertainty:

I.: And apart from that, nowadays, what things do you have in your life that are rather German than Finnish? (...)

Heli: Oh well... Well, I'm not really aware of all those things, well, somehow customs remained, well I — I don't know, hm. (thinks) I can't tell... Somehow that's more of a backbone, what is there. I don't really know, well — that's just some kind of mixed, well, that is then also passed on to my children, well, they partly obtain it as well, one passes it on.<sup>77</sup>

Overall and having the whole conversation in mind, Heli in particular did not appear to possess a distinct German self-identification. Even though she describes herself as "more open-minded and more lively than a Finn" and having a "mixture of both cultures", she still identifies consciously as a Finn<sup>78</sup>. Following Kalscheuer's line of argument, this part of Heli's interview can indeed be regarded as a trace of hybridity. According to Kalscheuer, in a "transdifferent space the own and the strange" stop being differentiable, and moreover hybridity finds amplification by adding the component of transnationality, meaning having cultural and social aspects that stretch beyond national borders.<sup>79</sup> However, Heli was one of the few interviewees who expressed what I initially regarded as hybridity, namely understanding it as a "new blend" of components. As initially

<sup>76</sup>Heiko: (...) Also, bei uns, ja, vielleicht oft wusste ich nicht, was jetzt deutsch und was finnisch ist — wir haben von allem was genommen, würde ich sagen.

<sup>77</sup>I.: Und ansonsten heutzutage, was hast du so für Dinge in deinem Leben, die schon eher deutsch sind als finnisch? (...)

Heli: Tja... Also, mir ist das alles nicht so bewusst, also, das ist einfach irgendwie Sitten sind geblieben, also ich — Ich weiss auch nicht, hm. (überlegt) Ich kann's nicht sagen... Das ist eigentlich eher so ein Rückgrat, was da so ist. Ich weiss wirklich nicht, also — das ist einfach so ein gemischtes, also, das wird dann auch an meine Kinder übertragen, also, (...) die bekommen das ja auch teilweise mit, da gibt man das dann weiter.

<sup>78</sup>Heli: (...) also, ich fühl' mich nicht, also, mehr eine Finnin als eine Deutsche, das schon. Aber ich bin auch nicht eine ganz, eine ganz — nicht, wie soll ich sagen? Nicht ganz finnisch, weil ich eben aufgeschlossener oder lebendiger bin, als eine Finnin normalerweise. Das ist schon. Beide Kulturen irgendwie so gemischt. (...) Obwohl ich hier manchmal merke: "Hmm, bist doch mehr finnisch!" (lacht) Das ist schon, das ist sehr interessant, das ab und zu mal zu merken, also, dass man doch bisschen anders denkt! (lacht)

<sup>79</sup>Ruokonen-Engler 2012. 83.

claimed above, most other participants did describe a mix of traditions, but yet were conscious about the supposed origin of those, which is why I argue these descriptions do not show hybridity in the sense of a hard-to-define-blend, but rather they are a stirring or new combination of seemingly distinct German and Finnish particles.

A possible explanation for what we find in Heli's interview is the constellation of her family: As she explains, her German mother was a young adult when she came to Finland, so while in Heli's childhood the "differences" concerning habits and holiday traditions were bigger, Heli explains that with the years her mother's "polarity got reversed" so that by now the family maintains rather Finnish customs<sup>80</sup>. Contrasting this with viewpoints from the 1940s, when Alfred Schütz referred to culture as a text that students first have to study, reflect upon the "structure of the own", before they can learn the basic structure of "the new", from which they can create their "own vocabulary"<sup>81</sup>, one could say that it is hard to reflect on the "own" and the "other", if no contrast is experienced. Or how Risse put it: the clearer that the border of a group or community is, "the more 'real' its psychological existence becomes in people's self-concepts"<sup>82</sup>. For Heli this means that since her mother stopped living out her Germanness quite early, Heli experienced a differentiation between the traditions only to a limited extent and therefore today she is not conscious of possible differences between German and Finnish cultural frameworks in her own life.

This sequence from Heli's interview shows something that should not be left aside, namely that it is possible for a person to fall in line more with another socialisation, consciously or subconsciously. The story of Heli's mother, who was

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<sup>80</sup>Heli: Mmm, naja, in der Kindheit haben wir, also, da war der Unterschied grösser, aber so langsam — also, wie gesagt, meine Mutter, die ist ja mit 19 Jahren gekommen und hat sich auch immer mehr umgepolzt, dass das jetzt auch irgendwie mehr nach den finnischen Sitten alles läuft. (...)

<sup>81</sup>See Bönisch-Brednich 2002a. 217, translated by author.

<sup>82</sup>Risse 2010. 26.



quite young when she moved to Finland and therefore with time she started to adopt Finnish habits and traditions, is one example of this process, which resulted in Heli being unaware of particularly German parts in her own life.

In the same way that a single person moulds their life can change with time and surroundings, traditions of a specific country can also change, again with time and outer influence. This links to Jan Nederveen Pieterse's paradigms of culture and globalisation (1999), as presented by Ruokonen-Engler. Pieterse's second paradigm describes "cultural convergence" as an "increasing convergence", "homogenisation" or "McDonaldization" of cultural differences<sup>83</sup>. Like white wedding dresses or a Coca-Cola-Santa in red invading most parts of the world, similar tendencies could also be found on a smaller scale in the scope of my interviews. For instance when it comes to Easter traditions and the hunt for Easter baskets, most of my interviewees clearly and without hesitating labelled this as stemming from the German side of their family, as something otherwise uncommon in Finland. When mentioning this to my (Finnish) supervisor, she told me "Oh! But we have this, too!", which first engulfed me in doubts about how to evaluate my interviewees' words, wondering if they mistakenly labelled this Easter hunt as German. Furthermore, a few interviewees expressed uncertainty about this particular custom. Harri even consulted his Finnish wife and asked if the hunt for Easter eggs came only from his side or whether it also came from her side. Harri's wife replied by clarifying that this had only recently become more common in Finland, but was not part of the "Finnish-speaking world" before, pointing out that it might be different for Finland-Swedish families or those with a German background<sup>84</sup>. While Harri was wondering about

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<sup>83</sup>Ruokonen-Engler 2012. 79, translated by author.

<sup>84</sup>Harri: Ich würde sagen, Ostern ist also — [Harri's Frau], hat man in Finnland Eier versteckt oder kommt das aus Deutschland? Also, dass das von unserer Familie kommt, weiß ich.

Harri's Frau: Was?

the origin of those Easter traditions, another interviewee, Laura, linked them not exclusively to a German background, stating that people in Finland would also paint and colour eggs, but having an Easter Rabbit bringing Easter treats and having other Easter decoration was a "rather German tradition"<sup>85</sup>.

In the previous chapter on the first generation of German migrants, I referred back to Ilmar Talve who wrote that supposedly "national traditions" can change over time, wander to other areas and become part of the local culture there. As a result, it might not always be possible to differentiate clearly between Finnish or German culture, as the boundaries are in fact more blurry than might have been expected. As Rebecca Friedman and Markus Thiel stated, culture is moulded by many individuals and groups, "cultural determinants – indeed, whole cultures – can change"<sup>86</sup>. With respect to European history, what might be seen nowadays as a national tradition, has in fact been shaped by numerous influences from many different directions. As a result, several nationalities might actually share similar traditions, which can not be clearly distinguished from each other. If someone celebrates St. Nicholas, it might very well be that they regard this as being related with their German background, a way for them to practice this part of their ethnicity. Meanwhile, people with other nationalities, coming from other countries, might also share similar traditions and would also claim those to be part of their cultural heritage. This goes in line with what Bienfait

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Harri: Zu Ostern Eier-verstecken, ist das ein finnischer Brauch auch oder kommt der aus unserer Familie, dass wir das —

Harri's Frau: Das kommt aus eurer Familie, aber ich glaube, das ist jetzt auch ein bisschen verbreitet in Finnland, dass das in Finnland auch jemand es macht heutzutage, aber als ich Kind war, da hat es —

Harri: Hat das keiner gemacht.

Harri's Frau: Nee. Aber dann weiß ich nicht, ich kenne die schwedischsprachigen Kreise nicht so gut, ob es vielleicht auch da ist. Und es gibt natürlich viele Familien, wo die ganzen Gebräuche — also, es gibt so viele Deutschstämmige, aber ich finde, in der finnischsprachigen Welt nicht.

<sup>85</sup>Laura: Hauptsächlich finnische Traditionen, also, wir halten uns an Ostern - naja gut, mein, vielleicht, Ostern ist so ein gemischtes Ding. Also Weihnachten feiern wir finnisch, Ostern mit Osterhase und mit Eier-Bemalen. - Osterhase gibt's hier nicht, aber Eier werden hier auch bemalt und an Ostersträucher oder wie auch immer, dieser ganze Osterschmuck, das ist wahrscheinlich eher dann die deutsche Tradition. (...)

<sup>86</sup>Friedman; and Thiel 2012. 3.

wrote, namely that "culture is not simply a sphere of compliance in unison, but rather a venue for conflicts about the right reading and interpretation"<sup>87</sup>. However, taking those seemingly national traditions as a tool to express a personal identification is a common, but questionable strategy, which in its problematic nature, explains possible inconsistencies in my interviews.

### **The passport - more than a travel document**

Even though a passport is not unchangeable or absolute, as one is able to apply for another passport under certain circumstances, it does impose official labels on a person and is thus sometimes taken to be an embodiment of how this person is most likely to identify themselves. A person may carry one of those labels in the form of a national passport and is thus the legal citizen of a nation. However, for that person to say that they *officially belong* to the group in question, they might also consider themselves not to be part of it, meaning that their *personal belonging* lies somewhere other than where the official status might suggest.<sup>88</sup>

In the discussions I had with descendants of Germans in Helsinki, some reflections were made on precisely this matter, the link between officially carrying a nationality and the person's emotional sense of belonging. It goes without saying that some participants expressed quite rational reasons for having one particular passport or for having both German and Finnish passports. Reasons given included that the Finnish passport was considered to be the "best" when it comes to applying for visas<sup>89</sup> or something in favour of keeping a German

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<sup>87</sup>Bienfait 2006. 20, translated by author.

<sup>88</sup>For reflections on the meaning of passports see for instance Svensson, Birgitta: "Passet – ett dokument över individuell identitet." In Svensson, Birgitta (Ed.): *Föremål för forskning. Trettio forskare om det kultur-historiska museimaterialets möjligheter*. Värnamo: Nordiska museets förlag, 2005.

<sup>89</sup>See interview with Hans/Jonas as well as Lukas.

passport was that in case of being abroad and having trouble, one could find a large and influential German embassy "everywhere", while Finland sometimes would not even have its own embassy as such<sup>90</sup>. These thoughts were interesting to hear, but of greater interest to me and my research was the question what emotional aspects were involved in carrying only one or having two passports as from an outsider's point of view, a passport could be regarded as the absolute and official manifestation of belonging to a group.

To put it briefly, most of the participants of my study who talked about their relationship to their passport(s), tended to regard it/them as some sort of manifestation of their identity, of how they position themselves. Not all of them were in the possession of both a German and a Finnish passports by birth, but they had either applied for the second at a later point of their life, or were intending to do so. Here it needs to be explained that before 2000, it was not possible to have dual citizenship in the European Union, with national legislation in the various countries regulating the exact procedures and requirements.

For instance, Laura told me that she had been planning to obtain Finnish citizenship for the last 20 years. She explains that until ten years ago, she would have had to cede her German citizenship, which she "somehow didn't want to do". - At the same time, she admits that now, it would be possible to have both, but it feels "too inconvenient to commit to paper" and to justify to the German authorities why she still wants to keep her German passport.<sup>91</sup> Unlike her chil-

<sup>90</sup>See interview with Hans/Jonas.

<sup>91</sup>I.: Hm. Ich denke, es gibt immer diese Klischees von wie Deutsche sind, wie Finnen sind und ich find' das ja immer interessant, zu fragen, wie man selbst sich darin sieht, ob man sagt: "Ich bin so ein bisschen dazwischen..."

Laura: Ich bin wahrscheinlich eher dazwischen, es ist mir schon wichtig, irgendwie — also, ich hab' jetzt schon ewig, schon seit 20 Jahren überleg' ich, ob ich auch die finnische Staatsangehörigkeit haben wollte. Und das ist eigentlich erst seit zehn Jahren möglich, dass man beide Staatsangehörigkeiten haben kann, also bis dahin hätte man die deutsche angeben müssen. Und ehm, das wollte ich dann irgendwie doch nicht. — Ja, ich hab's immer noch nicht gepackt, den Antrag zu stellen, weil das eben voraussetzt, dass ich für die deutschen Behörden das begründe, wieso ich immer noch den deutschen Pass haben möchte. Und das ist mir irgendwie

dren, neither Laura nor her siblings have both nationalities and passports, but as she qualifies:

Laura: (...) But to be honest, it doesn't really make a difference what you have. But specifically when it comes to citizenship, well, as soon as it starts getting concrete, when you want to apply for the other citizenship, then you actually do start thinking about what the identity actually is, I think. - If it has a meaning for you, this second passport.

I.: Yes. And... What was the reason why you didn't want to cede the German passport, I mean, does that have a concrete reason?

Laura: Well, that doesn't really have a concrete reason, it's just some sort of emotional something.

I.: Hm. Although you were quite young when you came here, right? And still this —

Laura: There *is* then somehow the bonding to Germany, after all. Although as I said I would never — consider living there, let's put it like this. I don't want to move there, two weeks of holiday are enough and then I want to leave again. (laughs)<sup>92</sup>

Laura refers to an "emotional something" that attaches her to Germany, where her father stems from and where she was born, but never lived except for those few early childhood years. She leaves no doubt that this connection is not strong enough for her to feel the desire to move to Germany, but sees her centre of life in Finland instead. From a rational point of view, there would not be much reason for her to keep her German citizenship, even if Laura still appears to feel resentment about cutting down those few moments of attachment with Germany, were it the real estate her family still owns there or in this case, her

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zu umständlich, das auf Papier zu bringen.

<sup>92</sup>Laura: (...) Aber ehrlich gesagt macht's ja auch nicht wirklich 'nen Unterschied, was man jetzt hat. Aber gerade da im Bezug auf die Staatsangehörigkeit, also, wenn es wirklich dann konkret wird, wenn du die andere Staatsangehörigkeit beantragen möchtest, dann macht man sich dann doch Gedanken, wie die Identität jetzt eigentlich ist, glaube ich. - Ob das eine Bedeutung hat für dich, dieser zweite Pass.

I.: Ja. Und... Was war jetzt so dein Grund, weswegen du den deutschen Pass jetzt nicht abgeben wolltest, ich meine, hat das einen konkreten Grund?

Laura: Na, das hat wirklich keinen konkreten Grund, es ist nur so ein emotionales Irgendwas.

I.: Hm. Wobei du schon recht jung warst, als du hierher gekommen bist, ne? Und trotzdem diesen —

Laura: Da ist dann *doch* irgendwie die Anbindung an Deutschland da, trotzdem. Obwohl ich wie gesagt nie — gedenke, dort zu wohnen, sagen wir mal so. Ich möchte da nicht hinziehen, mir reicht gerade so zwei Wochen Urlaub und dann will ich wieder weg. (lacht)

passport.

Other people I talked to also made direct reference to having a certain passport and the place of residence. Henrikki (in his 80s), who lived some of his childhood years in Germany, states that he kept his Finnish citizenship because he and his family had always wished to return to Finland, which in those days would have "meant a big trouble" without having a Finnish passport<sup>93</sup>. For him, carrying Finnish and not German citizenship was at first sight linked to pragmatic reasons, but at a closer look, it was also related to his inner and emotional connection to Finland, taking shape in his urge to move back there. Lukas would not have the difficulties Henrikki had to face decades ago, as he was born in Germany in the 1980s and moved to Finland as a child. Moreover, he expresses a similar attitude as Laura. Like her, at the time of the interview, he possessed only a German passport. He was hindered only by the years he had to wait until he was no longer required to sign up for the Finnish national service. He displayed firm intentions to claim Finnish citizenship as soon as he turned 28. He explains:

Lukas: I don't remember anymore how exactly it works. When I enquired about it some years ago, somehow one would have had to pay to be able to keep their German passport or so, but I definitely want to have dual [citizenship], see, I absolutely don't see why I should cede the German one.

I.: And why? Well, simply, if you plan to — or do you think of living in Germany at some point, or...?

Lukas: If there is an offer, I won't say No, but I see, well, I don't orientate myself towards Germany, to work there. But ehm, I do want German, I mean, it is part of my identity, I am German and I don't want to cede that. The reason why I want a Finnish passport is actually and primarily so that I'm allowed to vote here and such things, that I get such things in Finland. (...)<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Henrikki: Also, die Frage hat sich natürlich oft gestellt, soll man die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit annehmen, aber bei uns war eigentlich immer der Wunsch vorhanden gewesen, wieder zurück zu kehren und dann hätte das eine grosse Schwierigkeit bedeutet.

<sup>94</sup>Lukas: Ich weiss gar nicht mehr, wie das jetzt genau geht. Als ich mich vor ein paar Jahren mal erkundigt hab', hätte man irgendwie zahlen müssen, dass man den deutschen behalten kann oder so, aber ich will auf jeden Fall doppelt haben, also den deutschen abgeben, seh ich

Even though Lukas acknowledges that he does not literally plan to move to Germany (though unlike Laura he would also not feel repelled by the thought of it), he attributes great value to his German passport. While he names practical aspects like the right to vote or also the easier access to visas as a reason to apply for Finnish citizenship, the ownership of his German passport falls into a different sphere. For Lukas, carrying the German passport is closely linked to how he positions himself, saying that German was part of his identity, an articulated German identity that he did not want to abandon, even if he was living somewhere else. The same was also expressed by Lena (in her 40s), who moved to Finland only as a young adult. After having explained that she had always felt a bit different, also in Germany, wondering if that was related to her being of "bi-county-al"<sup>95</sup> background, I asked her:

I.: Do you think others perceived you like that as well? Well, German friends, in school...?

Lena: I don't think so. I also — you can't discuss that with someone who doesn't know that, well, that's something I always kept to myself. And ehm, that was quite funny, because for instance my brother got his Finnish passport when he was 18 and somehow we missed the time frame for me and now I've been having my Finnish passport for only three years or so. And that was something that was very important for me, that I still get it, that I have this now also officially. I am indeed two — well, I would, I think, I wouldn't have - some colleagues of mine, they now also applied for a Finnish passport and that's something I don't think I would have done, only because I now live here, but because I had the feeling that is so, I have to somehow express it officially, what as a matter of fact I am

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nicht ein.

I.: Und warum? Also, einfach, wenn du vorhast — oder hast du vor, auch mal in Deutschland zu leben, oder...?

Lukas: Wenn das Angebot kommt, sag' ich nicht Nein, aber ich sehe, also, ich orientiere mich nicht nach Deutschland, da arbeiten zu gehen. Aber ehm, ich will deutsch schon, also, es ist Teil meiner Identität, ich bin Deutscher und ich will das auch nicht abgeben. Warum ich einen finnischen Pass will, liegt eigentlich auch nur hauptsächlich daran, dass ich hier wählen darf und solche Sachen, solche Sachen in Finnland bekomme. (...)

<sup>95</sup>In an excerpt I will show later, Lena uses the term "zweiländerisch" which is not a proper German word, therefore I came up with the translation "bi-country-al". The reason why Lena uses this, rather than for instance "binational", remains open to speculation. I suggest that it might be due to her having obtained dual citizenship only few years before the interview took place and I could imagine that she would have felt imprecise if she had used "binational", since as a matter of fact in the years to which she is referring, she was not officially binational.

by birth, so two —<sup>96</sup>

In many parts of today's world, possessing a passport of one nation-state is often taken for granted. While many people don't reflect about it too much, for others this document contains much more than just legal attributions. As the excerpt from Lena's interview shows, people who feel attached to a certain place, who strongly identify with this place, may experience this document as a confirmation that they also officially belong and are part of life there. Lena and Lukas illustrated this very well, just like Henning, who said that having both nationalities "describes [him] best"<sup>97</sup> and that he would consider it to be "dramatically difficult [and] really bad" if he was made to choose<sup>98</sup>. This illustrates the emotional connection between possessing both citizenships, embodied in two passports, and a conscious bi-cultural identification.

This emotional aspect of holding a passport became visible in many other studies like the one by Čeginskās' research on "multicultural people"<sup>99</sup> as well as that by Mark Terkessidis, who focussed on descendants of Turks in Germany. At the time of his study, it was not yet possible to have both the Turkish and the German passport and as Terkessidis puts it, his interlocutors expressed the view that if they are Turkish, they can not be German, they can only absorb German

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<sup>96</sup>I.: Meinst du, das haben andere auch so wahrgenommen? Also, deutsche Freunde, in der Schule...?

Lena: Glaub' ich nicht. Ich hab' auch — das kann man auch nicht mit jemandem besprechen, der das nicht kennt, also, das ist was, dass ich immer für mich behalten hab. Und ehm, das war dann ganz lustig, weil mein Bruder hat zum Beispiel schon mit 18 den finnischen Pass bekommen und wir haben bei mir irgendwie so ein Fenster verpasst und ich hab' jetzt meinen finnischen Pass erst seit drei Jahren oder so. Und das war jetzt auch irgendwas, das mir sehr wichtig war, dass ich den noch bekomme, das ich das jetzt auch offiziell hab'. Ich bin tatsächlich zwei — also, ich würde, ich glaube, ich hätte ihn mir jetzt nicht - so Kolleginnen von mir, die haben sich auch einen finnischen Pass beantragt und das hätte ich glaub' ich nicht gemacht, nur weil ich hier wohne, aber weil ich das Gefühl gehabt hab', das ist so, das muss ich jetzt auch irgendwie so offiziell ausdrücken, was ich tatsächlich so von Geburt aus bin, so zwei —

<sup>97</sup>Henning: (...) Weil bis dahin hatte ich immer gedacht, das ist eine schöne Sache und ein Segen, dass ich Deutscher und Finne bin und ich bin sehr froh darüber, dass ich beide Staatsangehörigkeiten habe heutzutage, weil das mich am allerbesten irgendwie beschreibt (...)

