

# BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES

## Estonian Immigrants' Identity Construction in Finland

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract <p>This research discusses how macro-level changes like the collapse of the Soviet Union and Estonia's EU accession have influenced the experiences of Estonians' living in Finland. The topic is approached with three main research questions. Firstly, have temporal and structural changes influenced Estonians' lives in Finland. Secondly, what is the influence of the social position and various encounterings on one's experiences and how one interprets them. Thirdly, how immigrant's previous life in Estonia and his or her relations with family members and friends influence his or her current situation in the new country of residence. The main theoretical concepts of the study are ethnic identity, otherness, acculturation and transnationalism.</p> <p>The data collected for the study consists of eight interviews of Estonian women living in Finland. The interviews were semi-structured and emphasized informants' own interpretations and conceptions of the past. The used method, oral history, is interested in the interpretations of the past and the meaning that the happenings have in the present situation and not only the actual happenings. Reminiscence of the past is a way to share experiences and compare them with those of the others'. It is a way to produce interpretations that supplement, comply and criticize public understandings of the past. Oral history and interviews bring forth new standpoints while they concentrate on informants' own interpretations of the past.</p> <p>The informants have moved to Finland between 1990 and 2007 and their backgrounds and reasons to move vary. During the time frame of the research, there have been some practical changes that have influenced informants' possibilities to move and to live in Finland. Residence permits, for example, are not needed anymore. In addition, the reasons to move have changed from returning migration to work based migration. At the same time, also attitudes among Finns towards Estonians have developed into a more tolerant direction. Immigration from Estonia to Finland is often temporary and movers do not necessarily have exact plans how long they are going to stay. This has become possible as crossing borders has eased since Estonia's EU membership.</p> <p>Even though all the informants are women and Estonian, there are, however, differences in their experiences depending on, for instance, the time of the move, social position, occupation, family situation and personality. These variations influence the way in which they explain their experiences and construct their own identity in relation to the others. Besides, also conceptions of one's own ethnic group and its past have an impact on the self-understanding. According to the interviews, Estonians seem to be a particular immigrant group in Finland that is regarded mainly positively. However, even though they, in general, speak fluent Finnish and there are similarities in the histories of the two countries, the acceptance of immigrants is always relative and depends on the other factors as well. According to this research, various factors influence the ways how informants experience their everyday life situations in Finland, how differently they explain their experiences and construct their own identities through them.</p>			
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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract			
<p>Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan makrotason muutosten, kuten Neuvostoliiton romahduksen ja Viron EU-jäsenyyden vaikutuksia Suomessa asuvien virolaisten elämään ja kokemuksiin Suomessa asumisesta. Aihetta lähestytään kolmen tutkimusongelman kautta. Ensinnäkin kysytään, miten suuret rakenteelliset muutokset ovat vaikuttaneet Suomessa asuvien virolaisten kokemuksiin. Toiseksi tutkielmassa on kiinnostuttu erilaisten sosiaalisten positioiden ja tilanteiden vaikutuksesta kokemuksiin ja henkilön tapaan selittää kokemaansa. Kolmanneksi pohditaan sitä, miten maahanmuuttajan aikaisempi elämä Virossa ja suhteet Virossa asuviin sukulaisiin ja tuttaviiin vaikuttavat arkielämään Suomessa. Keskeisimpiä teoreettisia käsitteitä ovat etninen identiteetti, toiseus, akkulturaatio ja transnationaalisuus, joiden avulla tutkittavia kysymyksiä käsitellään.</p> <p>Tutkimusta varten koottu aineisto koostuu kahdeksan Suomessa asuvan virolaisen naisen haastattelusta. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin puolistrukturoituja haastatteluja, jotka jättävät tilaa haastateltavien omille tulkintoille ja käsityksille menneisyydestä. Käytetty metodi, muistitietotutkimus, on kiinnostunut menneisyyden tulkintoista ja tapahtumien myöhemmin saamista merkityksistä eikä pelkästään tapahtumien yksityiskohdista. Tapahtumien muistelu on tapa jakaa kokemuksia ja verrata niitä muiden kokemuksiin, eli tuottaa tulkintoja menneisyydestä, jotka täydentävät, myötäilevät tai kritisovat julkista historiankäsitystä. Muistitietotutkimus ja haastattelut sen välineenä tuovat esiin uusia näkökulmia selvittäessään haastateltavien omia tulkintoja menneisyydestään.</p> <p>Haastateltavat ovat muuttaneet Suomeen aikavälillä 1990–2007 ja heidän taustansa ja syynsä muuttaa vaihtelevat. Tutkitulla aikavälillä on tapahtunut käytännön muutoksia, jotka ovat vaikuttaneet haastateltujen mahdollisuuksiin muuttaa ja asua Suomessa. Esimerkiksi oleskelulupaa ei enää tarvita. Myös syyt muuttaa ovat vaihtuneet paluumuutosta työperäiseen maahanmuuttoon ja samalla suomalaisten asenteet virolaisia maahanmuuttajia kohtaan ovat muuttuneet entistä suvaitsevaisemmiksi. Nykyinen muuttoliike Virossa Suomeen on luonteeltaan tilapäistä, ja muuttajilla ei usein ole tarkkoja suunnitelmia siitä, miten kauan he aikovat viipyä Suomessa. Tämän on mahdollistanut rajojen ylittämisen helpottuminen.</p> <p>Vaikka kaikki haastateltavat ovat virolaisia ja naisia, heidän kokemuksissaan on kuitenkin eroja riippuen muun muassa muuton ajankohdasta, sosiaalisesta asemasta, ammatista, perhetilanteesta ja persoonallisuudesta. Nämä erot vaikuttavat siihen, miten henkilö selittää kokemuksiaan ja miten hän konstruoi omaa identiteettiään suhteessa muihin. Itsemäärittelyyn vaikuttavat myös käsitykset omasta etnisestä ryhmästä ja sen menneisyydestä. Haastattelujen perusteella virolaiset näyttävät olevan erityinen maahanmuuttajaryhmä Suomessa, johon suhtaudutaan pääsääntöisesti positiivisesti. Toisaalta, vaikka he puhuvat yleisesti ottaen hyvin Suomea ja maiden menneisyydessä on samankaltaisuuksia, maahanmuuttajien kohtaama hyväksyntä on kuitenkin aina suhteellista ja riippuu muista tekijöistä. Tutkimuksessa tuli vahvasti esiin erilaisten tekijöiden vaikutus informanttien kokemuksiin Suomessa asumisesta, erot informanttien suhtautumisessa näihin kokemuksiin ja oman identiteetin rakentaminen kokemusten ja kohtaamisten kautta.</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords virolaiset, etninen identiteetti, identiteetin rakentaminen, transnationaalisuus, toiseus, akkulturaatio, muistitieto			