<sup>98</sup>See following quote below.

<sup>99</sup>See Čeginskās 2015. 101.



elements over the years. One of his interviewees told him that if he had to take German nationality and simultaneously had to give up the Turkish, it would mean a "change of his own character".<sup>100</sup> For my interviewees the situation was more fortunate and as for instance Henning expressed, he highly appreciated being able to have both nationalities:

Henning: (...) I am a Finn as well as a German and that is how I feel! And that's why it is extremely important for me to have both nationalities and I will never give them away. And if I had to choose, that would be - ehm dramatically difficult for me, that would be really bad! And that is why it is also important for me that my children have both. (...) <sup>101</sup>

This conscious bi-cultural identification with Germanness and Finnishness did not only show in practical, tangible aspects in the lives of the people I talked to. It was also expressed in reflections upon oneself, the way someone saw themselves, often in contrast to how others perceived them. Those more complex matters will be presented in the following chapter.

### 4.2.2 Articulating belonging

Referring back to the earlier quote from Henning<sup>102</sup> in which he reflected on the years of struggling between feeling German and feeling Finnish and the turning point when he understood that there is no need for him to decide, this describes a tendency common to the discussions I had with the descendant generation. While some made general statements of how they see themselves now, others described an inter-dependence of their self-identification to other factors, among

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<sup>100</sup>Terkessidis 2004. 135, translation by author.

<sup>101</sup>Henning: (...) Ich bin sowohl Finne als auch Deutscher und so fühle ich mich auch! Und deswegen ist es auch für mich wahnsinnig wichtig, dass ich beide Staatsangehörigkeiten habe und ich werde sie auch nie weggeben. Und wenn ich wählen müsste, wär's für mich - ehm dramatisch schwierig, das wär' ganz schlimm! Und deswegen ist es auch wichtig für mich, dass meine Kinder beide haben. (...)

<sup>102</sup>See Chapter 4.1: "The Importance of language for belonging".

them time, place and people. This supports scholars like Barth (1969), Anderson (1991) and Hall (1996) suggesting a "constructed nature" of ethnic identity, which can be "situational and vary according to the surroundings, the language that is spoken, and the life span of the person who is experiencing, describing, or memorizing an identity."<sup>103</sup> I will present the different and flexible variations that were found in my data in the following part.

### Locating the Self

Even though most people would agree that a feeling of belonging is not tangible, some of my discussion partners even tried to define it in numbers. While for instance Linda explains that depending on the situation, she sometimes feels 100 per cent German, sometimes 100 per cent Finnish, sometimes 50-50<sup>104</sup>, others like Larissa seem to have a more stable, yet not unconditional distribution of identification:

I: (...) just the question that I briefly wanted to ask, ehm, well, if you rather see yourself as a German or a Finn, previously you said at some point that, I think, you do — I don't know if I remember correctly, but that in some context you did feel more like a German. And how is it now? After all those years here [in Finland]?

Larissa: Ehm... (thinks) Hm, OK — what shall I say? (laughs briefly) 60% German, 40% Finnish. Or maybe even more Finnish, I don't know. But no, well, I would say, I do feel a *little bit* more German than Finnish. And I don't know, if there was the situation that I had to side with something, which side it would be, that is, that I can't tell. (laughs) No idea!<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup>Weckström 2011. 121.

<sup>104</sup>Larissa: (...) Ehm, also, ich würde sagen, ich bin einfach beides. Ich bin manchmal 100% deutsch, manchmal 100% finnisch und manchmal bin ich 50-50, das ist irgendwie immer je nach Situation.

<sup>105</sup>I.: (...) nur die Frage, die ich vielleicht noch kurz stellen wollte, ehm, also, ob du dich eher als Deutsche oder als Finnin siehst, du hattest nämlich vorhin mal gesagt, dass du dich schon glaub' ich — ich weiss nicht, ob ich's richtig in Erinnerung habe, aber dass du dich in irgendeinem Zusammenhang glaube ich mehr als Deutsche gefühlt hast. Und wie ist es jetzt? So nach den Jahren hier?

Larissa: Ehm... (überlegt) Hm, na gut — was soll ich sagen? (lacht kurz) 60% deutsch, 40% finnisch. Oder vielleicht noch mehr finnisch, weiss nicht. Aber doch, also, ich würde sagen,

Larissa, who had been living in Finland for about ten years at the point of the interview, expresses having an almost balanced feeling of belonging with a slightly stronger emphasis on feeling German. However, when asked if she could imagine going back to Germany, she explains that she would not mind returning (given that her family would accompany her), but in the end she believes that she would be happier in Finland. As a reason she mentions her gut instincts, explaining that when she was still living in Germany, she always wanted to move to Finland, whereas during the years that she has been living in Finland, she never seriously wished to go back to Germany, even though she always wanted to leave the door open to do so.<sup>106</sup> Referring to a property her family still owns in Germany, she explains that she would not want to sell it, that it was important to her as she "feel[s] somehow attached to Germany or to [her] **Heimat**"<sup>107</sup>. The emotional meaning of having or keeping real estates in the other country was also visible in few other interviews. Wessendorf described findings that resembled this in her study on Swiss-Italian descendants in Switzerland to whom "owning property in Italy not only legitimizes the return as a strategically possible, final conclusion to the migration plan, it also provides a symbol for the (re-)united family and an investment that links future generations to their country of origin." In this context, Wessendorf gives credit to Olwig who calls such properties "cultural sites", which tie "to homeland in much more concrete ways

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ein *bisschen* mehr deutsch als finnisch fühle ich mich schon. Und ich weiss auch nicht, wenn es darauf ankommen würde, welches, eh, auf welche Seite ich mich schlagen würde, das ist, das kann ich so nicht sagen. (lacht) Keine Ahnung!

<sup>106</sup>Larissa: (...) Aber, also, ich würde schon, ja, ich könnte schon nach Deutschland ziehen, aber letztendlich würde ich glaube ich *glücklicher* in Finnland werden.

I.: Wieso meinst du das, woran machst du das fest?

Larissa: (holt Luft) Ja, das ist ein Bauchgefühl irgendwie. Ja, das ist ein Bauchgefühl. Also, ich bin in Deutschland aufgewachsen, da wollte ich immer nach Finnland und eh, jetzt, da ich in Finnland bin, teilweise... Teilweise wollte ich, aber nicht so *richtig ernsthaft*, zurück nach Deutschland. Na gut, ich *könnte* nach Deutschland, aber wenn ich wählen müsste, würde ich dann schon in Finnland bleiben. Ja. Aber immer mit der Option, dass ich mal nach Deutschland kommen kann (...).

<sup>107</sup>Larissa: (...) Also, das ist mir schon wichtig, weil ich mich halt doch irgendwie mit Deutschland oder mit meiner Heimat verbunden fühle.

than through the imagined worlds erected by the creative resources of fantasy” (Olwig 1997:35).<sup>108</sup>

As well as Larissa, another interviewee, Lennard, also refers to the concept of *Heimat* when locating his "self", telling me that "even though [he is] through and through Finnish", he would "still call Germany [his] *Heimat*".<sup>109</sup> Lennard proceeds:

Lennard: I wouldn't tell that to anyone here. (laughs briefly) But time and again I do feel very - because you just asked about feelings - anyway, I feel *very* much at home in Germany! — Don't know if one can have two *Heimat*— *Heimat*— Is there a plural of "*Heimat*"? (laughs)

I: One *Heimat*, two *Heimat* — s?

Lennard: *Heimats*, (I. laughs) I don't know, no, but I always feel very comfortable in Germany.<sup>110</sup>

Both Lennard and Larissa connect the idea of *Heimat* with the country they were brought up in, which is Germany, and at the same time Lennard reflects on whether it was possible to have two "*Heimats*". Indeed, a colloquial understanding of *Heimat* seems to be that it is linked to the place of birth or childhood, language and acquired affinities. However, as Knut Petzold argues by referring to Weichhart (2006), *Heimat* can be also regarded as a place where an individual establishes an "I-world-congruence", which may also be on vacation, at a second residency or in a second or even third *Heimat*. According to Petzold, it is "insignificant" if a person was born at a certain place. What matters instead is if they consider a place to increase the revenues of their actions.<sup>111</sup> More-

<sup>108</sup>Wessendorf 2013. 31

<sup>109</sup>Lennard: Ich weiss nicht, ob sich das blöd anhört, ich bin jetzt wirklich schon seit [Jahr] hier und ich bin auch wirklich durch und durch Finne, aber *Heimat* würde ich trotzdem immer noch Deutschland nennen.

<sup>110</sup>Lennard: Würde ich hier niemandem erzählen. (lacht kurz) Aber ich fühl' mich immer wieder sehr - weil du gerade Gefühle angesprochen hast - also, ich fühl' mich in Deutschland *sehr* heimisch! — Weiss nicht, ob man zwei *Heimat*— *Heimat*— Gibt's eine Mehrzahl von "*Heimat*"? (lacht)

I: Eine *Heimat*, zwei *Heimat*—en?

Lennard: *Heimaten*, (I. lacht) weiss ich nicht, nee, aber fühl' mich immer sehr wohl in Deutschland.

<sup>111</sup>"(...) dass er die betreffenden Orte mehr oder weniger positiv hinsichtlich der Steigerung der eigenen Handlungserträge bewertet." In Petzold, Knut: "Mobilität und Identität. Eine the-

over, in his reflections on different kinds of migration, Heinz Fassmann defined what he called a "temporary journeying" by at least two alternative centres of life and a "high intensity of interaction with the society of origin"<sup>112</sup>. - And as Wessendorf rightfully stressed by drawing on Vertovec, "belonging, loyalty and sense of attachment are not parts of a zero-sum game based on a single place"<sup>113</sup>, which implies that, as Lennard suggested, it certainly is possible to have several **Heimats**. In Weckström's study on Finnish descendants in Sweden, a slightly different picture came in use. As she explained, many of her participants were drawing on the metaphor of roots, even though those were not always taken as "solid and anchoring". Instead they should be seen as "flexible mental constructions that can connect and be tied to any place or entity, for that matter". In Weckström's material they were sometimes presented as "floating and mobile", just like roots of a waterlily that enable the flower to "continue living and flourishing also in another source of water than where it originally started to grow", as one of Weckström's interviewees illustrated it.<sup>114</sup>

Even though these are interesting approaches to the concept of "roots" and **Heimat**, nevertheless when it comes to the people I talked to, they seemed to share a more traditional view on it. Moreover, the concept above does not seem to describe the simultaneous existence of feelings of belonging that showed in my interviews. - In the interviews I did not ask directly where someone considers their **Heimat** to be. As a matter of fact, I even tried to avoid this term as to me it comes with historical baggage of the 1930s and 40s and sounds rather heavy and old-fashioned, though describing "home" as the place where you feel

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oretische und eine empirische Exploration am Beispiel multilokaler Akteure." In Hömke, Maik: *Mobilität und Identität: Widerspruch in der modernen Gesellschaft*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2013. 92.

<sup>112</sup>Fassmann, Heinz: "Von der Migration zur transnationalen Mobilität." In Csáky, Moritz; and Elisabeth Großegger (Eds.): *Jenseits von Grenzen: Transnationales, translokales Gedächtnis*. Wien: Praesens Verlag, 2007. 11.

<sup>113</sup>Wessendorf 2013. 8.

<sup>114</sup>Weckström 2011. 137.

you have your roots in a compact way. Instead, it was my interlocutors who brought it up. Lena shares an interesting point of view. As she explains, she considers herself to be Bavarian rather than German:

Lena: Although, when it comes to Germans, within the course of the years I started to be a bit more friend— well, I think, I have to say, actually I am Bavarian, at first place, then German. Because I don't know Germany, that is also something that was a little bit of a disadvantage of us always travelling to Finland in my holidays and my father is not really a travel person and doesn't have any relatives, that means I never travelled within Germany.<sup>115</sup>

Lena explains that she even feels closer to Austria than the rest of Germany and admits that she does not have any affinity to Germany - rather to Finland, she adds. She continues giving her definition of connectedness - with which she implies that this is how she feels about Bavaria:

Lena: It [Germany] is really, honestly it is a strange country to me, I have to say. Ehm — (thinks) No, that's a bit exaggerated, of course I know Germany, I do read and I also read about Germany.

I.: But this connectedness...

Lena: But this connectedness, I think it is for every person, it is tied to where someone is from. So, the, this feeling of "There I am from and there I know the ropes, there I know the customs and practices!", I think it is like that for everyone, that it — refers to [uses the English term], how is that called, that it refers to that...<sup>116</sup>

What showed in Lena's interview was that on the one hand she describes having a feeling of connectedness to Bavaria, as she grew up there, being familiar with

<sup>115</sup>Lena: Obwohl, da bin ich auch jetzt den Deutschen gegenüber bin jetzt im Lauf' der Jahre so ein bisschen freund — also, ich find', ich muss sagen, ich bin eigentlich Bayer, zuallererst, dann deutsch. Weil, ich kenn' Deutschland nicht, das ist auch so was, das so ein bissl der Nachteil war von dem, dass wir in meinen Ferien immer nach Finnland gefahren sind und mein Vater eigentlich kein Reisemensch ist und auch keine Verwandten hat, das heisst, ich bin nie in Deutschland rumgereist.

<sup>116</sup>Lena: Es ist mir echt, es ist mir ehrlich ein fremdes Land, muss ich sagen. Ehm — (überlegt) Nee, das ist schon übertrieben, natürlich kenn' ich Deutschland schon, ich les' ja auch und ich les' auch über Deutschland.

I.: Aber so diese Verbundenheit...

Lena: Aber die Verbundenheit, finde ich, ist ja glaube ich bei jedem Menschen, die hat damit zu tun, wo man her ist. Also, das, dieses Gefühl von "Da bin ich her und da kenn' ich mich aus, da weiss ich die Sitten und Gebräuche!", das ist bei jedem Menschen glaub' ich so, dass es sich zurück — refer to, wie heisst das, sich zurück — darauf bezieht...

the customs and traditions there. Nevertheless, she also reflects on her character and explains that while her "German I" is a rather pragmatic one, if she feels "surges of emotion in [her] chest", it is always related to something Finnish, never German<sup>117</sup>. This ambivalence in Lena's feeling of belonging is something significant for many of my interviewees. At a later point, Lena quotes a famous part of Goethe's *Faust*, saying:

Lena: (...) Well, I often [thought of] the quote by Goethe, so "Two souls alas! are dwelling in my breast!", because I didn't know exactly, what am I actually? Am I German? Am I Finnish? But I also don't know if that is, *because* I am bilingual - or bi-country-al, or that I, that this is part of my personality - I don't know how to distinguish this. Ehm, that I always have this feeling, something is *a little bit* different about me.<sup>118</sup>

Taking the quotes from Lena's interview as a whole, it shows a multifaceted and colourful picture of how she sees herself, feeling close to her Bavarian *Heimat*, but also emotionally attached to Finland, wondering about the extent to which her self-perceived otherness stands in direct relation to her "bi-country-al" background. As an explanation, she names never having travelled Germany, but only having lived in Bavaria and always having spent her holidays in Finland. Those two are Lena's places of reference, and she shows awareness of the different nature of those categories. As Lena explains, she always thinks of "Finland as a whole", while concerning Germany she distinguishes between "Bavaria and the rest", stating that Germany was more diverse than Finland which makes her "picture of Finland much simpler/easier"<sup>119</sup>. In Lena's interview, and also

<sup>117</sup>Lena: (...) Und genau, das Lustige ist, ehm, das hatte ich früher immer gemerkt, also, mein deutsches Ich ist so dieses, ehm, nüchterne, (...) da kommen dann so diese emotionalen Wallungen im Brustkorb und das hab' ich *nur* mit finnischen Sachen, mit deutschen überhaupt gar nicht!

<sup>118</sup>Lena: (...) Also, mir ist oft dieses Zitat von Goethe, so "Zwei Seelen wohnen ach! in meiner Brust!", weil ich wusste nicht so ganz genau, was bin ich eigentlich? Bin ich jetzt deutsch? Bin ich finnisch? Aber das weiss ich eben auch nicht, ob das damit zusammen hängt, *dass* ich zweisprachig - oder zweiländerisch bin, oder dass ich, dass das meine Persönlichkeitseigenschaft ist - ich weiss nicht, wie man das unterscheiden kann. Ehm, dass ich immer das Gefühl hab', ein *bisschen* was ist anders bei mir.

<sup>119</sup>Lena: (...) Aber bei Finnland find' ich, ist für mich eher so das ganze Land und in Deutschland unterscheid' ich so zwischen, naja, Bayern und der Rest. Weil, naja, weil Finnland

in others, it shows clearly how important it is to resign from "methodological nationalism" that ignores "regional and cultural differences within each nation-states and (...) differences within national and ethnic population"<sup>120</sup>, as Glick Schiller suggested. However, at times I realised how hard it can be to abandon the "ethnic lens", with which researchers would rely on "ethnic boundaries to define the unit of study"<sup>121</sup>, as this is what many of my interviewees still used themselves.

Even though Lena and a few others emphasised regional over national identification, most of my interviewees discussed their feeling of belonging as being limited to German- and/or Finnishness. At this point I want to address a common problem of research, namely that the way researchers pose their questions has considerable impact on the nature of the answers they will get. If I asked about German-/Finnishness and myself used such terminologies, it is most likely that this in turn supported my interviewees to draw on such concepts. In her research on Croatian migrants and their descendants in Germany, Jasna Čapo tried to compare them to Jean Monnet's *Homo Europaeus* as "transnational, "postnational" political actor(s) who would rise above parochial attachments to locality or nation". Even though Čapo states that her interviewees would certainly match this in their attitude, "they cannot identify themselves as such because they live in the context in which discourses about identity continue to be framed in terms of loyalty to unique nations and nation-states".<sup>122</sup> In the great majority of my interviews I had a similar impression. Between the lines many of my interviewees deconstructed ideas of uniquely defined ethnic identi-

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auch nicht so, Finnland ist so gleich auch. Deutschland ist ja so divers, da hast du ja alles, da hast du von Bergen bis zum Meer, bis zum Flachland, bis zum Hügelland, alles dabei und so riesig und so unüberschaubar und Finnland ist eigentlich Seen und Wälder überall wo du hingehst. Und ich glaub', das macht auch dieses, dieses Finnland-Bild viel einfacher.

<sup>120</sup>Glick Schiller 2012. 29.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid. 29.

<sup>122</sup>Čapo, Jasna: "Frames of Nationality, Experiences of Belonging: The Post-Migration Generation in Germany and Croatia." In Bardoshi, Nebi; Gilles de Rapper; and Pierre Sintès: *Pratiques sociales et configurations locales dans les Balkans*. Tirana: UET Press 2013. 192.



ties, but in their actual verbalisations they still drew on national terminology and thus categories. Nonetheless, a few interviewees declared explicitly that they would not see themselves in the two categories, German and a Finnish, and questioned their absolute nature.

Hauke for instance expresses a rather sophisticated view on national identification and nation-states throughout his whole interview. As his parents were already quite mobile for professional reasons during his early childhood years and still today lead a truly transnational life, Hauke grew up in several countries, speaking more than two languages. Even as an adult, he continued this lifestyle and studied in several countries. In our conversation, Hauke presented himself as a "world citizen", criticising the concept of a nation state while referring to the young and constructed nature of those<sup>123</sup>. Considering Hauke's international background, one could link his positioning as a world citizen to Deutsch's transactionalist theory (1957), in which he suggested that "transnational relations of national populations, such as frequent foreign travel, knowledge of foreign languages, and foreign friends have also been demonstrated to increase identification with larger regional units"<sup>124</sup>. However, I also wish to point towards Val Colic-Peisker's reflections on the correlation between mobility and the extent of a personal "community commitment". Colic-Peisker asks if high mobility weakens a person's sense of community commitment and instead increases individualism, but as she continues, she acknowledges that it might be too simple to state that "in intensely mobile and relatively privileged professionals local and national identifications have been replaced by professional and cosmopolitan orientations".<sup>125</sup> This is also mirrored in Hauke's interview.

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<sup>123</sup>Hauke: (...) Ehm, aber ja, ich find' ja, ich hab' vorhin erwähnt, dass ich Ländergrenzen nicht mag, weil the concept of a nation state, also dieses nation state ist ja, wenn man das mal genauer untersucht, dann erstens ist es kein besonders alter Begriff, also - wenige hundert Jahre alt, ehm und andererseits fördert das nun nicht wirklich den Frieden.

<sup>124</sup>Braun; and Müller 2012. 264.

<sup>125</sup>Colic-Peisker, Val: "Crisis of Community in the Era of Mobility?" In Babacan, Alperhan; and Supriya Singh (Eds.): *Migration, Belonging and the Nation State*. Newcastle: Cambridge

Although he expresses a highly critical view on categories such as a nation state and nationality, and described his complex biography in detail at the beginning of the interview, as he goes on, he still relates solely to Germany and Finland as "his countries". Furthermore, he elaborates:

Hauke: (...) Even though I am saying that I am as Finnish as Finns and as German as — you, for instance, still I am not *only* German and not *only* Finn, at the same time I am not only German *and* Finn, if you put that into one box! I just don't like putting myself into the German-German box, but also not into the Finnish box, but also not into the German-Finnish box.<sup>126</sup>

Considering Hauke's mobile background, which resembles the high mobility of classic TCKs, as well as his critical thoughts on the concept of nation states, it seems reasonable to link this to Joanna Yoshi Grote's concept of *NatioNILism*. With this Grote tried to "move beyond identifying each other solely in terms of belonging toward geographical location"<sup>127</sup> and to create a more positive picture than the "nation-less-ness" of many TCKs. For her, *NatioNILism* forms an empowering concept to describe a "belonging tied strongly and proudly to a comfortable lack of belonging to nation"<sup>128</sup>. Hauke's remarks seem to fit in there to some extent as he refuses to apply an only-Finnish, only-German, but moreover also an only-German-Finnish category to himself. Nonetheless, he still claims to be "as Finnish as Finns and as German as [me]", but does not see himself limited to those labels. Many other interviewees expressed similar viewpoints, but with slight variations. In order to illustrate this, I have chosen to present a quotation from Helena:

Helena: In the past I always said, no, I still think like that: Ehm,

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Scholars Publishing, 2010. 79.

<sup>126</sup>Hauke: (...) (...) Obwohl ich sage, dass ich genauso finnisch bin wie Finnen und genauso deutsch bin wie — du, zum Beispiel, bin ich auch trotzdem nicht *nur* Deutscher und nicht *nur* Finne, ich bin aber auch nicht nur Deutscher *und* Finne, wenn man das in eine Box tut! Ich mag mich halt nicht in die deutsch-deutsche Box, aber auch nicht in die finnische Box, aber auch nicht in die deutsch-finnische Box tun.

<sup>127</sup>Grote, Joanna Yoshi: "NatioNILism: The Space of Nation-Less Belonging." In Benjamin; and Dervin 2015. 119.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid. 111.

in Finland I don't really feel like a Finn, but somehow a little bit — yeah, both, German and Finnish and that is only natural, and in Germany as well, I don't really feel completely German. Ehm, yeah.  
 I.: And if you are somewhere else? I mean, you've been to numerous exchanges and... (...) were you more of a Finn or more of a German [there]?  
 Helena: Ah! Mmmm, more of a Finn. Because I grew up in Finland.  
 (...)<sup>129</sup>

In both passages a complex way of positioning becomes apparent. Both Hauke and Helena refer to German, Finnish and German-Finnish categorisations, but stress that they are none of those exclusively. Contrasting the statements of my interlocutors with other studies, one thing strikes me as interesting: Unlike Weckström's Finnish descendants in Sweden<sup>130</sup>, no one referred to themselves as an immigrant or pondered the official categories of themselves. Weckström's participants did in fact reflect upon such categories, but unlike me, Weckström admittedly addressed those topics directly. Her interviewees linked terms like "immigrant" to people of darker skin or Muslims and only rarely positioned themselves in those frameworks. In my interviews, I did not ask about the usage of such categories, nonetheless it is interesting to see how people I talked with "naturally" referred to themselves and as it showed, did not use categories like "migrants" on themselves.

What becomes visible in the sequences above, is that one's own feeling of belonging depends on exterior aspects, in this case the place where someone is at a certain point in life - so both place, time and furthermore the aforementioned Other play a significant role in the way someone feels about themselves.

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<sup>129</sup>Helena: Früher hab' ich immer gesagt, nein, das find' ich immer noch: Ehm, in Finnland fühle ich mich nicht als Finnin, sondern irgendwie ein bisschen — ja, beides, deutsch und finnisch und das ist ja ganz natürlich, und in Deutschland auch,ühl' ich mich nicht ganz als Deutsche. Ehm, ja.

I.: Und wenn du woanders bist? Ich meine, du warst ja bei ganz vielen Austausch und... (...) warst du [dort] eher Finne oder eher Deutsche?

Helena: Ah! Mmmm, eher Finne. Weil ich in Finnland aufgewachsen bin. (...)

<sup>130</sup>See Weckström 2011. 111 f.

### Dependence on place, time and the Other

The dependence on place becomes arrestingly visible in an excerpt from an interview with Hans and Jonas. Both were born in Finland, but unlike his father Hans (in his 50s), Jonas (in his mid-20s) spent five years of his childhood in Germany and in another European country, before the family moved back to Finland. As an adult, Jonas decided to move to Germany for a while and shortly before the interview returned from there. As he explains, having lived in Germany even strengthened his Finnish identification:

Jonas: But I realise that when I am in Germany, then I do feel a lot, a lot Finnish. Well, then we spend much time with Finnish friends, well, there we really want to be Finnish; of course one is a bit homesick for Finland or not homesick, but one does miss Finnish things and then one sometimes prepares Finnish food and spends *Juhannus*<sup>131</sup> and such days, of course, and such things, so there is a big influence from Finland compared to the German influence in my Finnish everyday life.

Hans: Yes, actually it's funny, especially regarding Jonas, who from all our family lived the longest in Germany, three years in [German city], but probably he is most Finnish.

Jonas: Yes, but maybe that is because one sees the contrast and then learns to appreciate the Finnish things and then one identifies even more as a Finn, when one lives there.<sup>132</sup>

Jonas' family maintains frequent contact to Germany, but he still describes that when being there, he consciously feels the Finnish influence, and this part of him getting stronger through a confrontation with German society. He continues

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<sup>131</sup>Finnish term for midsummer, celebrated towards the end of June.

<sup>132</sup>Jonas: Aber ich merk' das, wenn ich in Deutschland bin, dann fühl' ich da sehr, sehr viel Finnisches. Also, da machen wir mit finnischen Freunden, also sehr viel, also, da wollten wir wirklich finnisch sein; man hat natürlich ein bisschen Heimweh nach Finnland oder nicht Heimweh, sondern man vermisst finnische Sachen und dann macht man finnisches Essen ab und zu und verbringt *Juhannus* und solche Tage natürlich und so was, also das ist sehr grosser Einfluss aus Finnland im Vergleich zum deutschen Einfluss bei mir in dem finnischen Alltag. Hans: Ja, ist eigentlich lustig, bei Jonas gerade, der von uns allen in der Familie am meisten jetzt in Deutschland gelebt hat, drei Jahre in [deutsche Stadt], aber er ist am meisten Finne wahrscheinlich.

Jonas: Ja, aber das kann auch daran liegen, dass man den Kontrast sieht und dann die finnischen Sachen schätzen lernt und dann identifiziert man sich noch stärker als Finne, wenn man da lebt.

explaining that yet he does not feel "like being abroad" in Germany and when I asked him to elaborate on this, he explained:

Jonas: It is different, I mean, you once put it very well (addressing Hans), it's like one is 99% sure how things go, but there is always this small uncertainty. But in Finland it is of course basically always 100% certain, how everything, how all things go and one knows the ropes (...).<sup>133</sup>

This "small uncertainty", not knowing how some things work in Germany, was made the subject of discussion by participants in Lotta Weckström's study on Finnish descendants in Sweden<sup>134</sup> and apparently made a difference also for other interviewees in my research. Unlike Jonas in the citation above, Laura, who came to Finland before school enrolment, does feel like a foreigner in Germany and gives as a reason her inability to understand the processes of authority there. She depicts the situation of her saying that she is German and expresses annoyance about people consequently expecting her to know how things work:

Laura: Yes and stuff that has to do with authorities that work differently here. And ehm, if you tell them there [in Germany] that yes, you are German, yes, *then you actually should know how it's working here* - and that is simply not true.<sup>135</sup>

For her it is obvious that only because she carries German nationality, she might still lack German socialisation or knowledge that is otherwise expected of fellow-Germans. In situations like this, when being confronted with expectations of other Germans, Laura develops a concrete feeling of "otherness" when being in Germany, despite, but in fact caused by, her "official" belonging through her citizenship.

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<sup>133</sup>Jonas: Ist schon anders, ich meine, du hast es mal gut gesagt (an Hans), das ist so, dass man sich 99% sicher ist, wie alle Sachen laufen, aber dann ist immer die kleine Unsicherheit. Aber in Finnland ist natürlich immer eigentlich 100% sicher, wie alles, wie alle Sachen laufen und man kennt sich aus (...).

<sup>134</sup>See Weckström 2011. 130, where for instance one interviewee describes her getting a touristy feeling when forgetting to weigh fruits by herself in Finnish supermarkets.

<sup>135</sup>Laura: Ja und auch so Behördensachen, die hier anders laufen. Und ehm, wenn du da sagst, ja du bist Deutsche, ja, *dann müsstest du das doch wissen, wie das hier geht* - und das stimmt ja ganz einfach nicht.

Adding another nuance of how a certain place may influence a person's feeling of belonging, I draw back to what Lasse, the Finnish-Finnish interviewee, told me. In the conversation I had with him, he illustrated how a personal view of a place, country or its inhabitants may shift when one's own location changes. Lasse depicts inter-human situations which he used to regard as normal while he was still living in Germany, and which now that he had been living in Finland for several months started to feel different for him. Just as described in the chapter on the first generation German migrants, occasional visits to Germany can also become "trips of comparison"<sup>136</sup> for their descendants. In his remarks, Lasse reflects on the way people talk to each other in Germany and look each other straight in the eye, which, according to him, is considered impolite in Finland<sup>137</sup>. Moreover Lasse expresses a positive view of the stereotypical silence that is maintained between Finns: While in Germany this was considered as "the awkward silence", according to Lasse it was more of a "Good that we don't have to talk right now, how nice!" for Finns, as otherwise they might "end up *having to* tell too many personal things"<sup>138</sup>. Lasse claims to have "noted that immediately" and tells an anecdote about him spending few days back in the city where he grew up. He met a friend in a bar and after ten minutes during which Lasse mostly listened, the friend looked at him and said: "One really notices that you just spent four months in Finland!"<sup>139</sup>. As Lasse puts it, his

<sup>136</sup>Bönisch-Brednich 2002a. 300, translated by author.

<sup>137</sup>Lasse: Ich hab' jetzt gemerkt, also, als ich in Berlin gelebt habe, hab' ich das immer so als so was Normales angenommen, wenn man unfreundlich ist und das zeigt, fand ich das freundlich. Jetzt find' ich das ziemlich *unverschämt*, wenn mir in [deutsche Stadt] mir jemand direkt in die Augen schaut oder — irgendwie mich anschnauzt oder so...

<sup>138</sup>Lasse: (...) Man ist dann halt hier auch so - man ist lieber miteinander nebeneinander, schweigend, als dass man die ganze Zeit redet. Weil wenn man die ganze Zeit redet, würde man ja vielleicht irgendwie doch zu viele persönliche Sachen über sich erzählen *müssen*, und wenn man dann so schweigt, dann akzeptiert man so, dass man jetzt gerade einfach nicht reden möchte. Das Schweigen ist tatsächlich so, dass das, was in Deutschland so als unangenehmes Schweigen begriffen wird, ist hier mehr so ein: "Gut, dass wir jetzt gerade nicht miteinander reden müssen, schön!" (...)

<sup>139</sup>Lasse: Ah ja, ja, das habe ich hier sofort gemerkt. Als ich nämlich hier vier Monate verbracht habe und, also, am Stück, und dann nach [deutsche Stadt] gefahren bin, bin ich

own view on the aforementioned aspects turned into something positive, as he now considers people remaining silent *with each other* to be an "absolutely honest way of communicating" and adds that it is not just about what someone says, but that this silence might also tells something about their condition.<sup>140</sup> Even though Lasse "only" has a Finnish family background, he was still born and raised in Germany, with a German socialisation. However, knowing about his family background, being in regular contact with Finland and then having moved there as an adult, he presented himself as having adopted a *Finnish lens*. Not only does he *know* how a Finnish view on certain matters looks like, Lasse was and is in the position to evaluate both views, and possibly to decide consciously which one fits him and his personal viewpoint best. Still, this ability was created by him being confronted on a frequent basis with life in Finland, which apparently made him re-think what before seemed normal to him, thus causing him re-position within a German-Finnish framework.

The sequence of Lasse and his re-positioning due to a change of location brings us to the next factor influencing a feeling of belonging. Directly linked to a place is the aspect of socialisation, of the Other and of an inter-human surrounding. Drawing on Stuart Hall (1994), Ruokonon-Engler describes "ethnicity as social positioning" as something not exclusively done by people with a migrant background, but by every member of society. It is an active as well as a passive positioning, meaning that one positions themselves, but also gets positioned by

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sofort in eine Bar und hab' mich da hingesetzt, hab' mir ein Bier gekauft. Und ich hab' da glaube ich eine halbe Stunde gewartet, weil ich ein Treffen mit einem Freund hatte. Und der schaute mich so nach zehn Minuten, als er da ankam, so zehn Minuten angeschaut habe und ich irgendwie ganz viel nur zugehört habe, so: "Man merkt echt, dass du jetzt gerade vier Monate in Finnland warst!" (lacht)

<sup>140</sup>Lasse: (...) Dass das Miteinander einfach irgendwo sein, dass es so eine ehrliche Art, miteinander zu kommunizieren ist, weil man kommuniziert erstaunlich viel über Schweigen. Das vergisst man dann immer so, dass, ehm, dass nicht immer nur das, was man sagt irgendwie das Wichtige ist, sondern auch das, was der Andere gerade - in was für einem Zustand er ist.

others.<sup>141</sup> In many cases, my interlocutors related to a German or Finnish reference group, expressing an often evaluating picture of them in order to associate or disassociate from it. To illustrate this, I present a citation from the interview with Larissa in which she describes how a certain tendency in what she perceives as Finnish behaviour had a strengthening effect on her own self-positioning of that time.

Larissa: (...) Yes, there were times, when I somehow felt more German, well, when I was annoyed by something in Finland, "Woah, they are always so virtuous, always stand in line" and blablabla and "Phew, they are so shy here in Finland", where I still was a bit more German, when I came here, and then I also thought: "No, well, actually I am German, maybe I should just go back" and... But when I go back to Germany, then I notice certain character traits in Germans, somehow, that is - yes. There are positive and negative things, somehow. (laughs)<sup>142</sup>

In the citation above Larissa also refers to situational reference groups, but moreover, she makes it sound as if her attitude towards certain things changed over time. She names some attitudes that annoyed her when she was "still (...) a bit more German", more influenced by what seemed normal for her back then, having grown up with a German socialisation. She does not state whether her view on those specific points changed, but instead acknowledges the simultaneous existence of things she considers as positive and negative, implying that both Finland and Germany, Finns and Germans always possess sides that she approves or disapproves.

This dependence on a feeling of belonging to particular contexts is also discussed in Wessendorf's study on Swiss-Italian descendants. Wessendorf claims

<sup>141</sup>See Ruokonen-Engler 2012. 69.

<sup>142</sup>Larissa: (...) Ja, es gab so Zeiten, wo ich mich doch irgendwie mehr deutsch gefühlt hab', also, wenn mich was in Finnland aufgeregt hat, "Boah, die sind immer alle so brav, die stehen immer alle an" und blablabla und "Hach, die sind so schüchtern hier in Finnland", wo ich halt noch ein bisschen deutscher war, als ich hierher gekommen bin, da dachte ich auch so "Nee, also, eigentlich bin ich ja Deutsche, vielleicht sollte ich ja zurück gehen" und... Aber wenn ich wieder nach Deutschland gehe, dann fallen mir wieder bei Deutschen so bestimmte Charaktereigenschaften auf, irgendwie, das ist halt - ja. Es gibt halt positive und negative Dinge, irgendwie. (lacht)



that "patterns of identifications shift according to context and situation" and explained that even though some of her interlocutors might have distanced themselves from what she calls "typical Italians" in Switzerland, this would not consequently mean that they would "completely detach[ed] themselves from everything Italian", nor would they "reject the Italian part of their background". Instead, the extent to which they stress their background and the dimension of their affiliation to it depends on the context and specific situation, moreover the people surrounding them.<sup>143</sup>

A remarkably multifaceted and differentiated picture of belonging was drawn by Hannah, who spent all her life in Finland, with annual summer holidays in Germany. As Hannah first states, she regards herself as being more of a Finn, as she feels attached to nature and needs to have the possibility to escape to her *mökki*<sup>144</sup> at a lake<sup>145</sup>, and as she considers Germany to be rather crowded, she could not imagine moving there. Still, Hannah expresses her appreciation for the German language and culture and acknowledges:

Hannah: Yeah, I guess, many others have already said the same, but hm... I think, I always kind of have the feeling, still today, that I do feel more like a Finn when I am in Germany and then [notice] the differences in the, I don't know, personality is of course a bit tricky, but still, some things that are indeed a bit different there. Eh, in Finland especially, when we are for instance at my husband's family, I do notice some differences, where for example the [her] family culture of the German side becomes clearly visible.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>Wessendorf 2013. 141 ff.

<sup>144</sup>Finnish term for a cottage in the countryside, sometimes without running water or electricity, where people tend to spend especially their summer months.

<sup>145</sup>Hannah: (...) Also, ich fühl' mich in der Hinsicht schon mehr als Finnin und auch mit der Natur und mit solchen Sachen sehr verbunden, es ist mir schon sehr wichtig, dass wenn da, wenn man aufs Mökki kommt und einen See hat in der Nähe und...

<sup>146</sup>Hannah: Ja, ich glaub', das haben schon Viele bestimmt so gesagt, aber hm... Ich glaub', ich hab' auch immer so ein bisschen das Gefühl, immer noch, dass ich halt in Deutschland mich eher als Finne empfinde und dann halt die Unterschiede in der, ich weiss nicht, in der Persönlichkeit ist natürlich immer so ein bisschen schwierig, aber trotzdem also, einige Sachen, die dann schon anders sind. Eh, in Finnland vor allem, wenn wir zum Beispiel mit der Familie von meinem Mann zusammen sind, merke ich einige Unterschiede, wo zum Beispiel die Familienkultur von der [ihrer] deutschen Seite dann stark aufkommt und so.

Here, but also later on Hannah reflects on the way her (Finnish) husband's family interacts with each other in contrast to her own family. In this context Hannah refers to how discussions are held, the general tone of voice and choice of words, which she considers to be much more polite in her (German-Finnish) than her husband's (Finnish-Finnish) family, even though the discussions might even turn quite heated sometimes. Despite this point at which Hannah draws a boundary, she shortly after relativises it again:

Hannah: (...) Although I realised some years ago that this is not a matter of culture as a whole, but also family culture, education and everything behind it, because at some point I was in totally different circles in Germany, where things went a bit differently (laughs briefly) and first that was for me like this: "Ah, somehow not all Germans do it like that".<sup>147</sup>

As Hannah explains, when having been confronted with Germans in Germany, she understood that the things she had previously considered to be typically German, actually are not universally valid for all Germans but might be more a matter of what she calls "family culture" as well as education. Instead, the German reference group also turned out to be eclectic, - and yet in contrast to this complex group Hannah still recognises the differences between "German and Finnish", while simultaneously in Finland she does not feel completely Finnish either<sup>148</sup>. When asking her to elaborate on that by giving examples, Hannah illustrates the interdependence of her feeling of belonging in relation to others:

Hannah: Ehm, well, in Finland I would say that I am rather social, but in Germany I notice that, that many people somehow also, in a clique already filled this role, then I can easily be - well, not unsocial, but less social. I don't really feel the urge to be the one who is

<sup>147</sup>Hannah: (...) Wobei ich vor ein paar Jahren erst gemerkt hab', dass das ja auch eine Sache nicht nur der Kultur als Ganzes, sondern auch Familienkultur, Bildung und alles, was dahinter steckt, weil ich dann in ganz anderen Kreisen mal auch in Deutschland war, wo das dann eher anders zugeht (lacht kurz) und das war für mich erst so: "Ah, das machen nicht alle Deutsche irgendwie".

<sup>148</sup>Hannah: (...) irgendwie in Finnland bin ich jetzt nicht nur eine Finnin, weil wir hatten auch eine andere Kultur und so, und in Deutschland merkt man dann eher die Unterschiede von deutsch und finnisch irgendwie.

pursuing talks or conversing with people. That I'm more likely to have in Finland, for example especially in my circle of friends, when new people join, then I am really trying to make sure that I got to know everyone and talked to everyone and I think Finns are not that worried about this in their everyday life. And in Germany I'm often a bit, a bit, ehm more restrained and notice that I need more quietness and somehow to be alone and such things, where a clear difference exists, because I was, ehm, actually for many summers in the past years alone at the mökki, for two, three months and many people in Germany say they could never ever do this and how one can live so lonely, without electricity and running water - and there one does notice that concerning few things one grew up differently. But for sure that is also a difference between countryside and city, not only culture. But somehow both is part of this, probably.<sup>149</sup>

Hannah describes how her own behaviour, which broadly speaking is also an outcome of someone's personality as well as socialisation, changes depending on where she is and how people around her act. This might be universally true, but Hannah differentiates clearly between the way she acts when she is in Germany and respectively when in Finland, adapting to the social constellations at both places. Čeginskas discovered something similar in her research on "multi-cultural individuals" and refers to it as "flexible relativism", which she defines as the possibility to stress certain components depending on situation and counterpart "without losing the sense of possessing interdependent and multiple other bonds"<sup>150</sup>. Also, other scholars came to similar conclusions, for instance Paul

<sup>149</sup>Hannah: Ehm, also, in Finnland würde ich sagen, dass ich dann eher sozial bin, in Deutschland merke ich aber, dass das, dass viele Leute auch irgendwie dann in der, in einem Freundeskreis dann schon diese Rolle übernommen haben, dann kann ich mich ganz ruhig auch erst mal - na, nicht unsozial, aber weniger sozial verhalten. Ich hab' nicht so unbedingt den Drang, dann diejenige zu sein, die jetzt irgendwie ein Gespräch weiterführt oder mit Leuten konversiert. Das hab' ich eher in Finnland, zum Beispiel gerade in meinem Freundeskreis, wenn dann auch noch neue Leute dazukommen, dann bin ich irgendwie ganz genau, dass ich alle Leute kennen gelernt habe und mit allen was gesprochen habe und ich glaub', Finnen machen sich da nicht so Stress darüber im Alltag. Und in Deutschland bin ich dann oft halt bisschen, bisschen, ehm zurückhaltender und merke, dass ich mehr Ruhe brauche und irgendwie schon das Alleinesein und sowas, wo es auch ganz stark einen Unterschied gibt, weil ich auch, ehm, also ganz viele Sommer lang, jetzt in den letzten Jahren, alleine war auf dem Mökki, zwei, drei Monate lang und viele Leute in Deutschland sagen, die könnten das überhaupt nicht machen und wie kann man denn so alleine wohnen, ohne Strom und fließendes Wasser - und da merkt man halt schon, dass man irgendwie auch anders aufgewachsen ist in manchen Dingen. Aber das ist natürlich auch ein Unterschied zwischen Land und Stadt, nicht nur Kultur. Aber irgendwie ist da beides dabei, wahrscheinlich.

<sup>150</sup>Čeginskas 2015. 93.