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Eastern Europe has been under great changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union, which has influenced also the population of the district. Emigration from the former Soviet republics has increased as well as migration between the countries.<sup>1</sup> One of the next major changes in the area has been the membership of the European Union (EU) of many former Soviet republics, which has raised fears of growing migration and international organized crime in the West<sup>2</sup>. Migration from Eastern European countries is an actual topic in public debate, as the EU's Eastern enlargements in 2004 and 2007 will still continue increasing the number of immigrants in the Western European countries. Also the reactions of people against this growing immigration flow raise interesting questions.

Both the collapse of the Soviet Union and Estonia's EU accession in 2004 increased the volume of immigration from Estonia to Finland. Finland opened its borders for job applicants from new EU countries after a two-year transition period in 2006 whereas some others, like Germany and Austria, have had their borders opened only since the beginning of May 2011<sup>3</sup>. During and after the Soviet regime, moving abroad from Estonia and other Soviet republics was restricted. However, nowadays crossing borders and living between two countries has become a part of everyday life. In this research, I will ask whether structural changes, like the collapse of the Soviet Union and the EU enlargement, have had influence on the level of personal experiences of the Estonians in Finland. Thus I will aim to find out what kind of consequences macro-level changes have had on everyday life "micro" level.

Estonians' migration to Finland differs from other main migration flows inside EU, like from Poland to UK, as the motivation for migration has not been only to earn living. In the 1990s most of the Estonians who migrated to Finland were returning migrants with Finnish ancestry. There are also some similarities in the histories of these two countries, and Finns and Estonians are often said to be kindred nations because of the kindred languages. Therefore migration from Estonia to Finland is a special case in the post-1989 European

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<sup>1</sup> Kyntäjä & Kulu 1998, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Arnsward & Jopp 2001, 62.

<sup>3</sup> Baer, Katarina, Helsingin Sanomat 30.4.2011.

context. The question of Estonians in Finland is important also in other terms. Estonians are now the biggest immigrant group in Finland, even bigger than Russians who constituted the biggest immigrant group until 2010<sup>4</sup>. The level of the work-based migration from Estonia is high, and Estonians form an important resource for the Finnish labour market.

## 1.1 Research questions

The focus of this research is how migration from Estonia to Finland has changed during the period of 20 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union and how it can be seen in the experiences of immigrants. I assume that great upheavals, the collapse of the Soviet Union and Estonia's EU membership, have had some kind of influence on the experiences of people who have migrated from Estonia to Finland during the last 20 years. Compared to Finland, Estonia is a relatively new EU country and therefore the mental borders of the Cold War era might still exist. According to the previous research, Estonians have experienced stigmatization in Finland, especially because Estonians are connected with Russians<sup>5</sup>. My purpose is to research how changes in immigration practices, for instance from the need of residence permit to the freedom of move, have influenced how Estonian immigrants see their position in Finland and how they define themselves in different situations they face in Finland. In other words, I am interested in the identity construction of Estonian immigrants.

However, not only do political or economic changes influence people's lives but occupational and social positions of the both partners of interaction have a meaning too. Different positions, for instance the situation in the labour market, age and occupation have, for sure, influenced Estonian immigrants' everyday life experiences in Finland. Those who have moved for work have different kind of experiences than those who have moved as returning migrants. The level of language skills and the intended length of residence probably have an influence too.