Drechsel et al., who claimed it to be possible to "stabilise intercultural relationships and to produce commonalities without losing the respective cultural identity by 'switching' between the cultures depending to the context"<sup>151</sup>. A tendency that resembles this becomes visible in my talk with Lukas. On the one hand, his family background is German and he also attended the German school in Helsinki, but on the other hand, he spent most of his life in Helsinki. When I asked him in the course of the interview if he could position himself and where and why this would be. Lukas' answer first seems like the typical response to expect:

Lukas: M-hm. In general I always see myself as - I am always German when I'm in Finland, and when I'm in Germany, I'm a Finn. So I am always the opposite. Eh, or that is how I introduce myself, when someone asks me. (...) <sup>152</sup>

Lukas' description can be put into the context of Fang's metaphor of culture as an ocean, as presented by Grote, picturing a simultaneous existence of "all elements (...), and situation and context dictate which surface"<sup>153</sup>. This illustrates exactly the phenomenon of feeling a certain side of oneself stronger in one situation, and weaker in another. While Hannah defines herself as being less social when in Germany, Lukas at another point chooses referring to others, explaining that in Finland he is *taken* to be social and extrovert, meanwhile people in Germany would easily see him as reserved<sup>154</sup>. As Nicole Tressoldi put it, humans have the "need to be classified in order to be recognizable and

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<sup>151</sup>Drechsel; Schmidt; and Gölz 2000. 24., translated by author, original: möglich „interkulturelle Bez. zu stabilisieren und Gemeinsamkeiten zu erzeugen, ohne daß die jeweilige kulturelle Identität verloren geht, indem man je nach Umständen zwischen den Kulturen ‚switcht‘“

<sup>152</sup>Lukas: M-hm. Generell seh' ich mich ja immer als - ich bin immer deutsch, wenn ich in Finnland bin und wenn ich in Deutschland bin, dann bin ich Finne. Also ich bin immer so das Umgekehrte. Eh, oder so stell' ich mich vor, wenn ich jetzt, wenn mich jemand fragt. (...)

<sup>153</sup>Grote, in Benjamin; and Dervin 2015. 103.

<sup>154</sup>Lukas: (...) Ehm, ich denke mal, dass ich in Finnland oft als sehr, eh, sozial und extrovert und bisschen, bisschen freier und vielleicht bisschen schneller Auto fahr' als die Finnen und so, also, da bin ich in solchen mehr deutsch. Aber wenn ich in Deutschland wäre, würde ich denke ich mal sehr schnell als zurückhaltend oder eh, denke ich mal eingestuft.

to recognize"<sup>155</sup>, which can also be detected in Lukas's and many other interviews I made: the picture others - Verkuyten and de Wolf named them "corroborating witnesses"<sup>156</sup> - have of them has direct impact on my interviewees' self-perception. What strikes one as interesting is that Lukas explains how his own behaviour is actually shaped by how people in his social surrounding are acting:

Lukas: (...) Or that in Finland, because people are more quiet there, that I then am more outgoing and if I were in Germany and everyone else talked so much, that I don't interrupt the whole time and so on. Yeah, for example I don't interrupt — Finns don't interrupt, you know, one always waits until the other one is done talking, while in Germany people always shout right into the sentence. (I. laughs) Often. And something like this I don't - I wouldn't even be able to do that. (...)<sup>157</sup>

Seeing those two sequences of Lukas's interview in the correlation they de facto formed, it shows not only that the way someone perceives themselves is influenced by how others see him/her, but also that *their behaviour* has a direct and strong impact on the person's *own behaviour* - and thus also on the label others *therefore* impose onto this person. This reciprocal effect of those aspects adds another, interesting layer to the dependence of a feeling of belonging on the Other.

Unfortunately, this did not show up as obvious in the other interviews. Instead, the usage of characterisations of the German and Finnish reference group was much more common in order to position oneself. While differentiating between "groups" as "internal definitions", and "categories" as "external definition imposed on us by others outside our group", Richard Jenkins explains that people

<sup>155</sup>Tressoldi 2014. 83.

<sup>156</sup>Verkuyten; and Wolf 2002. 388.

<sup>157</sup>Lukas: (...) Oder dass ich eben in Finnland, weil die anderen Leute ruhiger sind, dass ich da mehr rauskomme und wenn ich in Deutschland wäre und alle anderen so viel reden, dass ich da nicht die ganze Zeit dazwischen rede und so. Ja, zum Beispiel unterbreche ich — die Finnen unterbrechen sich ja nicht, man wartet immer, bis der andere fertig ist und während in Deutschland wird halt immer drauf - mitten im Satz drauf geschrien. (I. lacht) Oft. Und sowas mach' ich zum Beispiel - könnte ich gar nicht so richtig. (...)

will "renegotiate their own group identity" under the experience of being categorised by others<sup>158</sup>. Similar phenomena have been described in other empirical research such as in Wessendorf's study on Swiss-Italian descendants in Switzerland in which she stressed the importance of the different reference groups<sup>159</sup> - and certainly this also became visible in many of my interviews. For instance, as Linda described it, her childhood and youth in Germany surely coined her as a person, shaping certain character traits which now seemingly make her German. She puts it as follows:

Linda: (... ) I think, well, my thinking, my brain or my — I am German socialised, that is what is most German about myself. Ehm and, my heart is rather Finnish. (...) I have learned to think German. Well, somehow this analytical, this "There must be order!", somehow this structured approach, systematic approach, ehm, certain things. (...)<sup>160</sup>

Linda continues by picturing Finns as non-critical, unable to verbalise their opinion, while for her Germans are taught to be critical, reflexive and keen to debate. This is where Linda feels "100% German, (...) so German, hard to be more German", while immediately relativising, saying that in other (social) situations she then again feels differently<sup>161</sup>.

Drawing on stereotypes of what one considers as typically German or typically Finnish turned out to be a common way of trying to describe oneself or other

<sup>158</sup>Koskela, Kaisu: "Boundaries of Belonging: Highly Skilled Migrants and the Migrant Hierarchy in Finland." *Journal of Finnish Studies* 17, no. 1; 2 (2014). 31.

<sup>159</sup>See Wessendorf 2013. 140 ff.

<sup>160</sup>Linda: (...) ich glaube, also, mein Denken, mein Gehirn oder mein — ich bin deutsch sozialisiert, das ist das, was bei mir am stärksten deutsch ist. Ehm und, mein Herz ist eigentlich finnisch. (...) Ich habe gelernt, deutsch zu denken. Also, irgendwie dieses Analytische, dieses "Ordnung muss sein", irgendwie dieses gegliederte Vorgehen, systematische Vorgehen, ehm, so gewisse Dinge. (...)

<sup>161</sup>Linda: (...) Und das vermisse ich bei vielen Anderen. Dieses kritische, dieses — Und deswegen, da fühl' ich mich 100% als Deutsche, was das so angeht. Und die Finnen, die immer nur dasitzen und ihre Meinung nicht sagen und wenn man *irgendwie* versucht, sie herauszufordern: "Ich weiss nicht, ich weiss nicht, ich weiss nicht!" kommt als Kommentar. Irgendwie... Da denke ich: "Oah, ich bin sowas von deutsch, das geht gar nicht deutscher!" Ehm, aber dann natürlich fühle ich mich dann auch wiederum nicht deutsch, wenn ich jetzt mit Deutschen zusammen bin und Deutsche irgendwie diskutieren, die keine Ahnung haben vom Leben im Ausland. (...)

Germans/Finns. This is in line with what Marianne Noh stated, namely that "(a)n individual's sense of self is largely based on sweeping generalizations or stereotypes of social groups of peoples"<sup>162</sup>. Wessendorf also described the idea of a certain mentality as a means to differentiate in order "to describe the differences in ways of thinking and behaviour, cultural values and practices between themselves and people of other origins." She made a comparison to Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus* that refers to "a system of dispositions consisting of durable and acquired schemes of perception, thought and practices".<sup>163</sup>

However, while some of my interviewees did refer to those stereotypes, they chose to use them in order to distance themselves from them. When I asked Jan (in his 20s), who could be regarded as part of a third generation of Germans in Finland, what makes him German or Finnish, he states that his friends consider him to be an "atypical German". Jan explains that unlike the Finnish picture of Germans as being punctual and systematic, he is not like this, yet he is also not a "typical Finn" as he is not "asocial".<sup>164</sup> Still, most interviewees used those stereotypes without reflecting on them, while for instance Harri, after I asked him to elaborate further on his previously presented self-description, added:

Harri: I can't really tell. Those are somehow — you see, I would be insecure, do we talk about a "Harri-gene" or a "German-gen", well

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<sup>162</sup>Noh, Marianne: "From Model Minority to Second-Generation Stereotypes. Korean-Canadian and Korean American Accounts." In Wilkes-Karraker 2013. 108.

<sup>163</sup>Wessendorf 2013. 62.

<sup>164</sup>Jan: Meine Freunde sagen mir immer, dass ich die undeutscheste — Ich weiß nicht, ob das ein Wort ist. Untypical...

I.: Untypisch, ja.

Jan: Ein untypischer Deutscher bin. Also, ich... Die Finnen sprechen immer über deutsche Pünktlichkeit, dass die Deutschen effektiv sind und so weiter – ich bin ziemlich anders. Aber dann bin ich auch nicht der stereotypische Finne. In vielen... In many ways.

I.: Ja, in vielen Dingen. Was zum Beispiel?

Jan: Naja, ich bin nicht asozial. (lacht) So sind ja die finnischen Stereotypen.

I.: Du meinst, extrovertiert und introvertiert.

Jan: Ja, genau. Viele deutsche Stereotypen hab ich ja nicht. Aber ich sehe deutsch aus, also, das sagen viele Finnen, dass ich nicht typisch finnisch aussehe. Viele fragen ja, ob ich finnisch-schwedisch bin, dann sage ich denen „Nee, ich bin halb Deutscher“.

— that would mix a bit with this matter.<sup>165</sup>

I deem this to be a very important point and am surprised that none of the other interviewees reflected on it, but instead they accepted me suggesting those admittedly stiff categories of Germanness and Finnishness and did in fact use these categories by themselves. Nonetheless Harri's comment points towards a significant question: Certainly one gets shaped by their surroundings and socialisation. However, there might be a part of our own person, our personality, our character that makes us act, think and feel in a certain way. The extent to which this part occurs stays unclear, however, we need to be aware of the fact that the words of my interlocutors can not be put solely into a German-Finnish framework, but still have to be taken as unique stories, forming a flexible and changeable picture based on a person's experiences, but also their personality.

As shown above, many of the participants in my study chose to use labels to describe what they regarded as German or Finnish in order to express their personal position within those frameworks. In most cases they charged those labels either positively or negatively and depending on this, my interviewees positioned themselves to be close to a certain attribute, or tried to distance themselves from it. Despite this, also opposing attitudes about one and the same aspect were described. This ambivalence showed up most clearly in the conversation I had with Lukas and serves as a manifestation of an as-well-as-position I presented before:

Lukas: It is always the same things that are good in some situations and bad in others. So, for example I sometimes see the Finnish reservation or politeness, which also exists in a work-environment, I find them quite pleasant, on the other hand one sometimes gets annoyed, why the other doesn't just say what he thinks, why does

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<sup>165</sup>Harri: Kann ich nicht direkt sagen. Das sind dann irgendwie so — guck mal, ich wäre unsicher, sprechen wir da jetzt über das „Harri-Gen“ oder das „Deutsche-Gen“, also — würde sich ein bisschen vermischen mit der Sache.



he always have to be so reluctant - it's always the same, the same things that in some situations one gets annoyed at and in other one likes them. (...) And in Germany, I think, sometimes there is too much straightforwardness or that one — needs to talk the whole time. (laughs)<sup>166</sup>

Thinking of what other interlocutors told me and putting the single quotes in a mutual context, the same, seemingly contradictory positions can be found, also from the first generation migrants. While interviewees like Doris and Darius complained about Germans getting too close to each other, Doris for instance also expressed awareness about foreigners complaining about too much distance between people in Finland and even seeing the less intimate social life as a reason to leave<sup>167</sup>. References to aspects of life in Germany or Finland or also certain behavioural patterns of Germans and Finns served as landmarks on the path of (self-)positioning, and the fact that some points were sometimes seen as *both* positive *and* negative by one and the same interlocutor might also tell us a lot about a person's location, once more giving proof that the world comes in many different shades between black and white.

As this passage illustrated, strategies of positioning oneself were miscellaneous, ranging from concrete aspects like traditions, habits or the meaning of passports to more interior processes such as a personal self-perception or the perception through respectively in contrast to others. Moreover, those strategies were by no means absolute and unchangeable. Instead, the participants in my study explained how their feeling of belonging changed during their lives and how they

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<sup>166</sup>Lukas: Das sind immer so die gleichen Sachen, die in manchen Situationen gut sind und in manchen schlecht. Also, ich seh' zum Beispiel manchmal die finnische Zurückhaltung oder die Höflichkeit, die es ja auch im Arbeitsfeld oder so gibt, finde ich ganz angenehm, zum anderen Teil ärgert man sich manchmal auch, warum der andere nicht einfach sagt, was er denkt, warum er immer so zurückhaltend sein muss - das sind immer die gleichen, die gleichen Sachen, die einen in manchen Situationen ärgern und in manchen toll findet. (...) Und in Deutschland, denke ich mal, manchmal das zu direkte oder dass man da zu — die ganze Zeit reden müsste. (lacht)

<sup>167</sup>See interview with Doris.

often were of situational character, depending on place and people. They confirmed what Stuart Hall stated about identity as being "fluid and flexible"<sup>168</sup>, even though I dare say this is not only true for people of migrant background, but for every single one of us. Nevertheless, as many people are coined by ideas of nation-states with national cultures and identities, it seems particularly interesting to explore the numerous variations in the process of self-identification when looking at people who grew up with several of such frameworks. What appeared to be unequivocal was an overall positive attitude towards possessing a bi-cultural or even a multi-cultural background, which will be presented in the next section on the "impact of mobility".

### 4.3 The impact of mobility

As I illustrated, for descendants of migrants the knowledge of their family history forms grounds for specific manifestations of self-understanding. These can be vague and blurry at times, or tangible at other times. Furthermore, this self-understanding of migrants' descendants may have considerable impact on their life-choices and strategies to find their place in the world. In the following pages I will present how the mobility of this descendant generation influenced their life, the choices they made and the paths they took. It links to Helen Lee's call to look at descendants of migrants as people who are "actively engaging in transnational practices themselves" rather than being only "passively transnational" through their parent's and ancestors' movements<sup>169</sup>.

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<sup>168</sup>Hirvi 2013. 23.

<sup>169</sup>See Lee 2008. 11.

### 4.3.1 Summer illusions vs. reality

I argue that the mobile life my interviewees experienced even as children had great influence on their life choices and their personal feeling of belonging. All of them had frequent contacts with two countries, Germany and Finland. Some lived longer periods in the other country, others went there only for the summer months. Those annual trips should not be regarded solely as holidays, as for the families they often meant more than that. They helped to cure possible home-sickness of the parent(s), helped to maintain and strengthen transnational family ties and contacts as well as raising bilingual children and with a knowledge of both German and Finnish culture.

For many interviewees, those stays were characterised by nice experiences, and several described having developed a "summer-illusion" or "holiday-illusion" of Germany, or respectively, Finland: - a thoroughly good picture of freedom in different interpretations, being allowed to do things they normally were not allowed to do, getting to eat things they did not have at home, and just enjoying the days with fewer restrictions. Lari, who was born in the Germany of the 1980s and moved with his German-Finnish family to Finland aged six, pictures vivid memories of his vacations in Germany:

Lari: As a child that was, that was always like holiday, of course. As a child it always was very, very nice there. Everyone was happy that you were there, one got loads of —

I: Attention —

Lari: Yes, attention, always got those fifty or a hundred Marks from someone or fifty Marks from the godfather and then we went to Karstadt<sup>170</sup> and I got my Herpa-lorries<sup>171</sup>, which you couldn't get in Finland, there was Nutella<sup>172</sup>, which wasn't available in Finland, and then there was Hohes C<sup>173</sup>, which wasn't available in Finland, then at the bakery you got those cherry-ehm-lollipops, which were

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<sup>170</sup>German chain of shopping malls.

<sup>171</sup>Toy.

<sup>172</sup>Chocolate spread.

<sup>173</sup>Brand of orange juice.

not available in Finland — first of all one did not go to a bakery in Finland and then those cherry lollipops were not available. That was very nice. And there were croquettes and Holzfäller-steak and such things. One always had some certain things.

Then at ages 13, 14, 15 actually, during the teenage years, I was of the opinion that, immediately, as soon as I could, I would move to Germany, where the world is still ideal and well. Because, at ages 13, 14, 15 it already was kind of OK in Germany to go to a pub, one was kind of allowed to do such adult things, one could accompany other people, even if it was in a familial circle, one was allowed to go with them to the pub. And then there were the children and the adults and then one maybe even got a small beer with 15 and was allowed to play billiards - that was actually the big life. That was absolutely awesome. - Unthinkable in Finland! (...)<sup>174</sup>

Similar positive views could be found in sequences in which people described their summer months in Finland, just with different explanations for them, for instance the quiet and peacefulness when being at the family's mökki and being so close to nature. For others, their positive image of Finland was constructed by what they heard about it from afar, for instance the sports and unusual competitions Finland is known for worldwide<sup>175</sup>. These observations go along

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<sup>174</sup>Lari: Als Kind war das, das war natürlich immer Urlaub. Als Kind, das war immer sehr sehr schön da. Alle haben sich gefreut, dass man da war, man hat unheimlich viel —  
I.: Aufmerksamkeit —

Lari: Ja, Aufmerksamkeit bekommen, hat dann auch immer diese fünfzig oder hundert Mark von irgendwem bekommen oder fünfzig Mark vom Patenonkel und sind wir dann nach Karstadt gegangen und dann habe ich meine Herpa-LKWs gekauft, die man in Finnland nicht bekam, da gab es Nutella, das es in Finnland nicht gab, und dann gab es Hohes C, das es in Finnland nicht gab, dann gab es beim Bäcker diese Kirsch-ehm-lutscher, die es in Finnland — erst einmal ist man in Finnland nicht zum Bäcker und dann gab es nicht diese Kirschlutscher. Das war sehr schön. Und Kroketten gab es dann und Holzfäller-Steak und solche Sachen. Man hat immer so bestimmte Sachen gehabt.

Dann mit 13, 14, 15 eigentlich, wo dann so die Teenagerjahre waren, da war ich dann eigentlich der Meinung, sofort, wenn ich kann, ziehe ich dann nach Deutschland, da ist die Welt noch heil und gut. Weil, mit 13, 14, 15 war es in Deutschland dann schon halbwegs OK, in die Kneipe zu gehen, man durfte halbwegs so Erwachsenensachen machen, man konnte irgendwo mit Leuten mit, auch wenn es in familiären Kreisen war, man durfte mit in die Kneipe. Und dann waren die Kinder da und die Erwachsenen da und dann hat man vielleicht sogar ein kleines Bier bekommen mit 15 und durfte Billard spielen – das war eigentlich so das große Leben. Das war absolut geil. - In Finnland unvorstellbar! (...)

<sup>175</sup>Lasse: (...) Und so das war für mich immer so das Finnische, dass man diese freien Sachen macht und dann hab' ich gehört von diesen Stiefel-Weitwürfen und —  
I.: Handy-Weitwerfen, ja...

Lasse: Handy-Weitwürfen und sowas, und so was hat schon mein Finnlandbild geprägt (...) so ein Bild von Finnland, das halt so nicht existiert. So aus Ski-Weitsprung und ach... Skispringen und Sisu und dieses, das ist geprägt von lauter so positiven Sachen. Und wahrscheinlich total verklärtes und romantisches Bild von Finnland (...).

the line of what other scholars also found out, for instance Helen Lee, who even goes so far as calling those visits one of the most important "strategies" to connect children with the home country of the parent(s) and to "reaffirm their sense of cultural identity"<sup>176</sup>.

As seen in the excerpt from Lari's interview, in which he elaborates on childhood memories of his holiday trips to Germany, those "illusions"<sup>177</sup> my interlocutors had of the other country often resulted in the desire to move there. Many of them did and what often followed, was a clash between the summer illusion and "reality", as perceived once actually living there<sup>178</sup>. Going back to the talk I had with Lari, he continued telling me how, as a young adult, he had his first experiences of working life with Germany and Germans:

Lari: (...) and that was basically the first time that I was there outside of that holiday context. And actually, thinking of the countries of Europe, Germany was not my thing. (...) Germany was, (...) where it was always grey, the streets were bad, where people were grumpy, where you have trouble with officials, where everyday communication between people is actually quite arrogant and aggressive; didn't like it at all. Then I had years of break from Germany again. (...) But now I can separate a bit better again between holiday-Germany and profession-Germany, I still don't like the profession-Germany, but for a holiday it's quite OK. I like going to [Germany] for a long weekend or a week; longer I don't really need to be there.

I do like eating my rolls for breakfast [father Dieter agrees], then I eat Currywurst or... - For me a German dish is Döner. No, seriously! When I go to [Germany], I won't be looking for Bratwurst<sup>179</sup>, I will be looking for Döner<sup>180</sup>. And I'm quite happy, Monday morning at breakfast there will be Mohnbrötchen<sup>181</sup>; Nutella is not the thing anymore, as nowadays it's also available here, and jams are also available here. Only in the 90s Finland got (incompr.) for the

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<sup>176</sup>Lee 2008. 20.

<sup>177</sup>When using this term, I draw on terms used in the interviews in order to describe idealistic pictures my interviewees got during their visits, which emerged due to the exceptional situation when being on holiday.

<sup>178</sup>I do not want to imply that experiences while being on holiday were not "real". However, it refers to descriptions of holiday impressions as "illusions", which thus consequently leads to calling everyday life experiences "reality".

<sup>179</sup>German fried sausage.

<sup>180</sup>Doner/Kebab.

<sup>181</sup>Buns with poppy seeds.

first time orange juice in supermarkets with ehm... fruit pulp, until then that was basically only available in Germany. So that's also no reason anymore for going to Germany.<sup>182</sup>

Before Lari unfolded all those memories, he had stated that he "just started thinking about it" and realised that he had "a certain diversity" in his attitude towards Germany and explains that the way he thought about it as a child was different from when he was a teenager, which yet again was different when he was 20, 25 and today.<sup>183</sup> For him, the contact he had with Germany at different stages of his life was shaped by multiple impressions which then had great impact on his attitude towards the country and in this his wish to go or live there.

Lari's remarks show what I consider to be true for many people of mixed ethnic or otherwise transnational background: even his early childhood experiences were coined by an intense relationship to two countries and cultures, more intense as probably is the case for children whose international contacts are restricted to media or a few weeks of vacation. Similar statements were made

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<sup>182</sup>Lari: (...) und das war eigentlich das erste Mal, das ich so außerhalb von diesem Urlaubskontext da gewesen bin. Und da war eigentlich so, wenn man jetzt an die Länder in Europa denkt, Deutschland nicht mein Ding. (...) Deutschland war da (...) das, wo es immer grau war, die Straßen schlecht waren, wo die Leute stinkig sind, wo man Ärger mit den Beamten hat, wo die Kommunikation zwischen Leuten im Alltag eigentlich unheimlich arrogant und aggressiv ist; hat mir überhaupt nicht gefallen. Dann hatte ich auch jahrelang wieder Pause mit Deutschland. (...) Ich kann das jetzt aber auch wieder ein bisschen besser trennen, was Urlaub-Deutschland ist und was Beruf-Deutschland ist, ich mag das Beruf-Deutschland immer noch nicht gerne, aber für den Urlaub ist es ganz OK. Ich fahr gerne mal nach [Deutschland], für ein langes Wochenende oder eine Woche; mehr muss ich das dann auch nicht haben. Ich esse meine Brötchen ganz gerne zum Frühstück [Vater Dieter stimmt zu], ich esse dann die Curry-Wurst oder... - Für mich ist ja ein deutsches Essen ein Döner schon. Nee, ehrlich! Wenn ich nach [Deutschland] fahre, ich such mir keine Bratwurst, ich such mir einen Döner. Und ich bin ganz zufrieden, Montag beim Frühstück gibt es wieder Mohnbrötchen; Nutella ist nicht mehr so das Ding, weil Nutella gibt es heutzutage auch hier, und Marmeladen gibt es heutzutage schon hier. Finnland bekam ja erst Mitte 90er mit (unv.) das erste Mal einen O-Saft in die Supermärkte mit ehm... Obstfleisch drin, bis dahin gab es das eigentlich nur in Deutschland. Ist also auch kein Grund mehr, nach Deutschland zu fahren.

<sup>183</sup>Lari: Ich habe eigentlich so eine — Ich habe gerade eben angefangen, darüber nachzudenken, aber ich habe eigentlich so eine gewisse Diversität in der Einstellung gegenüber Deutschland, die sich eigentlich über die Jahre aufgebaut hat. So, wie ich als Kind gedacht habe, so habe ich nicht mehr als Teenager gedacht, so habe ich nicht mehr mit 20 gedacht, so habe ich nicht mehr mit 25 gedacht und so denke ich wiederum heute nicht mehr. Ich habe jetzt so im Laufe der Jahre unheimlich viele verschiedene Einstellungen zu dem Ganzen gehabt.

by scholars such as Michael Braun and Walter Müller, who stressed that "migrants can relate, in addition to supra-national units, to two different countries in a much more encompassing sense than members of national populations with transnational contacts"<sup>184</sup>.

However, even though Lari was sure he would move to Germany when he was a teenager, he never did, as his adult experiences with "profession Germany" were apparently already disillusioning him enough to change his mind. As he acknowledges, he enjoys going there once in a while for short private trips, but living and working there is not an option for him. By describing how certain things, particularly related to cuisine, lost meaning for him, Lari in a sense deconstructs his summer illusion of Germany. It once more underlines how his attitude towards Germany changed with time and - in this case also with the effects of globalisation such as the increased mobility of goods worldwide.

Concerning possible illusions about the respective country, growing up with both German and Finnish influences could also entail other consequences. Here, I want to draw on the interview with Hans and Jonas, one of the two father-son conversations I had. As I explained earlier, both Hans and Jonas went to Germany to work for a while, and pictured the time as follows:

Hans: (...) And I thought that it would be like my second home, Germany - that was quite a culture shock for me. Even though I did not have any problems with the language, but the way people worked [there], was completely different than what I was used to from Finland. - So, that was really exhausting for me there. (...) There was too much friction between people, all the time with someone else, someone complained about something or wanted something differently. One wasn't used to that here (...).

Jonas: But I think with you that was different, with me the shock was much smaller, because my expectations were completely different (...). I went there as a Finn and you are so much more German and maybe you had the expectation that you could just - access

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<sup>184</sup>Braun; and Müller 2012. 264.

straight away.<sup>185</sup>

Hans grew up bilingually and with Finnish-German socialisation. Apparently he clearly identified strongly as German and believed he could simply slip into German society and become part of it without difficulty. A bit further below, Hans adds that he had to learn that Germans abroad are different than Germans in Germany, therefore his impression of Germans was based on wrong grounds as it was drawn on Finland-Germans, who were "more open, more flexible" than Germans living in Germany.<sup>186</sup> This can be seen in the light of John Gumperz' differentiation between "linguistic competence" and the "much more significant communication competence", which enables "in a world of strangers (...) to detect the social norms and values of the group and to act according and conformally to them"<sup>187</sup>. Regarding the remark by Hans, his son Jonas explains that his father was "so much more" German than himself and this made him have too high expectations which were bound to lead to disappointment. As presented earlier, when Jonas went to Germany to work there, he "went there as a Finn", with different expectations than his father used to have. It becomes visible here how someone's mobility and opportunities are interlinked with their self-identification. Hans, whose German identification was stronger than that of his son, was confronted with what he calls a "culture shock", when living and

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<sup>185</sup>Hans: Und ich dachte, das wäre wie eine zweite Heimat, Deutschland - das war ein gewaltiger Kulturschock für mich. Also, obwohl ich schon von der Sprache her wirklich nichts, keine Probleme hatte, aber die Art, wie die Leute [dort] gearbeitet haben, das war total anders, als ich das gewöhnt war in Finnland. - Also, es war für mich schon sehr anstrengend da. (...) Das ist irgendwie - das machte zu viele Reibereien mit den Leuten, ständig mit irgendjemandem, also jemand hat sich über irgendwas beschwert oder wollte was anders. Das war man her nicht gewohnt (...).

Jonas: Aber ich glaub', bei dir war das anders, also bei mir war der Schock kleiner, weil meine Erwartungen waren ganz anders (...). Und ich, ich bin als Finne hingegangen eigentlich schon und du bist viel mehr deutsch und du hattest vielleicht die Erwartungen auch mehr, dass du — direkt einsteigen kannst

<sup>186</sup>Hans: (...) Und ich dachte eigentlich, (...) ich würde Deutsche gut kennen und kennen, wie die denken, aber so Auslandsdeutsche sind ganz anders als Deutsche im Inland. Hier im Ausland, gerade die Deutschen, die in Finnland wohnen, sind vom Charakter her - ich weiss nicht, ob man das sagen kann - irgendwie offener, flexibler.

<sup>187</sup>Schellenberger 2011. 178, translated by author.



working in Germany for the first time. On the other hand, his son Jonas, who said that he went to Germany "as a Finn", experienced even a strengthening of his Finnish identification when living there as he started to miss "Finnish things".<sup>188</sup>

The inter-connectedness between visits to the parents' country of origin and a personal feeling of belonging was discovered by other scholars, for instance Lotta Weckström in her study on Finnish descendants in Sweden<sup>189</sup>, but also Susanne Wessendorf, whose research focused on descendants of Italians living in Switzerland. According to her findings, positive experiences when being on holiday in Italy could strengthen a feeling of belonging to Italy while "experiences of exclusion could lead to a feeling of detachment and an increased awareness of cultural difference"<sup>190</sup>. Moreover, a "feeling of belonging, fed by their parents' nostalgia for the homeland and by their dream of returning to Italy, can change radically once members of the second generation settle there and are confronted with the realities of everyday life. In this way, certain ties of 'being rooted' in southern Italy are called into question and the homeland evolves into a more differentiated picture."<sup>191</sup> Even if some of my interviewees described having experienced a cultural shock, it did not seem to have gone as far as Christian Triebe suggested concerning TCKs. Triebe depicted TCKs who returned to their passport country, and in confrontation with non-TCKs there lost "a sense of who they are" and thus turned into "non-persons"<sup>192</sup>. Instead, their reactions to moving to the "other" country appear closer to Weckström's and Wessendorf's remarks, namely a re-positioning of the personal identification in one way or the other.

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<sup>188</sup>See chapter 4.2.2, page 161.

<sup>189</sup>See Weckström 2011. 132 f.

<sup>190</sup>Wessendorf 2013. 139.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid. 109.

<sup>192</sup>Triebel, Christian: "Non-Place Kids? Marc Augé's Non-Place and Third Culture Kids." In Benjamin; and Dervin 2015. 98.

### 4.3.2 Life strategies

Having the opportunity to go to another country to see if one would want to live there, is nothing uncommon for people with a considerably wealthy background. However, going to the other country of one's ethnically mixed family might have a different meaning, as those countries are often closely attached to one's picture of oneself, one's self-identification and feeling of belonging. Like Jonas, who experienced a strengthening of his personal Finnishness when living in Germany for some years, others also went to the respective country to try if that is where they feel most at home. Jan for example decided to spend an exchange semester in Germany and as he put it, for him it was not about the studies as such, but about being able to live in Germany once in his life. He describes his experiences there as follows:

Jan: (...) But my priority was not academic; I wanted to live in Germany once in my life. (...) Well, I wanted to get this feeling of home, but there one realises that one is a bit more Finnish. You notice it, when I'm speaking German; many people answered immediately in English. Such a feeling of... (thinks) belong, so I belong here - [he uses the English expressions here]

I.: "to belong"

Jan: Belongingness, I didn't really get that there; that's also because of the language. But yes, I could imagine that I end up living or working in Germany.<sup>193</sup>

It shows that even though Jan really wanted to feel at home there, he could not, as he still felt more Finnish there. He links this to not being fluent in German, so by people responding in English, his feeling of not belonging there got even stronger. I dare say that there are many people who learn a language, travel

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<sup>193</sup>Jan: (...) Aber meine Priorität war nicht akademisch; ich wollte einmal in meinem Leben in Deutschland wohnen. (...) Naja, ich wollte ein bisschen Daheim-Gefühl kriegen, aber da merkt man ja, dass ich ein bisschen mehr Finnisch bin. Das merkt man ja, wenn ich Deutsch spreche; viele Leute haben sofort auf Englisch geantwortet. So ein Gefühl von... (überlegt) belong, also I belong here -

I.: "Zugehören"

Jan: Zugehörigkeit, so etwas habe ich nicht so richtig gekriegt; das ist auch wegen der Sprache. Aber ja, ich könnte gut denken, dass ich irgendwann in Deutschland wohne oder arbeite.

the country in question and feel frustrated when locals respond in English. It signals clearly that one is an outsider, not part of the local community, and is obviously and clearly perceived and marked as such. However, for someone who has this mixed family background and who grew up knowing that he has roots in both Germany and Finland, reactions like this might feel different. This makes decisions about moving to Germany or Finland respectively, and the experiences there highly emotionally loaded - at a level that might be different from that of people who lack such an ethnic background.

Based on findings from my data, I claim that many descendants of migrants have a more favourable initial situation when it comes to moving to the country of their family, as they often can draw on linguistic and social capital stemming from their background. Thanks to the recent history of their families, descendants of migrants inherit what Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry referred to as "tools"<sup>194</sup> that give them comparably easy access to their own mobile life. Those tools can be in the form of dual citizenship, social networks in both countries, but of course also social capital such as language and cultural knowledge of both places. Thus, for many of them it is relatively easy to "just go" to the other country, to try and see if they want to stay or would rather return. This strategy of trial-and-error became strongly visible in the talk I had with Heiko, in which he described a time during his early adult years in which he struggled to find his spot in life:

Heiko: And that was of course quite a critical phase for me, and okay, I was in Germany and then I came back to Finland and then I also wasn't really satisfied in Finland. And then the Finnish culture: "No, it's better in Germany!" and then I quickly went back to Germany and after a while in Germany: "No, that's also shit there!" and again. But it was just such a time, maybe two years, when I

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<sup>194</sup>Hannam, Kevin; Mimi Sheller; and John Urry: "Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings." *Mobilities* 1, no. 1 (March 2006). 12.

didn't really know myself. (...) <sup>195</sup>

For Heiko, those years after high school were characterised by a search for direction for his life and a place to call home, a place that he felt he belonged to. This process apparently was not easy for Heiko and he ended up going back and forth between Finland and Germany, always finding reasons to leave again. When I asked him what it was that he did or did not like in the two countries, among other things, he told me of a greater openness between people in Germany. Referring to his stays in Germany as a child, he expresses appreciation of people in the neighbourhood knowing and greeting each other. Heiko does not particularly say why he decided to stay in Finland in the end, however, at the beginning of his reflections he stresses that Finland was his "Heimat, somehow" <sup>196</sup>. Statements like Heiko's show something quite common for today's mobility and migration, which can no longer be seen as a one-way-street, but instead could rather be compared to moving from one place to another, yet not being limited to a "two-way-journey" <sup>197</sup> either. Furthermore, those sequences support what Harry Goulbourne also warned about, namely not to underestimate "identity and belongingness (...) as crucial elements driving the motor of transnational family experience" <sup>198</sup>.

Other interviewees also went back and forth between Germany and Finland - for instance it took Lena several attempts to settle down in Finland, her mother's

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<sup>195</sup>Heiko: (...) Und das war natürlich so eine kritische Phase bei mir und gut, da war ich in Deutschland und dann kam ich nach Finnland zurück und dann war ich in Finnland auch nicht richtig zufrieden. Und dann die finnische Kultur: "Nein, es ist besser in Deutschland!" und dann bin ich schnell mal wieder zurück nach Deutschland und nach einer Weile in Deutschland: "Nein, das ist auch scheisse hier!" na und wieder. Aber das war so eine Zeit, so ein, zwei Jahre, wo ich nicht richtig wusste. (...)

<sup>196</sup>Heiko: Ne, das war immer so ein Gedanke, meine Heimat ist schon Finnland, für mich irgendwie. (...)

<sup>197</sup>Østergaard-Nielsen, Eva (Ed.): *International Migration and Sending Countries. Perceptions, Policies and Transnational Relations*. Basingstoke/Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 13.

<sup>198</sup>Goulbourne 2010. 6.

home country. Lena explains that even though her family was not particularly wealthy and even though getting to Finland was far less easy than it is nowadays, they still managed to go there once a year for the summer months, also because "the *Heimat* was important for [her] mother"<sup>199</sup>. As she puts it, despite those summer vacations, at that point she did not really have her own relationship to Finland, but rather "ran alongside", while her mother re-established her ties to her home country and family during what Lena calls her mother's "soul holidays"<sup>200</sup>. After high school Lena did an internship in Finland, but admits that it was initially not her idea to do it there, but rather that she ended up doing it due to suggestions of relatives and thanks to their connections. During this time she realised that she might like it there and decided to move to Finland to do an apprenticeship. Lena explains that "only then" she started to develop her own relationship to Finland, learned the language properly and met the man she later would marry. Despite all this, Lena soon felt that she had to leave:

Lena: (...) And then I also met the Finn I later married, but I just had to leave at all costs, that was around 1990 and I just had to return again, because for me that was — there's a Finnish word called 'ankee'<sup>201</sup>, that is somehow — it just was too different from Germany, well, I was used to, I don't know, you can just go around the corner to eat at a Greek restaurant and everything is available and here nothing was available, that really was — *Ostblock*<sup>202</sup> and as a child I never realised that, because my summer-Finland basically was, ehm — that really was pure summer and *mökki* and so on, all those adventures that one experiences there, but this real life here with the, with the darkness and — I mean, in the supermarkets of those days, for me the picture is always: Chinese cabbage and Edam cheese. And I thought, I can't live here, that is - that won't work.

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<sup>199</sup>Lena: (...) und dann die finnischen Verwandten, die aber so wichtig waren und auch die Heimat war also wichtig für meine Mutter, dass wir jeden Sommer nach Finnland gefahren sind. Und das war damals, (...) man ist nicht einfach mal eben schnell irgendwo hingeflogen, wie heute, also heute fährt man, was weiss ich, echt zum Kaffeetrinken fliegt man schnell irgendwo hin, aber obwohl meine Eltern sicherlich nicht, ehm, wohlhabend waren, war das jedes Jahr drin, dass wir mit dem Auto hoch nach Finnland gefahren sind. (...)

<sup>200</sup>Lena: (...) So diese Seelen-Urlaube für unsere Mutter eigentlich, dass die heimfahren konnte, ihre eigene Sprache sprechen konnte und wir sind halt so nebenher gelaufen.

<sup>201</sup>Finnish for "drab", "mirthless".

<sup>202</sup>"Eastern Bloc".

And then I went back again — <sup>203</sup>

Lena also experienced a clash of summer-illusions and reality, as did Lari and Hans. For her, this was related to Finland giving her the feeling of "Ostblock", of the former Eastern Bloc, lacking exotic food and ethnic restaurants. This was mentioned in a few other interviews, for instance with Dennis who first came to Finland in the mid-90s. Here it shows how important it is to bear in mind that the participants of this study are not a homogeneous group. Certainly someone who came to Finland later, broadly speaking from 2000 onward, would describe their impressions differently than someone who came in the early 90s, when Finland as a matter of fact was comparably less-wealthy and life was indeed much more sparse than after Finland joined the European Union in 1995. Moreover, it is advisable to point out that both Lena and Dennis grew up in Western Germany, so this must also have influenced their **Ostblock** impression to a great extent. As all interviewees who addressed this theme indeed came from the Federal Republic of Germany, I can only assume that someone who came to Finland during the same era, but from German Democratic Republic, might have felt differently.

When I asked Lena what the reasons were for her to give Finland another chance, she explained that again it was more by accident. In the meantime she had started and given up studying in Germany, but heard of a temporary job offer in Helsinki and felt that "Ah, it doesn't really matter where I do nothing

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<sup>203</sup>Lena: (...) Und dann hab' ich auch den Finnen kennen gelernt, den ich später geheiratet hab', aber ich musste damals unbedingt gehen, das war also so um 1990 und ich musste dann einfach wieder zurück, weil das war mir, das war — es gibt ein finnisches Wort, das heisst 'ankke', das ist so — es war halt zu anders als Deutschland, also, ich bin das gewohnt gewesen, weiss nicht, da geht man mal schnell um die Ecke zum Griechen zum Essen und alles ist vorhanden und hier war halt nichts vorhanden, das war wirklich, das war — Ostblock und das hab' ich aber als Kind nie mitbekommen, weil mein Sommer-Finnland war halt immer so, ehm — das war so voller Sommer und Mökki und so, diese ganzen Abenteuer, die man da erlebt, aber dieses echte Hier-Leben mit der, mit der Dunkelheit und dem — Ich sag' mal, in den Supermärkten damals, für mich ist das Bild immer: Chinakohl und Edamkäse. Und ich dachte, ich kann hier nicht wohnen, das ist mir - das geht nicht. Und dann bin ich wieder zurück —

or where I hang out"<sup>204</sup>. From this citation it seems like Lena's decisions were mostly made by accident. Lena says:

Lena: (...) Well, I think my life has been totally, most of the time it was rather without a plan, most things, it was usually kind of like "Ah, let's wait and see, let's go just here..." - so, as a child I never had the feeling that I desperately want to, ehm, go to Finland, to see how it is to live in the country of my mother. Because, you know, there are many who say that they are consciously doing that, for me that was all more by accident.<sup>205</sup>

Even if the moments in which Lena decided for or against moving to Finland feel like pure coincidences to her, still I argue that the fact that her focus seemed to point exclusively towards Finland, tells a different story. She may not have actively felt the wish to move to Finland, but the opportunities that made her do so were strongly related to her family background, to her connections and ties with and to Finland. At a later point of the interview, Lena describes how much she feels at home in her apartment in Helsinki and acknowledges:

Lena: (...) And that just happens to be in Helsinki and I do believe however that it is not by accident in Helsinki, but it is quite consciously here.<sup>206</sup>

Throughout most of her accounts about how she ended up in Finland, Lena depicted it as all pure coincidence and concatenation of circumstances. However, later on, when talking about her apartment in which she had been living for many years and which is the reason why she feels at home in Helsinki, it seems like in the process of talking, Lena realises that it is more than just coincidence and suggests that it is "supposed" to be like this. This sequence as well as the

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<sup>204</sup>Lena: (...) und dann hab' ich über jemanden erfahren, dass die so eine [Angestellte] suchen, und dann hab' ich gedacht: "Ach, das ist ja jetzt egal, wo ich jetzt nichts mache oder wo ich abhängе!" und bin halt dann deshalb her.

<sup>205</sup>Lena: (...) Also ich glaub', eben mein Leben ist völlig, das ist meistens eher ungeplant gewesen, die meisten Dinge, das ist immer so "Ach, schau' 'mer mal, gehen 'mer mal her..." - also, ich hatte nie so das Gefühl als Kind, ich möchte unbedingt mal, ehm, mal nach Finnland, mal sehen, wie's so ist, im Land meiner Mutter zu leben. Weil es gibt ja so viele, die sagen, sie machen das ganz bewusst, das ist bei mir eigentlich alles eher Zufall gewesen.

<sup>206</sup>Lena: (...) Und das ist jetzt aber zufällig in Helsinki und ich glaub' aber, dass es nicht zufällig in Helsinki ist, sondern es ist schon ganz bewusst hier.

others above serve as examples of the characteristics of a transnational life as Alejandro Portes and Josh DeWind defined it, namely a "ceaseless back-and-forth movement, enabling migrants to sustain a presence in two societies and cultures and to exploit the economic and political opportunities created by such dual lives"<sup>207</sup>.

As shown above, the close relationship my interviewees already had with Finland and Germany as children, certainly had an impact on their life choices and feeling of belonging. Many of those who decided as adults to move to the respective country, experienced a clash between how they expected life would be there and how it then really turned out to be. Nevertheless, even if they realised that their centre of life, or **Heimat**, is now in Finland, none of my interviewees had decided to abandon Germany from their life completely.

For some of those who were born and raised in Germany and moved to Finland at later points in their lives, it seemed as if Germany remained as some kind of backup plan to the life in Finland. This links broadly to concepts like the *myth of return* as described by Muhammad Anwar in 1979<sup>208</sup>, and to Katharina Scherke's *identity anchor*. According to Scherke the latter serves as a reason for descendants of migrants having thoughts of "return", even if those thoughts might not even be "concrete wishes"<sup>209</sup>. However, what I saw in my interview material showed yet another nuance of such aspects of transnational life:

In several talks it became clear that even though most interviewees considered Finland to be their home, many still wanted to ensure that they maintained

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<sup>207</sup>Portes; and DeWind 2007. 9.

<sup>208</sup>Anwar, Muhammad: *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979.

<sup>209</sup>See Scherke, Katharina: "Transnationalität als Herausforderung für die soziologische Migrationsforschung." In Marinelli-König 2011. 81.



a physical connection to Germany, even though they were not planning to return there. Unlike participants in Anwar's study on Pakistanis in Britain, my interviewees did not direct their energy and focus of life towards Germany, so their ties seemed less tangible. But at the same time, they went further than Scherke's "identity anchor", as they did in fact result in practical considerations and actions, like owning real estate in both countries. That this was also for emotional reasons shows in an excerpt from the interview with Larissa:

Larissa: (...) Well, I would, yes, I could move to Germany again, but I think I would become *happier* in Finland. (...) (takes a breath) Yes, that's a gut feeling somehow. Yes, that's just a gut feeling. I mean, I grew up in Germany and I always wanted to go to Finland, and now I am in Finland, partly... Partly I wanted to return to Germany, but I was never *really serious* about it. Okay, I *could* go to Germany, but if I had to choose, I would stay in Finland. Yes. But then always with the option of being able to go to Germany from time to time, well, my father still lives in Germany and we have a house there and I would, even if my father was not alive anymore, I would want to keep the house. Or selling it and buying a small apartment in [German city X], that I somehow there — That I somehow have a, well, domicile in X. That is important to me, because I somehow feel connected to Germany or to my *Heimat*.<sup>210</sup>.

Larissa was not the only one who described it in such a way, as a connection to *Heimat*. As she came to Finland in her mid-20s, it does not come as a big surprise that she refers to Germany by using a rather emotionally charged expression such as *Heimat*. However, others with a different background feel

<sup>210</sup>Larissa: Aber, also, ich würde schon, ja, ich könnte schon nach Deutschland ziehen, aber letztendlich würde ich glaube ich *glücklicher* in Finnland werden. (...) (holt Luft) (holt Luft) Ja, das ist ein Bauchgefühl irgendwie. Ja, das ist ein Bauchgefühl. Also, ich bin in Deutschland aufgewachsen, da wollte ich immer nach Finnland und eh, jetzt, da ich in Finnland bin, teilweise... Teilweise wollte ich, aber nicht so *richtig ernsthaft*, zurück nach Deutschland. Na gut, ich *könnte* nach Deutschland, aber wenn ich wählen müsste, würde ich dann schon in Finnland bleiben. Ja. Aber immer mit der Option, dass ich mal nach Deutschland kommen kann. also, mein Vater lebt ja noch in Deutschland und wir haben da ein Haus und ich würde dann auch, also, wenn mein Vater nicht mehr leben würde, würde ich auch das Haus behalten wollen. Oder halt es verkaufen und eine kleine Wohnung in [deutsche Stadt X] kaufen, dass ich da irgendwie das — Dass ich da irgendwie in X, also, ein Domizil habe. Also, das ist mir schon wichtig, weil ich mich halt doch irgendwie mit Deutschland oder mit meiner Heimat verbunden fühle.

similar. Laura, who had most of her early socialisation in Finland, describes how she would find it sad if they were selling her father's parental home, if there was "nothing left in Germany, no connection, if all would disappear". This attitude was unlike that of her siblings, who do not care about it.<sup>211</sup>

As I tried to show with those sequences, for some of my interlocutors keeping a property in Germany to which they could easily return, sometimes served as a way to *live* an emotional connection and a feeling of belonging to both countries and cultures and to give those more tangibility. Drawing back on Lena, whose trial-and-error path to settling down in Finland I presented earlier, another nuance becomes visible:

Lena: (...) the way it is right now for me, ehm, I think, that's perfect, well, I have my life here [in Helsinki], I have work, I also have friends and certain things that I do here, but I totally enjoy it to escape on and off and to go home or somewhere else - well, to stay *only* at one place, ehm, I wouldn't like that at all. Because all my friends say I should come back to [Germany], then I say: 'And then? Then I'm there!' - well, I think, I wouldn't go to Finland just like that, but the other way round I do. Then I could always stay at my parents' place for example, so, everything is so simple! One just goes there, everything is how it used to be, but one gets the advantages from it. So, sometimes I just call people and say: 'Phew, I only have time tonight, do you have time?' and one takes the time, that's just such a luxury that one has when being as a guest at the place where one is from. That's also what my mother liked a lot when she came here [to Finland], that everything is a bit like at home, but a little bit better (both laugh), because one gets courted.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup>Laura: Na, ich merk' das eben, dass ich mir Gedanken drüber mache: was passiert dann, wenn meine Eltern nicht mehr können? Ich fände es schade, wenn das jetzt verkauft wird irgendwie und wir *nichts* mehr da in Deutschland haben, also, keinen Kontakt mehr haben oder wenn es wegfällt. Bei meinen Geschwistern ist das anders, die interessieren sich überhaupt nicht dafür.

<sup>212</sup>Lena: (...) so wie es mir jetzt geht, ehm, denke ich, ist das einfach optimal, also, ich hab hier so mein Leben, die Arbeit, hab auch Freunde und bestimmte Sachen, die ich hier mache, aber ich geniess' das total, dann mal wieder auszubrechen und wieder heimzufahren oder irgendwoanders hinzufahren - also, dass ich *nur* an einem Ort wäre, ehm, würde mir überhaupt nicht gefallen. Weil immer meine ganzen Freunde sagen, ich soll wieder zurück nach [Deutschland] kommen, dann sag' ich: 'Und dann? Dann bin ich da!' - also, dann würde ich glaub' ich nicht so einfach nach Finnland fahren, aber andersrum schon. Da könnte ich immer bei meinen Eltern wohnen zum Beispiel, also, alles so einfach! Man kommt einfach hin, ist alles wie früher, aber man kriegt so diesen Vorteil von dem. Also, ich ruf' teilweise Leute

Here, several of the aforementioned aspects become apparent: First, Lena signals an understanding that when returning to Germany for some days, she basically experiences what I previously referred to as a "holiday illusion", just that she is aware of its unreal character. In Wessendorf's study on Swiss-Italian descendants a similar phenomenon became visible, for instance when her interviewees described how much they always enjoyed visiting their relatives in Italy and that this family feeling was one of the main reasons for them moving there. Once living there, they had to realise that their relatives were stuck in their own life, thus did not have much time for them the way they did when Wessendorf's interviewees only came for a short stay.<sup>213</sup>

Coming back to Lena, she highly appreciates being able to travel back to her former home Germany (and also to other places), where she feels at home again while still keeping her current life in Finland. This links directly to the concept of transnationality, the intention of which is to give expression to migration not being necessarily tied to a loss of familiar surrounding and human relationships. Instead it acknowledges the possibility of migrants living in several societies at the same time, which would make them "rooted in several places" rather than "up-rooted"<sup>214</sup>. Coming back to the interview with Lena, her gratitude for the privileges she has due to her transcultural and transnational background becomes even more obvious in another excerpt from her interview:

Lena: Ehm, and that as a half-German-half-Finn you're in the lucky

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an und sag': 'Boah, ich hab' nur heute Abend Zeit, hast du Zeit?' und man nimmt sich die Zeit, das ist einfach so ein Luxus, den man hat, wenn man Gast da ist, wo man herkommt. Das ist auch das, was meiner Mutter dann gut gefallen hat, als sie immer hierher gekommen ist, dass alles irgendwie ein bisschen so wie zu Hause ist, aber so ein bisschen besser (beide lachen), weil man ja so hofiert wird.

<sup>213</sup>See Wessendorf 2013. 122.

<sup>214</sup>Original: "Migration nicht mehr zwangsläufig an den Verlust der vertrauten Umgebung und menschlicher Beziehungen gekoppelt. Der Begriff Transmigration will zum Ausdruck bringen, daß in heutiger Zeit viele Migranten nicht die Brücken zur Heimat abbrechen, und sich in der Fremde neu akklimatisieren, assimilieren und re-sozialisieren (...), sondern in mehreren Gesellschaften gleichzeitig, also transnational, leben. (...) Migranten wären dann nicht mehr als Entwurzelte (...), sondern als an mehreren Orten Verwurzelte zu begreifen." In Schellenberger 2011. 12 f., translated by author.

position of always being able to go there, yeah, well, I often think about people who *have* to leave their country and who won't get this sense of *Heimat* back, never again, that is, ehm, this being-cut-off from a part of yourself. And yes, that's why I think — well, we are in such a lucky position, I mean us half-German, half-Finnish.

I.: Hm, also because one can choose...

Lena: One can choose, one can seek everything, one won't be — I have never been dissed for what I am actually doing here, that is — Someone who is black, probably gets to hear this three times a day, what he is actually doing in Finland... <sup>215</sup>

In those two quotations Lena expresses her awareness of the "lucky position" she and people with similar background are in. She knows that - unlike others who lost their home and were forced to leave - she could always return to Germany or then back to Finland. She knows that her migration to Finland does not have to be final or unchangeable and that she could return to Germany if she wanted to. Lotta Weckström's Finnish-Swedish interviewees found themselves in a similar position and reflected on "visible differences and the fact that unlike the color of one's skin, a Finnish background doesn't (sic) show"<sup>216</sup>. Her interlocutors often spoke "of the image of Swedes as a homogeneous group consisting of blond and blue-eyed people"<sup>217</sup> and similar tendencies showed in my data, though mostly more hidden, for instance when Linda claimed that she looked "100 percent Finnish" or when Hannah told me that people might have commented that she was a bit "darker" than other Finns. I will reflect upon this a bit further in the chapter summary, but concerning this excerpt, Lena's words illustrate what other participants in this study also seemed to possess, namely

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<sup>215</sup>Lena: Ehm, und dass man halt als Halb-Deutscher-Halb-Finne eigentlich in der glücklichen Lage ist, ständig halt da hingehen zu können, ja, also, ich denke immer an Menschen, die ihr Land verlassen *müssen* und dieses Heimatgefühl nicht wieder bekommen, jemals, das ist, ehm, dieses Abgeschnitten-Sein von einem Teil von einem Selbst. Und ja, deshalb finde ich's — also wir sind so in einer so glücklichen Lage, also wir halb-deutsch, halb-finnisch.

I.: Hm, weil man auch wählen kann...

Lena: Man kann wählen, man kann alles aufsuchen, man wird jetzt nicht — ich bin nie blöd angeredet worden, was man eigentlich hier macht, das ist — Jemand, der schwarz ist, der muss sich das wahrscheinlich drei mal am Tag anhören, was er eigentlich in Finnland macht...

<sup>216</sup>Weckström 2011. 87.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid. 108.

a "mobile mindset".

### 4.3.3 Mobile mindset

The option of being able to just move to Germany or Finland had considerable impact on how my interviewees perceived and positioned themselves. Most of them had put their focus on those two countries. Those seemed to be the places they felt closest to, those were the countries they had most experiences with, and thus many seemed to build or at least had built their life around them. However, some of the people I talked to also expressed a more general openness that they linked directly to having been brought up with an ethnically mixed family background. This matches with findings from other studies claiming the "high mobility aspirations"<sup>218</sup> of people with a migrant family history.

Referring back to Lena, who was wondering if having been raised as what she calls "bi-country-al"<sup>219</sup> made her more open in general. When I asked her if she could imagine going back to Germany, she explained:

Lena: I can imagine everything. Well, I can also imagine going somewhere completely different. I just started (...) learning Spanish and ehm, yes, it would be great to go somewhere completely different, to adjust myself to something different, to learn a new language, everything.

I.: Do you think, it's some kind of openness that you have, because you grew up between two cultures - or with two cultures, is that somehow —

Lena: Well.

I.: — that it made you a bit more open, did it?

Lena: I sometimes ask that myself if that's it or if it is simply some

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<sup>218</sup>Juhasz; and Mey 2003. 35.

<sup>219</sup>Lena: (...) manchmal hatte ich so dieses Gefühl, ob ich, ob man so ein bissl was anderes ist. (...) Also, mir ist oft dieses Zitat von Goethe, so "Zwei Seelen wohnen ach! in meiner Brust!", weil ich wusste nicht so ganz genau, was bin ich eigentlich? Bin ich jetzt deutsch? Bin ich finnisch? Aber das weiss ich eben auch nicht, ob das damit zusammen hängt, dass ich zweisprachig - oder zweiländerisch bin, oder dass ich, dass das meine Persönlichkeitseigenschaft ist - ich weiss nicht, wie man das unterscheiden kann. Ehm, dass ich immer das Gefühl hab', ein *bisschen* was ist anders bei mir.

kind of personality trait. (...) <sup>220</sup>

At this moment, Lena continues explaining that when she was younger, she always felt a bit different, living in what she describes as at that point a still "homogeneous" Germany. Also later in the interview, when talking about behavioural patterns and character traits, Lena again wondered how much of someone's personality is due to their background and to what extent they are born with it. Even though Lena acknowledges that she might be more open, flexible or just a bit "different" than others, she consciously leaves room for interpretation about the inter-connection of this and her "bi-country-al" background.

In the section about "Articulating belonging" I referred to Hauke, who was raised highly transnationally and called himself a "world citizen". His attitude did not only show in his own self-positioning as being neither part of an "only German", "only Finnish" nor "only German-Finnish" box, but had also practical consequences for his life. Hauke studied in several countries of the world and that this was not by coincidence becomes clear when looking at his interview more into detail:

Even at the beginning when summarising his background, Hauke explains that after high school graduation, he would not have wanted to study in Finland, *because* he had stayed there for several years and "actually wanted to leave again"<sup>221</sup>. However, a certain study program was still convincing enough for

<sup>220</sup>Lena: Ich kann mir alles vorstellen. Also, ich kann auch mir vorstellen, noch mal woanders hinzugehen. Ich hab' jetzt angefangen, (...) Spanisch zu lernen und ehm, ja, wär toll, nochmal irgendwo hinzugehen, sich nochmal auf irgendwas anderes einzustellen, eine neue Sprache zu lernen, alles.

L.: Meinst du, das ist so eine Offenheit, die du hast, weil du so zwischen zwei Kulturen - oder mit zwei Kulturen aufgewachsen bist, ist das irgendwie —

Lena: Naja.

L.: — dich weng offener gemacht hat, oder?

Lena: Frag' ich mich auch manchmal, ob das was ist oder ob das einfach so eine Persönlichkeitseigenschaft ist. (...)

<sup>221</sup>Hauke: (...) Ich wollte eigentlich nicht zurück nach Finnland, weil ich '98 bis 2004 in Finnland war und wollte eigentlich wieder weg, aber — rein inhaltlich war das [Studien-] Programm in [Finnische Stadt Y] (...) dann inhaltlich doch überzeugend (...).

him to study there, but nonetheless he spent several semesters at other universities abroad and explained:

Hauke: (...) Ehm, well, I wouldn't stand it for too long in Finland, well, then I'd rather go to Spain again or something like this or South America, to have a bit more life around me again.<sup>222</sup>

For Hauke this thought was not only about Finland, but a general feeling about not being able to stay in a place for too long:

Hauke: (...) That means, if I had to imagine that, regardless in which country, doesn't matter, and may it be ever so beautiful, the country, to stay somewhere forever or even only for five years, *oah*, I would suffocate! No, well, I definitely have to move around.<sup>223</sup>

As Hauke explains, he needs a change once in a while and in view of his very mobile childhood, in which he never stayed longer than a few years at one place, it seems natural that this mobile lifestyle eventually became part of his character. This not only affects his own choice of being mobile, but goes further into the field of everyday preferences when living somewhere:

Hauke: (...) and if I am in a group of people for example, where there are only Finns, when I'm surrounded only by Finns, then it's a bit too Finnish for me, so I — when I throw a party here - I do a lot, eh, organise events in Helsinki and I like keeping that always international. And not just because I see myself as an international world citizen, but also because for me an exclusively Finnish group would be a bit too boring.<sup>224</sup>

Both of those quotes illustrate some of the features attributed to TCKs as well:

As Pollock/Van Reken explain, many TCKs develop what they call an "inner

<sup>222</sup>Hauke: (...) Ehm, also, ich würde es jetzt nicht allzu lange in Finnland aushalten, also, da geh' ich mal lieber wieder nach Spanien oder irgendwie sowas oder Südamerika, um ein bisschen mehr Leben um mich zu haben.

<sup>223</sup>Hauke: (...) Das heisst, wenn ich mir jetzt vorstellen müsste, dass ich egal in welchem Land, egal, und wenn's noch so schön wäre, das Land, irgendwo für immer oder sogar auch nur fünf Jahre sein müsste, *oah*, da würde ich ja ersticken! Nee, also, da muss ich mich schon bewegen.

<sup>224</sup>Hauke: (...) und wenn ich dann zum Beispiel in einer Gruppe von Menschen bin, wo nur Finnen sind, wenn ich nur von Finnen umgeben bin, dann ist mir das dann etwas zu finnisch, also ich — wenn ich hier eine Party veranstalte - ich mach' ziemlich viel eh, veranstalte Events in Helsinki und ich mach' das immer ganz gerne international. Und eben nicht nur deswegen, weil ich selbst mich als internationaler world citizen sehe, sondern auch, weil eine rein finnische Gruppe ich meistens etwas zu langweilig finde.

migratory instinct" or also a "rolling stone instinct", resulting in an inability to settle down, but getting "itchy feet" and a desire to move on after a while<sup>225</sup>. Furthermore, it resembles what Gabrielle Désilets described by drawing on Vertovec, saying that TCKs "feel at 'home' in cosmopolitan and 'Super-diverse' (Vertovec 2007) multicultural cities"<sup>226</sup>, which I interpret as a preference for "multicultural" social life in general.

Of all the people I talked to, Hauke was the one who had the strongest and most pronounced mobile mindset, who showed that he had reflected upon it a lot and led this mobile and transnational lifestyle consciously and deliberately. Most others still had their focus on Germany and Finland as their orientation frameworks for life. It appears to be how Knut Petzold described it, namely that it was more likely that "multiple local identifications emerge than one single cosmopolitical commitment to one overarching plane"<sup>227</sup>. Considering Hauke's background, which can be described as much more international than the background of my other interviewees, one could link his positioning as a world citizen to Deutsch's transactionalist theory (1957). Deutsch suggested that "transnational relations of national populations, such as frequent foreign travel, knowledge of foreign languages, and foreign friends have also been demonstrated to increase identification with larger regional units"<sup>228</sup>. However, Val Colic-Peisker's reflections on the correlation between mobility and the extent of a personal "community commitment" should be remembered. Colic-Peisker asks if high mobility weakens a person's sense of community commitment and instead increases individualism, but as she continues, she acknowledges that it might be too simple to state that "in intensely mobile and relatively privileged professionals local and national identifications have been replaced by professional

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<sup>225</sup>Pollock; and Van Reken 2009. 128.

<sup>226</sup>Désilets, in Benjamin; and Dervin 2015. 159.

<sup>227</sup>Petzold 2013. 96, translated by author.

<sup>228</sup>Braun; and Müller 2012. 264.



and cosmopolitan orientations".<sup>229</sup> The scope of this research is too small to draw solid conclusions on this matter, but based on the material at hand it still seems that the level of a person's mobility and mobile lifestyle might indeed have a significant effect on his/her self-consciousness as a "global citizen" or "cosmopolitanist". This may be linked to the elaborations of Gabrielle Désilets who drew on Roudometof (2005) when stating that even though there might not be a "direct correlation between heightened mobility and cosmopolitanism", still a transnational upbringing has the power to "affect(s) the isomorphism between identity and place (...) and leads to the construction of cosmopolitan identifications (forms of identifications that reach beyond the confine of single nation-states)"<sup>230</sup>.

When the posture towards having grown up with a mixed cultural background came up for discussion, almost all of my participants expressed a positive view. This corresponds to general tendencies in migration studies, where concepts like *Interkulturelle Zwischenwelten* (Gemende 2002), *the third chair* (Baudauria 2002) or Bhabha's *third space* replaced pictures of inner strifes and conflicts<sup>231</sup>. Some of them named pragmatic reasons like being able to learn languages easier than mono-lingual people<sup>232</sup> or other practical aspects of being fluent in both languages. Often those linked directly to the possibility of choosing how to present oneself, especially in countries where Germans do not have the best reputation<sup>233</sup>. Even within Finland, carrying a German name and passport could come in handy as Lutz described with an anecdote of how he was once stopped by the Finnish police for driving too fast. Lutz told me that as he had a German license plate at that point and as his name sounded

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<sup>229</sup>Colic-Peisker 2010. 79.

<sup>230</sup>Désilets, in Benjamin; and Dervin 2015. 146.

<sup>231</sup>See Ruokonen-Engler 2012. 81.

<sup>232</sup>See interview with Helga.

<sup>233</sup>See interview with Helga, Lutz.

rather German, he just pretended not to understand any Finnish and finally got away without any further consequences<sup>234</sup>.

As in the previous passage, those descriptions were interesting to hear, however, it struck me as more important to examine the emotional attitude my interviewees had concerning the way they had been brought up. Obviously, every person, regardless of their ethnic background, holds several identities and as Glick Schiller rightfully stated<sup>235</sup>, it is important to bare in mind that not only specified groups of people (in this case people with a Finnish-German family background) are heterogeneous in their views, but moreover, the frame of reference of the national populations (here German or Finnish) consists of numerous individuals who identify to a varying intensity with their nationality. However, I suggest that people who have acquired diverse cultural knowledge, were it through more extensive travel, personal contacts or through having a mixed ethnic family background, possibly tend to reflect to a greater extent about themselves, their character, what shapes them and where they feel attached to. As each person is an individual with unique experiences, it does not come as a surprise that there are variations in my interviewees' views on having grown up with both a German and a Finnish influence.

Some of them perceived their ethnic background as a reason why they are "more open than normal Finns"<sup>236</sup>, also towards other cultures - something that the

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<sup>234</sup>I.: Mmm. Ich musst' jetzt gerade daran denken: In der Situation, wenn man ehm, dann von der deutschen Polizei angehalten wird, dann wär's eigentlich die Situation, wo man sich wirklich dann als Ausländer auch geben könnte, so, aber das ist dann natürlich dein Name, der verrät's dann! (lacht)

Lutz: Also, das hab' ich dann *hier* gemacht, also, wenn sie mich hier dann erwischt haben, dann hab' ich nur Deutsch gesprochen. Das war auch sehr lustig. Da bin ich zu schnell gefahren und dann haben sie mich angehalten. Und ich hatte ein deutsches Kennzeichen damals. Und die sprachen kein Englisch und haben das dann auf Schwedisch versucht und ich hab' dann immer nur Deutsch gesprochen und Englisch. Und meine Frau sass neben mir und die konnte sich - also, die musste sich beherrschen und dann der eine wollte mich dann zur Polizeistation mitnehmen und der andere hat gesagt: "Ach, lass' ihn doch fahren! Es ist viertel vor fünf!"

<sup>235</sup>See Glick Schiller 2012. 29.

<sup>236</sup>See interview with Heli.

participants in Tuomi-Nikula's study on Finnish descendants in Germany also described about themselves<sup>237</sup>. For instance, while Laura finds it hard to name concrete advantages, she still describes having a bi-lingual and bi-cultural background as an "enrichment":

I.: But how do *you* feel about it? I mean, do you have the impression that this, this, bi-lingual and bi-cultural, eh, cultural background of yours, that it — well, how do you feel about it? Did it bring any benefits with it or, ehm, change you?

Laura: I do think that it is an enrichment, of course. And that's why it was also important for me that the children experience this as well or obtain it right from home. Ehm, what kind of profits that would have brought, I wouldn't know. Simply mentally. (laughs)<sup>238</sup>

After I finished recording the interview with another person, Henning, he referred to the slogan used by the German TV channel *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen*<sup>239</sup>: "Mit dem Zweiten sieht man besser!", meaning "You see better through the second!". Henning described how, thanks to his family background, he is able to see both the advantages as well as the disadvantages of both Germany and Finland, pointing out that he possesses two different perspectives - something he highly appreciates. This is reminiscent of what Ruokonen-Engler described with reference to Finnish female migrants living in Germany, as a resolving of the borders between "Heimat und Fremde", between home and outland, in which migrants are able to have a "privileged sight" and a "unique two-sided perspective on inside and outside"<sup>240</sup>. Tschernokoshewa called the same phenomenon a "stereoview", describing migrants developing multiple perspectives, learning languages and behaviour patterns and "participating in dif-

<sup>237</sup>See Tuomi-Nikula 2013. 116.

<sup>238</sup>I.: Aber wie empfindest *du* das? Ich meine, hast du das Gefühl, dass diese, diese, zweisprachige und zweikulturelle, eh, kultureller Hintergrund von dir, dass es — also, wie empfindest du den? Hat der dir Vorteile verschafft oder, ehm dich verändert?

Laura: Ich finde schon, dass es 'ne Bereicherung ist, natürlich. Und deswegen war das auch für mich wichtig, dass die Kinder auch das miterleben oder mitkriegen von Haus aus. Ehm, was für Nutzen das jetzt gebracht hat, wüsste ich nicht. Einfach so geistlich. (lacht)

<sup>239</sup>"Second German Television", state-owned TV-channel.

<sup>240</sup>Ruokonen-Engler 2012. 81.

ferent realities"<sup>241</sup>. Even though certainly there is not *one* perspective of migrants or migrant's descendants, and even though those tendencies will differ from each other, yet both groups claim to share a more multifaceted view on the respective countries than "natives" possibly do.

Heiko expressed something similar as Henning. After reflecting on pictures of Finns, Finland-Swedes and Germans, he concludes:

Heiko: In this sense, I mean, it is nice to see the different cultures and you don't belong to any of them 100 per cent, but you can choose it. Would you prefer this or that and so, and I think that is — that is nice.<sup>242</sup>

Depicting one's own position in relation to (not-)belonging to German or Finnish culture was done in several ways, as shown earlier by presenting Hauke's<sup>243</sup> and Helena's<sup>244</sup> view. Here, Heiko describes a viewpoint comparable to Hauke's, stating that he was not absolutely Finnish or Finland-Swedish, but also not absolutely German and thus is finding himself in the "nice" situation of being able to choose which one he prefers to be.

The possibility of choosing who you want to be, how you want to present yourself and thus how you want to be seen by others was something that other interviewees also referred to. In the sequence of the interview with Lena presented earlier, she reflected on her "lucky position" of being able to go and live in Finland and in Germany, without it having to be irreversible. She expressed gratitude at being able to keep her German **Heimat**, though living in her other home Finland, and always having the option to return there. Once more, this supports

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<sup>241</sup>Tschernokoshewa 2005. 20.

<sup>242</sup>Heiko: So gesehen, ich mein', es ist schön, die verschiedenen Kulturen zu sehen und du gehörst eigentlich hundertprozentig zu keiner Kultur, sondern du kannst dir dann aussuchen. Möchtest du das oder das und so, und das finde ich schon — das ist schön.

<sup>243</sup>Hauke claimed not to fit into to an only-Finnish, not to an only-German, but yet also not to an only-Finnish-German box, while still being as Finnish as other Finns and as German as me.

<sup>244</sup>Helena described herself as being German as well as Finnish, but none of them exclusively.

Østergaard-Nielsen's suggestion to regard migration as something other than a simple one-way-street, but still it would go further than a "two-way-journey"<sup>245</sup>. Moreover, Lena raises the subject of being in a privileged position as unlike it is the case for people with a darker skin colour, no one can spot her un-Finnish part at first sight. She - and also my other interviewees - are in a similar position than what Pollock and Van Reken call "total chameleon(s)" when referring to TCKs who are visually not different from the host society and thus form a "hidden diversity"<sup>246</sup>.

Most interestingly, Lennard has a different view on this matter. He also appreciates his family background, however, it is exactly the idea of being different from the other Finns in Finland that he likes most. When I talked to him about his social life and mentioned that there seem to be Germans who like staying amongst other Germans and then some who consciously avoid them, he admitted:

Lennard: Okay, since it's anonymous: I do have a little bit, such a slight feeling that I like being different. Well, I like being a Finn and then having this German status and then myself joking about Germans - I like being different. Maybe that's why among other Germans, especially at those gatherings, I might not feel that —  
I.: Not that special.  
Lennard: Yes, precisely. (...) <sup>247</sup>

In contrast to Lena, who appreciates being able to blend in both into German and Finnish society, Lennard consciously decides to stick out from the Finnish reference group by stressing his personal Germanness and playing with it. Stefan Wolff wrote that the "desire for meaning, which cannot be satisfied without

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<sup>245</sup>Østergaard-Nielsen 2003. 13.

<sup>246</sup>Pollock; and Van Reken 2009. 102.

<sup>247</sup>Lennard: Also, weil's anonym ist: ein bisschen, so ein kleines Gefühl hab' ich, dass es mir gefällt, anders zu sein. Also, mir gefällt es, ein Finne zu sein und dann diesen deutschen Status zu haben und dann eben selbst auch sehr gerne Witze über Deutsche - gefällt mir, anders zu sein. Vielleicht fühl' ich mich dann unter Deutschen, gerade an dem Stammtisch, vielleicht dann nicht mehr so —  
I.: Nicht so besonders.  
Lennard: Ja, genau. (...)

a secure and accepted position in a familiar cultural environment, is an elementary human need"<sup>248</sup>. For Lennard, this means that he gains a personal meaning by taking a position that only he can fill, being "the familiar one", a "person who can stress familiarity if needed but who is also perceived as different"<sup>249</sup>. As Lennard explained at another point of the interview, in Finland he is "more of a German" than he was a Finn in Germany and refers to situations in his work life when colleagues joke about his Germanness. Here again he adds that he likes to join those jokes, which strengthens the statement from above that he actually enjoys being perceived as different from the others - even though apparently he would not admit this aloud.<sup>250</sup> Viktorika Čeginskas noticed the same attitude in some of the participants of her study, who reacted with "different strategies" to the confrontation "with labels of otherness and difference". While for some these (self-)categorisations enabled them to "produce feelings of connection with multiple identity markers (...)", others consciously maintain "a certain amount of otherness".<sup>251</sup> Also in Wessendorf's study on Swiss-Italian descendants she described some interviewees who used their Italianness like a "trademark"<sup>252</sup>. Unlike Pollock's and Van Reken's idea of an "anti-identity" with which some TCKs stress their differentness, leaving them lonely and cut off from others at times, the aforementioned descriptions as well as the remarks of Lennard picture rather a maintenance of a "positive otherness".

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<sup>248</sup>Wolff 2000. 3.

<sup>249</sup>Čeginskas 2015. 99

<sup>250</sup>I.: Hm, ja. Aber gibt es so bestimmte Sachen an dir selbst, die du auch, wo du merkst: "OK, da bin ich Deutscher!", also vom Verhalten, vom Denken, oder vom...

Lennard: Also definitiv in den sozialen Sachen und — ich glaub', da muss ich fast ein bisschen drüber nachdenken. (überlegt) Ich bin hier mehr der Deutsche, als was ich in Deutschland der Finne war. Und ich, eh, das gefällt mir auch. In der Arbeit, Kumpel machen Witze über mich, oder über Deutschland - also, im positiven Sinne und ich mach' da auch immer ganz gerne mit. Aber dass ich jetzt wirklich so von Grund aus anders geschaltet wäre, würde ich nicht unterschreiben.

<sup>251</sup>Čeginskas 2015. 110.

<sup>252</sup>Wessendorf 2013. 51.

## 4.4 Summarising reflections

Just as in the analysis of the interviews with the first generation of German migrants, it also showed in the talks I had with the descendant generation that language was one of the means to define one's sense of belonging. Moreover, for the descendants the birth of their first child often turned out to be a changing point that could lead to a conscious decision to pass the German language onto them - which in many cases could also be closely linked to their own positioning. Of those interviewees who were themselves raised with the two languages, German and Finnish, some described having spoken a simultaneous mix of those languages, like a secret language hard to understand for outsiders - and one could insinuate that this could serve as a metaphor for the belonging of migrants' descendants. However, language could also have a negative effect on belonging, namely when it was (is) related to exclusion of those who were (are) not equally fluent in both languages. Even if they regarded themselves as German and/or Finnish, due to the lack of fluency in the respective language they might not have been seen as such by others, causing bad feelings and consequences for someone's self-concept. This was not the only moment in which the perception by others proved to be determining for the self-image and feeling of belonging of my interviewees.

In the process of positioning, language was not the only means; other aspects were also involved which could be of a tangible, but also a more abstract, nature. While some my interviewees of the descendant generation referred to habits, customs, traditions or then concrete objects like passports or real estates, others described their own attitudes, behaviour or ways of thinking in order to get hold of their own position within German- and Finnishness. My interviewees used different strategies and approaches of positioning themselves, yet they were not absolute about those. Instead, they often described an as-well-as-position of

being German *and* Finnish that could moreover be subject to and shift with time, place and (social) surrounding. This as-well-as showed in various ways and made me wonder about its possibly hybrid nature. The extent to which the term *hybridity* is applicable depends on its definition: certainly most of my interviewees did not present an undefinable cultural blend, but instead an awareness of the various ingredients of "their cultural mix".

In all their descriptions, my interviewees showed that they had chosen not to choose, but rather pictured conscious, active and deliberate choices in how to lead their lives and in belonging to both German, Finnish but also German-Finnish self-identifications. However, such choices for sure can not be seen as detached from outer influences:

Once put into context with other migration-related studies, it becomes apparent that precisely the circumstance of German and Finnish culture (respectively what people take as such) not being too far away from each other, actually enabled the aforementioned freedom of choice. Some interviewees, like Lena, reflected consciously about her "lucky position" of being able to go back and forth, of living in Finland without "being dissed", which she directly links to being as white as the majority population. Even though the ideas behind a German or Finnish cultural concept may be further away than for instance the Finnish and Swedish in Weckström's study, their differences are apparently not regarded as severe enough to cause issues, thus it might be seen as a positive otherness which precisely allows my interviewees to embrace both of their backgrounds as for them it does not carry much risk of negative consequences with it.

Moreover, the fact that descendants of migrants, in this case of German-Finnish background, were confronted with a great amount of mobility throughout their lives, had considerable impact on their own decisions, paths and positioning.



As all of the people involved in this study were raised with the influence of two or even more cultural frameworks, ideas about themselves and about where they see their centre of life were formed in ways that are possibly different from people without such mixed family background. This goes in line with what Peggy Levitt suggested when she drew on Abelman and wrote that "(w)hether individuals ultimately forge or maintain some kind of cross-border connection largely depends on the extent to which they are brought up in transnational spaces"<sup>253</sup>. Even though the scale of my study might be too small to draw reliable conclusions on this matter, it did seem as if my interviewees' feeling of belonging and the resulting consequences were indeed affected by the transcultural ways in which they were brought up.

Their relationship to the countries involved were intense, and, I argue, more emotional than if they had only been there for a few weeks of school vacation. Often this resulted in idealistic pictures of the "other country" and the wish to move there when grown up, followed by disillusionment once they did. Others used the strategy of moving back and forth between the two countries, trying to find their place in life. While this is nothing uncommon for many people, for the descendants of migrants, the starting point is of a different nature: expectations and strong emotions are involved, which stem from having grown up with both cultures and the knowledge that "this" is where part of the family comes from. Moreover, having such a background also brings practical opportunities with it, like being able to draw on a family network in the other place or owning real estate to which one could return to, which both function as firming up of the otherwise rather emotional ties to a place. While most participants in the study had put their focus on Germany and Finland, some expressed openness in general, towards others, but also towards moving to new, unknown places.

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<sup>253</sup>Levitt, Peggy: "Roots and Routes: Understanding the Lives of the Second Generation Transnationally." In *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 7 (August 2009). 1228

This is linked to what I call a mobile mindset, a concept meant to describe the effects mobility can have on the mentality and personality of a person.

The excerpts drawn upon illustrate how the multifaceted paths of descendants of migrants can be. It is not enough to think of them in terms of "second generation migrants" living at the place where their parents once moved to, nor is it enough to see them as "return migrants" if they decide to go to the country their parents came from. Reality is much more complex, the emotions and thoughts involved in decision-making and life-strategies are much more complex. It is necessary to consider the versatile variations in the life course of mobile people in order to promote an acceptance and understanding of what people might perceive as "habitually and culturally different"<sup>254</sup>.

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<sup>254</sup>Berchem 2011. 613, translated by author.

## Chapter 5

# Dismantling boundaries

In this thesis many aspects have been discussed, shedding light on lives of Germans and their descendants living in contemporary Helsinki, the capital city of Finland. The aim of the research project was to find out more about their feeling of belonging, self-positioning and reflections on themselves. In this context I explored the aspects and strategies that were involved in such processes and what consequences could result from having this specific background.

The material for the research was based on 32 semi-structured interviews, out of which nine were held with "first generation" Germans who came to Finland in the more recent past. The remaining 23 interviewees were children and grandchildren of German, German-Finnish or even Finnish couples, who grew up with the influence of both German and Finnish culture.

To put the analysis into a nutshell, I will first go through the research questions stated in the introduction and answer them based on the findings of my empirical data as presented in the previous chapters. Thereafter I will draw final conclusions, linking the points that were addressed previously to broader ideas, questions and reflections.

**Research question 1: Drawing and deconstructing boundaries**

The first sub-question concerns the participants' definitions of "German- and Finnishness", where they draw or even deconstruct boundaries between such categories, and moreover where they position themselves regarding those concepts.

When being asked what they considered to be the "German" aspects in their lives, in most cases the first themes that were addressed pointed towards rather tangible matters. Here, talks often turned on food, for instance certain eating habits, which some interviewees making it sound as if those were German concepts by themselves. Moreover, participants also named specific dishes they regarded to be German aspects in their lives. Others referred to holiday-related food, mostly connected with Christmas. This reminds of what Hanna Snellman called "heritage food"<sup>1</sup> that can be seen as a direct link to someone's identity.

Holiday traditions were another field my interviewees made recourse to in order to detect German- and/or Finnishness in their lives. Here, mostly three annual holidays were of central importance, namely Easter, St. Martin's Day and the sixth of December. Even though most interviewees clearly labelled some activities on those days as traditions stemming from the German part of their families, respectively as a tradition their family kept on doing in Finland, others expressed doubts about the origin of this tradition. However, it is hard to tell what holiday traditions are of Finnish or respectively of German origin, as there has always been influence from "outside" and in fact some of the traditions my interviewees described as part of their German family heritage may also be celebrated in certain parts of Finland by people without a German background. Nonetheless, what is of greater importance than facts about the origin of certain

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<sup>1</sup>Snellman 2016. 158.

traditions, is that the people I talked with described those aspects as part of *their* German-, respectively Finnishness, as something that connected *them* to their family history.

Most significant in the descriptions of ways of how to spend certain holidays was certainly the sixth of December. On this day two completely different concepts collide, but as my interviewees explained, this did not cause any issues for them. While in Finland the sixth of December is the biggest national holiday, the Finnish Independence Day, in Germany it is the day to remember St. Nicholas in whose celebration completely distinct activities are involved. However, it turned out that for my interviewees it was *not* an "either-or" decision. Instead, they explained that they simply chose to celebrate both, they *chose not to choose* and also on a more general basis they rather included aspects of different backgrounds in their lives.

The interviews I had with the participants of the study did not only remain on such corporeal levels, but went further into abstract spheres of interior qualities like character traits, or then behaviour they classified as "typically" German or Finnish. Unlike the interviewees of the first generation of German migrants, who expressed more elaborate pictures of how they thought Germans, and respectively Finns, tend to behave, those of the descendant generation chose other strategies to approach these aspects. Quite often they presented stereotypes of Finns and/or Germans, and seemed to be sometimes more, sometimes less conscious about the questionable nature of such stereotypes. When presenting ideas of how Germans or Finns "are" or "act", many interviewees either positioned themselves as one of them, or then used such references to distance themselves from those categories. In doing so, my interviewees occasionally did not only relate to general ideas of "the generic German/Finn", but instead colated themselves with how they see their German parent(s). Having others as

a reference point could also come in yet another shape, namely by drawing on how friends and acquaintances without a German-Finnish background see them. In this context, part of my interviewees simply told me about such "external assessments" without much reflection on it, and I cautiously interpret this to be a sign of having no explicit objection to them. However, some interviewees once again used statements by others about their person in order to distance themselves from those ascriptions, so to tell me the ways they consider themselves *not* to be particularly German, or respectively Finnish.

Moreover, it became apparent in the interviews that such views on German- or Finnishness could also change under certain circumstances, especially with time, place and social surrounding. As some interviewees told me, once they were more intensely in touch with the "other" country<sup>2</sup>, for instance through longer stays, especially outside a holiday context, their perspective on certain matters, and furthermore on themselves, could change drastically: Aspects of German or Finnish life they previously evaluated in a positive way could turn more negative, and vice versa. Besides this, some interviewees even described how they developed ambivalent viewpoints on certain things, so that concerning one and the same aspect, such as character traits and behavioural patterns, they could see simultaneously positive and negative sides of it.

Participants in the study often took such impressions of life in Germany or Finland and of behaviour they regarded as particularly German or respectively Finnish, in order to construct boundaries between the two categories, to define what they considered to be the essence of German- and Finnishness. Yet, there were participants of the study who expressed doubts about the accuracy of such definitions. For instance, in direct contact with Germans *in Germany*, German-Finnish interviewees could realise that what they had taken

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<sup>2</sup>With this I refer to the country in which they did not grow up, but only knew from occasional visits, so with whose customs and people they might not have been as familiar as they were with the place they spend most of their previous lives.

to be "typical" German behaviour was in fact not what "all Germans do". As some interviewees explained, they then realised that it was not about culture as a whole, distinct and absolute concept, but also family culture, education and socialisation. Thus, for some participants a critical reflection on cultural determination started with having contacts to certain groups of people.

In my interview material, such attempts to deconstruct rigid ideas of boundaries between categories like German- and Finnishness were not always expressed obviously, but instead most interviewees did in fact draw on what they considered to be German or Finnish cultural markers. However, this does not mean that they necessarily took clear positions within such frameworks, that is by describing themselves as *either* German *or* Finnish. Instead, many identified themselves as being *as-well-as*, so German as well as Finnish. In my interviews this as-well-as was sometimes pictured as a simultaneous condition, in which one feels both at the same time, and at other times as if the feeling of belonging depended on the specific context.

Expressions of such as-well-as-positions came in different ways. While some literally described themselves as "100 per cent" German respectively Finnish, depending on the context, others explained that when in Germany, they might not feel absolutely German and at the same time in Finland they might not feel absolutely Finnish. Often it was in direct contact with German or Finns that my interviewees realised certain parts within themselves which they felt would differ from the norms of the respective groups. Once confronted with what they perceived as a gap between the two cultures, for instance with what they were taking to be typical German or Finnish behaviour, they felt less German or less Finnish. In this context, few reflected critically on whether this differentness they thought to feel within themselves originated from their "mixed" cultural

background or if it was just a matter of their personality as such.

However, this "as-well-as" can in some cases be reinterpreted as a "neither-nor", since some interviewees made it sound like being "always a bit different" or then neither "only German", "only Finnish", nor "only German-Finnish". The latter was expressed by an interviewee who experienced an exceptionally high level of mobility throughout his life that took him to various countries, other than Finland and Germany. His intense contact to multiple cultural frameworks serves as an explanation of why he developed his flexible self-definition and refusal to put himself into exclusively German-Finnish boxes.

My interviewees' positioning in an as-well-as or respectively neither-nor manner are reminiscent of Gabrielle Désilets' reflections on TCKs' identities as being "diffused in space" rather than "placed". As a consequence, state-borders may in fact not lose their importance, but gain a different role, so that "identifications take place beyond instead of across numerous nation-states"<sup>3</sup>. When applied to my study, this serves as an explanation of why my interviewees did indeed draw on boundaries between what they regarded as German and Finnish culture on the one hand, but on the other hand, they also expressed eclectic perspectives on those and did not take those boundaries as absolute and rigid.

Furthermore, many interviewees explicitly elaborated on having an active choice - not only when it comes to cultural manifestations such as holiday traditions, but also concerning how they wanted to present themselves, how they wanted to be seen and what aspects of German- or Finnishness they wanted to incorporate into their lives. While some expressed appreciation of not belonging completely to either of those two categories and being able to choose who they want to be, others went so far as to state that they consciously maintained their differentness, since feeling "special" filled them with joy.

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<sup>3</sup>Désilets, in Benjamin; and Dervin 2015. 151, 158.



It showed that most of my interviewees detected aspects in their lives and also within themselves that they clearly linked to their German, or their respectively Finnish background, thus in a way they maintained some boundaries between such cultural frameworks. However, this did not mean that they kept them strictly separated from each other, but rather chose from both sides. In the next part I will discuss the mechanisms involved in developing a certain feeling of belonging.

### **Research question 2: The process of self-identification**

In the interview material that this study is built upon, several big themes were described that evidently had a major influence on my interviewees' process of self-identification. Looking at the first generation of German migrants, who in part were direct parents of some descendant interviewees, it showed that while they expressed discomfort regarding a strong "German identity", they still wanted to make sure that their children would "inherit" some Germanness. This reluctance is likely to be connected to what I consider to be a widely spread attitude in Germany. Even though this might well depend on the social background of a person and might have also changed in the light of the "European refugee crisis" that started in 2015, however, for many Germans it seems unthinkable to possess or express a distinct German national identity referable to Germany's guilt in the Second World War.

For the interviewees of the first generation of German migrants, this German-ness turned mostly on passing on "innocuous" aspects like the German language, but also holiday traditions and certain manners. For the sake of this, all of those who had children, decided to speak German with them, though not all actually sent their children to the German School of Helsinki. Reasons for deciding against it were for instance personal issues with school policies or then simply

related to practical issues such as the physical distance from home. Some interviewees explained that they chose to send their children to the German School particularly because they knew that students there would not be taught exclusively in German, but that both, German and Finnish language and culture, would be included in the education. Making sure that their children would also get to know other aspects of German culture (that is, features other than language) was a concern of most, though not all, participants from the first generation. Some, especially those who expressed a distinct aversion to German self-identification, seemed almost eager to picture their family life to be Finnish rather than German, and claimed that they spent significant annual holidays in a Finnish, and not a German way, and even if they did, they described it as if it never has had a deeper meaning for them.

The participants of the first generation might not have been aware of it, but as the interviews with the descendant generation showed, their way of life had a major impact on the way their children negotiated their feeling of belonging. Admittedly, I did interviews with only two pairs of father and son, in which such matters were directly traceable. However, they also showed in the individual statements of all the descendants involved in this study. The sum of those reflections therefore form the basis for the following deliberations.

When discussing their self-positioning between or within German-Finnish categories and their personal feeling of belonging, one of the major themes addressed related to language - just as it appeared in the interviews with the first generation of German migrants. Furthermore, the descendant generation did indeed relate to the same aspects that were of importance for the parent generation, for example the different holiday traditions, and mostly referred to those aspects as well, once they had their own children and had to decide on what to pass to them. This often included central aspects in life, things that are commonly

connected with "culture", for instance food, traditions, habits and having a certain mentality, as described by Wessendorf<sup>4</sup>.

Most interestingly, their outer appearance was hardly ever addressed by my participants. This forms a sharp contrast to findings of other studies, which often deal with minority groups with a more visible foreign background. In such studies, participants tend to describe their incomprehension and bewilderment when being repeatedly confronted with the clash of how people see them and their own feeling of belonging. If this topic came up in our talks, my interviewees reflected on how they tend to blend in, both optically and socially. This made some reflect on how their freedom of self-positioning was related to perceived ethnic hierarchies, and some went so far as to compare their situation to the situation of people of different skin-colour. This group were continuously asked what they were doing in Finland, while the interviewees' own presence was pictured as remaining un-questioned by the Finnish majority. It showed that for my some of my interviewees the fact that they looked what some of them described as "100 per cent Finnish" sometimes caused issues of a different kind, namely when they were (at first sight) perceived as Finnish and in fact felt Finnish, but then for instance could not express themselves in Finnish, which felt to them as if it undermined their own self-identification.

Besides those aspects, something else turned out to be highly influential for my interviewees' self-identification, which was the fact that they had led a quite mobile life as children and mostly continued doing so as adults. As the interviews showed, the crucial role of mobility in the lives of my interviewees proved to be a factor that shaped their feeling of belonging, positioning and also life strategies to a great extent. Going to the other country, that is, the one where they did not live permanently, several times or even on a regular, often annual,

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<sup>4</sup>Namely as a mean to differentiate in order "to describe the differences in ways of thinking and behaviour, cultural values and practices between themselves and people of other origins.", see: Wessendorf 2013. 62.

basis was part of every interviewee's childhood memories. Those stays enabled establishing close emotional ties to both countries and as I argue, those ties are of a different kind than might be the case for people on holiday without having such family connections to draw on. Yet, those stays, which often took place during the summer vacation, could lead some interviewees to developing an idealistic, illusionary picture of life there. Many interviewees depicted vivid and overall positive memories of everyone taking time for them, being allowed to do things they were usually not allowed to do, and in general everything happening in an always relaxed holiday context. Having this idealistic picture in mind, it does not come as a surprise that some interviewees decided to move to the other country once they were grown up - followed by a clash and a disillusionment with reality. Once living there, many realised that everyday life was quite different than holiday life, and as mentioned earlier, the contact with other Germans or Finns in the respective country also made some of the participants of the descendant generation renegotiate their positions within German and Finnish frameworks. The act of moving to the other country is already pointing towards the third sub-question of my research, dealing with the personal consequences that could evolve from a person's self-positioning and feeling of belonging.

### **Research question 3: Personal consequences from a feeling of belonging**

As briefly outlined above, some of my interviewees told me of how they took advantage of the freedom of being able to just move to the other country for a while to find "their" place in the world, so to see if that is where they want to live and settle down for a while. For some, this was closely linked to a quest for self-discovery and a way of accepting their "other side". Here, some took advantage of being able to draw on family networks in the other country, for

instance when hearing of job offers through relatives. Even if the benefits of having a German-Finnish background were not as direct, in any case many of the participants were in the fortunate situation of having inherited other "tools" such as language proficiency or dual citizenship. Those provided a different starting point and made moving to the other country less risky and much easier than what might be the case for others without such background.

Some of the participants in my study even moved back and forth several times between Germany and Finland as for them the search for the place they wanted to stay and the search for their direction in life was not as easy as it seemingly was for others. Such life strategy can certainly be considered to be in part enabled by having a bi-cultural background, especially if one can rely on family networks. Some interviewees of the descendant generation reflected on precisely the luck of having "two **Heimats**", two homes, where they could always go without losing the other.

A way of keeping those two **Heimats** was by maintaining or even buying real estates in the other country, in the constellations in question in Germany. Even if the physical family bonds might not have been there any more or then regarding similar scenarios in future, some interviewees consciously decided to keep the houses or flats where the German part of their families came from. Others even bought own properties in Germany, just to enable going there spontaneously and frequently. None of those interviewees who owned or could inherit property in Germany, was actually planning on moving there, however, they explained that they wanted to keep the door open to do so. In other sequences of the interviews it showed that those apartments or houses were more than just plain objects: they did not only facilitate going to Germany, but in addition they also carried a high emotional value and could be seen as a manifestation of emotional ties to Germany, or of certain places there.

I argue that those life strategies are linked to what I describe as a *mobile mindset*, a state of mind that showed out in different variations in the interviews with the descendant generation. As I outlined earlier, in many of their depictions a certain flexibility became visible, an unwillingness to settle down with the intention of living there until the end of their days and instead an openness towards staying on the move. This "staying on the move" might not even have to be limited to Germany and Finland, but for some interviewees could also mean taking into consideration or even moving for real to yet another place, where they have never been before.

My understanding of a mobile mindset goes further than solely an openness towards physical mobility, into the sphere of an overall openness of mind: towards other people, in general and also in particular towards people with different ethnic backgrounds. Even though this reminds one of the idea of cosmopolitanism as an "openness towards diversity"<sup>5</sup>, none of my interviewees actually referred to themselves in such terms. However, they did describe being able to handle other cultural concepts more easily, explicitly due to their own "stereoview" as it made them "more open" than others.

This openness was one of the aspects my interviewees appreciated about themselves and about having grown up with the influence of different cultural frameworks. The third and final characteristic of the mobile mindset I found in my interview material was being aware of their particular situation and holding dear the benefits they connected with it. Several interviewees expressed appreciation of the opportunities they have due to their family background. They referred for instance to convenient skills such as learning languages easily, but also to other significant privileges they have. Many seemed to be aware of being in the position to move freely and without much risk, and some put their fortunate

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<sup>5</sup>Désilet, in Benjamin; and Dervin 2015. 146.

situation straight when pointing out how much this differed from the experiences of people of other ethnic background. As one interviewee put it, she can move around without losing her home(s), while others knew that they could never return to where they came from. Being aware of their fortunate situation may serve as an explanation for having developed the mobile mindset I found in the interviews. Indeed, the situation of descendants of Germans in Finland is a rather specific one, which gives rise to certain questions that I will reflect upon in the following, concluding part.

### **Conclusion: Why should we care?**

The face of the world has changed significantly in the past decades and centuries: People, who have always been moving to a certain extent, now do so over growing distances: they cross oceans, pass borders and settle down in a new place. Even though this increase in mobility is not accessible to all the world's population, the overall scale of it has expanded and changed significantly, especially throughout the past century. For more and more people migrating is not a definite concept any more, instead they are aware of having the option to move back or just further, so their moving is not as permanent as it might have been 200 years ago. Moreover, migration no longer means to leaving beloved ones behind and most likely never seeing them again. Instead, the technical revolution enables us to lead lives at a distant place and yet to stay in touch with the "old home": may it be by chatting via Whatsapp, following pictures on Facebook or by having calls on camera via Skype.

As a result of this change in mobility, an increasing number of people call several places their home, whose self-perception includes different concepts of culture, ethnicity, and ways of belonging. They are not uprooted, an expression that pictures rather painful and dangerous conditions of plant-like humans whose

destiny, once they are removed from their natural habitat and put somewhere else, remains uncertain. Instead, studies like mine show that for mobile people it is possible to live and be "rooted" in several places at the same time, or as Lotta Weckström put it, their roots could be also compared to the roots of water lilies that can in fact be put into other waters without causing too much danger to the plant<sup>6</sup>. Supporting a more positive viewpoint on descendants of migrants, away from ideas of being torn between countries and cultures by showing how people manage to embrace different cultural frameworks and belongings, is one of the efforts I hope this study has succeeded in.

Having other migration-related research in mind, it became clear why "belonging" had to turn out playing such a central role in my analysis. Unlike people who migrate for economic, educational or humanitarian reasons (even though in those cases other aspects could be involved in the decision to migrate), the descendants of German migrants had other motives for moving. For many of them it was about seeing where they come from, getting to know the country of their family and maintaining emotional ties to both Finland and Germany. Therefore, their decisions to move have to be seen in the light of negotiating their personal feeling of belonging. This feeling of belonging could shift and change many times in someone's life, and turned out to be of complex nature. Therefore I describe it as a *vague feeling of belonging* whose shape could depend on various factors, as described earlier.

Considering this, the analysis of the interviews of this study portrays people and human life itself as a process, which is not fixed, and does not stagnate at a certain point. Instead, they are ever-changing, and so is a person's self-identification, belonging and the way they connect to others, places, attitudes or concepts about their background. We do not live in a world in which a person has to be "either-or", in which one can belong only to one group. Instead, one

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<sup>6</sup>See Weckström 2011. 137.



can be as-well-as, even neither-nor, which gives reason to question widespread ideas behind national identities with all the implications, problematisations and consequences that often come with them. A bit further below I will reflect more on this, but first something else needs to be pointed out:

Even if this and other studies showed that a person's feeling of belonging does not have to be absolute and exclusive, it still has to be emphasised that this "freedom of choice", may it be connected to active "heritage maintenance" or identification processes, is not as free as it may first seem. Studies, which focused on marginalised migrant groups, showed how discrimination had a rather major influence on how someone handles their self-identification. In contrast to this, in most of the interviews in my research such aspects were not mentioned. Few experienced rejection or harassment due to their German background, which is why I suggest that my interviewees' "choice not to choose" was possible *precisely* because their "differentness" was not perceived as major enough to be seen as problematic. As one interviewee explained, he even enjoyed Finns in Finland perceiving him as a bit different, and consciously played with German stereotypes when being with them. I claim that a position like this is only possible for people of very selected ethnic backgrounds, namely those which for various reasons are not regarded as too different or otherwise problematic by the majority. Here, many might want to argue that it is about skin colour and possibly also religion. However, I suggest that while this might be generally true in many cases, the aspects that can be involved may go even further.

First of all, the historic conditions of the inter-relations between the respective countries play a significant role in this. Taking someone living in Finland who has a Russian or Estonian background as an example, I suggest that their experiences and ways of positioning would likely be yet of very different nature than of someone with a German background. Their presence is linked to more recent

historical events, so the way they are perceived by the majority population is coined by stronger bias and negative prejudices than it is the case for German descendants *in Finland*. The latter needs to be stressed, since - as the chapter on the history of Germans in Finland showed - apart from the occurrences of the Lapland War in 1945, the connections between Finland and German-speaking areas were coined by overall positive things. Unlike the case in other European countries, the Germans who came into Finnish territories did not threaten or suppress the local population - at most, German merchants were perceived as competition. What linked those two areas instead was rather an exchange of goods, labour and thoughts, that continued over centuries. I argue that this set the basis of a unique relationship, shaped by a largely mutual respect and appreciation - which in turn enables precisely the aforementioned "freedom of choice" descendants of Germans in Finland seem to have.

Second, I suggest that the constitution of the status of a certain group of foreigners in a country may also depend on the extent to which the local population feels familiar with them. In one of his recent publications, Zygmunt Bauman illustrates the various aspects involved in people being afraid of the Other<sup>7</sup>. According to him, for a long time humans were surrounded mostly by people they knew, which shaped our mindset until this day<sup>8</sup>. For this reason, being confronted by someone unknown can evoke fear inside us. As Bauman explains, "(s)trangers tend to create anxiety precisely because of being 'strange' - and so, fearsomely unpredictable, unlike the people with whom we interact daily and from whom we believe we know what to expect"<sup>9</sup>. Connecting this statement with the study at hand, one suggestion would be that Finns tend to be relatively familiar with what they regard as German culture. Many of them might have had German classes at high school, travelled to Germany, might listen to

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<sup>7</sup>Bauman, Zygmunt: *Strangers at Our Door*, Cambridge: Polity, 2016.

<sup>8</sup>See Ibid. 71.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. 8.

German bands or watch German TV series. Besides the common idea of both Germany and Finland belonging to a "Western, industrialised world" and thus sharing mutual values, it might particularly be due to the quite high degree of cultural contact between the two countries that Germans are at least "familiar enough" for Finns to be accepted, if not appreciated. This background serves as another explanation for the "freedom of choice" participants of my study expressed in their interviews.

This illustrates how important it is to put qualitative research into a larger context. Just as Gabrielle Désilets urged taking the social context into consideration when discussing TCKs, the same is true for my study, since aspects such as the "country of origin, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, age, level of education, occupation, legal status, visa category and conditions, etc."<sup>10</sup> determine a person's experiences which then shape their positioning. Only when connecting tendentially specific case studies to both their historic as well as societal background, and furthermore contrasting them with other studies, a full (or at least *fuller*) understanding of the field becomes possible.

Reflecting on such matters gains significance when seeing them in the light of contemporary developments in Europe and other parts of the world. The last few years have been eventful for Europe. The so-called "European refugee crisis" has brought millions of people from Syria and other conflictual countries to Europe, polarising the local population. While many people volunteered to help the arrivals, others flocked together to create a negative atmosphere, expressing their disapproval on the events. Thoughts that might have been there all the time, lurking in certain circles and regulars' tables at the local pubs, were suddenly voiced louder, entered public and even political debates. It seems as though fear is spreading among many Europeans, a fear Bauman describes as

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<sup>10</sup>Désilets, in Benjamin; and Dervin 2015. 146.

"moral panic"<sup>11</sup>, which comes in various shapes and with different consequences. Recent studies like one made by Bertelsmann Stiftung on "Fear of Globalisation or Conflict on Values"<sup>12</sup> tried to explore the connection between a shift towards populist political parties and worries of Europe's population. This study revealed that concerns about poverty, terror, war and crime were not significantly different between people who expressed fear of globalisation and those who did not. The difference between those two groups became apparent concerning thoughts on migration as such, with the former being more likely to express xenophobic remarks and feeling "strange in their own country"<sup>13</sup>. Certainly aspects like what the Bertelsmann-study calls a "competence competition with immigrants"<sup>14</sup> on the job market, thus economic fears, can not be left aside, however, it seems that abstract concerns might be involved in those shifts to the right: the fear of losing what people consider to be their national cultural heritage, but particularly the fear of the Other, nurtured by prejudice and generalisations. Meanwhile politicians, in their never ending attempt to keep or get voters, react to these concerns by closing their countries' borders, restricting legislation, and debating over the interpretations of human rights like freedom of religion, or then whether dual citizenship should be abandoned again, suggesting it undermining a person's loyalty towards one's "home country"<sup>15</sup>. As Zygmunt Bauman remarks, politicians utilise and nurture the existing insecurities to strengthen their *raison d'être*: By using the fear of people and supporting an atmosphere of a "state of emergency", many politicians try to

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<sup>11</sup>Bauman 2016. 1.

<sup>12</sup>See Vries, Catherine de; and Isabell Hoffmann: "Globalisierungsangst oder Wertekonflikt? Wer in Europa populistische Parteien wählt und warum." *eupinions* (March 2016). [https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/user\\_upload/EZ\\_eupinions\\_Fear\\_Studie\\_2016\\_DT.pdf](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/user_upload/EZ_eupinions_Fear_Studie_2016_DT.pdf) (accessed 03.02.2017).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. 26.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. 8.

<sup>15</sup>See political discussions in Germany in summer 2016, as portrayed in newspaper Zeit: <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-08/andreas-scheuer-csu-doppelte-staatsbuergerschaft-abschaffen> (accessed 01.12.2016).

create the image of authorities as those to protect people, and to shift the focus towards tasks they seem at first sight to be capable of tackling.<sup>16</sup>

In an atmosphere like the one at present, it is worth not becoming set on groups of people who tend to be perceived by the majority population as different, as part of the "infamous Other". Instead, paying attention to people with an otherwise inconspicuous migrant background might be a healthier strategy, in order to point out how colourful and multifaceted the "native" European population is. It is important to become aware that "we" are not and have never been completely isolated or detached from others. This links directly to an understanding of the interconnectedness of the world and the fact that there has always been migration, which I consider to be essential to create a counterweight against nationalistic and xenophobic ideologies. One possible consequence of this could be an overall attempt to challenge ideas of national cultures, ethnicities, people, and instead to look behind the constructed nature of such concepts. Once people become aware of how questionable it is to take rigid ideas of closed and exclusive cultural containers to set standards, the "Other" might not be seen any more as the big threat that it currently still appears to many. As Zygmunt Bauman puts it by drawing on Ulrich Beck (2006), mankind requires a "cosmopolitan awareness to match our cosmopolitan condition"<sup>17</sup> - and, if I may add, we need this urgently.

During my research I developed the idea of a "*mobile mindset*" of which I caught a glimpse in the conversations I had with some of my interviewees. While this discovery was of a rather accidental and unexpected nature, it still made me curious to find out more about it. For this reason I hope that in future

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<sup>16</sup>See Bauman 2016. 25 ff.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. 66.

I will be able to explore this mobile mindset further through strategic research pointed towards this concept. One idea would be to do comparable research on other migrant groups in Finland, which are on the one hand optically as inconspicuous as German descendants, thus blend in due to their physical appearance, but on the other hand, have a more problematic set-up due to the historic relationships between Finland and their country of origin. As hinted earlier, Estonian or Russian, even Swedish descendants could provide such a setting concerning Finland, and their experiences are likely to differ significantly from those of people with a German background, thus offer good grounds for comparison.

On a more general basis, I would suggest migration-related studies to continue questioning certain terminologies and the concepts behind them, and to reconsider their sometimes rather unreflected usage. While working on this study, I found myself confronted by the dilemma between drawing on terms because they seemingly described certain constellations easily, and then the need to challenge those terms. Admittedly, the latter happened in the process of working with my research material, but also stimulated by talks at conferences, conversations with other scholars and of course by reading research-related works.

While at the beginning I did not see reason to scrutinise terms like "culture", "generation", "identity" or "migrant", gradually I understood why they should be treated with caution. However, even though I could not fully support them any more, I soon felt as if I had reached the limits of a consequent criticism of the concepts: How should I deconstruct the picture of closed national cultures if some interviewees referred to them like this? Every time I wanted to type expressions such as "a German Christmas" or that something was done "in a German way", I had to remind myself to rephrase it, to stress in my formulations that this is not what I present as the absolute truth, but what I was

presented in my interviews.

I do believe that by using certain terms - even if reflected upon and criticised in some initial point of a scholarly work, as it was also done in the one at hand - one strengthens their existence. A suggestion would be to become even more aware of how careful we all have to be when using certain terms, as they create pictures and impressions we might not want to create. But even if academia came up with ever more, well-designed and elaborated concepts to replace the outdated ones - what difference would it make if we can not change their re-utilisation by the world outside of academia, which in turn often provides our research material?





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