To answer these research questions, I interviewed eight Estonians who migrated to Finland during the last 20 years and experienced the possible changes in Finland and Estonia. They

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<sup>4</sup>Statistics Finland, Statistical Databases <http://pxweb2.stat.fi/Dialog/Saveshow.asp>. Kansalaisuus iän ja sukupuolen mukaan maakunnittain 1990 – 2010. Accessed on 3.5.2011.

<sup>5</sup> For example Liebkind, Mannila, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Jaakkola, Kyntäjä and Reuter 2004.

all have had different reasons to move and their backgrounds are diverse, which offers me interesting views to the themes that I am studying. Qualitative research, which I am doing, is not about asking the opinions of the majority or minority of the informants and making statistical generalizations as in a survey-research. Instead, the researcher is interested in the ways how informants give meanings to things and possible differences and similarities in them.<sup>6</sup> Therefore the goal of this research is not to do generalizations on the basis of the eight interviews that form the primary sources of the research. It would not even be possible.

Another reason for doing interviews is getting information about something that is not well known already. Thus, interviewing can also lead to new questions that the researcher could not have thought beforehand. This is also one of the advantages of the interviews because they challenge the researcher to rethink his or her hypotheses. During this research process, I have found it necessary to adjust my original research questions according to the findings of the interviews. Originally my aim was to concentrate on the experiences of prejudice and stigmatization and how temporal changes might have impacted them but later I have found it important to broaden my viewpoint. Adhering to my first idea of the research theme would have narrowed my viewpoint and made me to ignore some very important issues.

The interviews made it clear that people left behind their lives in Estonia when they moved to Finland and that migrants are faced with different kinds of attitudes and opinions in their home country as well. These attitudes and opinions probably influence immigrants' experiences in the new country and how they explain and locate their own experience. Therefore, the third research theme of this study is discussing not only what happens in the new country but also what the informants' situation in the old country was and does it have influence on their experiences and identity in the new country. In the new home country, immigrants will face various situations in which different kind of self-negotiation is needed.

In conclusion, there are three main research questions in this study: firstly, have temporal and structural changes influenced my informants' lives, secondly, what is the meaning of

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<sup>6</sup> Ruusuvaori, Nikander, Hyvärinen 2010, 17.

the position in which immigrant is in Finland and thirdly, how that what immigrants have left behind influences their current situation. Consequently, I will try to combine ideas of transnationalism, a temporal comparison and various situations and positions and how those effect on self-identification.

Besides, I assume that my research will answer some interesting questions concerning relations between Estonians and Finns. Finland and Estonia have had a close relationship, and for example similarities in history and language make these questions worth investigating. Previous studies have showed stereotypes and prejudice against Estonians, and by studying Estonian immigrants I try to find out if these attitudes still exist and whether there has been any change. In the next chapter, I will introduce what kind of research has been done before in this field and discuss how my research is related to that.

## **1.2 Previous research**

In the other fields of the social sciences, the previous research concerning immigration from former Soviet republics has concentrated on social networks, stigmatization experiences, integration, professional experiences and migration of mothers of young children. Therefore, this field has been broadly studied already. The viewpoint of the most of the previous studies made in Finland, has been either to study the number of immigrants and to clarify their backgrounds by using migration theories<sup>7</sup> or to research the acculturation process of the immigrants<sup>8</sup>. Also studies concerning the attitudes of Finns against foreigners<sup>9</sup>, the willingness of Estonian people to emigrate<sup>10</sup> and Estonian people's stigmatization experiences<sup>11</sup> have been made. In the field of cross-cultural psychology, for example John W. Berry has studied the psychological consequences of acculturation and created concepts to study acculturation and adaptation.<sup>12</sup>

Finnish immigration research has traditionally concentrated on how immigrants have done and acted in Finland and among Finns but less attention has been paid on the communities

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. Kyntäjä & Kulu 1998.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Liebkind 1994, Perhoniemi & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2006, Ghazanfari 2006.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Jaakkola 1993, Lankinen 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Karppi & Rantala 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Kyntäjä 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Berry 1997, 5.



of immigrants and how they maintain their contacts and relations with their families and friends abroad. Because of the low number of immigrants, Finnish research has examined immigrants as individual actors but not as communities.<sup>13</sup>

Transnational approach to migration creates a more diverse picture of immigrants than the traditional immigrant-approach by emphasizing immigrants past before they migrated. According to the transnational approach, immigrants' past influences their present situation. One part of the past is friends and relatives in the previous country of residence and transnational ties are created by keeping in touch with them.<sup>14</sup> For example Heli Hyvönen<sup>15</sup> has studied expectations and experiences of Finnish women in Estonia and Estonian women in Finland, acculturation and social networks in both in the previous and the present country of residence and models of motherhood following migration. Also transnational care<sup>16</sup> and international marriages and stigmatization<sup>17</sup> have been researched. There is also one research project going on that studies transnational space between Estonia and Finland that has offered me useful information about transnationalism in regard to migration<sup>18</sup>.

Another interesting field of the previous research is the implications of the fall of communism and the EU enlargement on migration. The Eastern enlargements of the EU in 2004 and 2007 can be seen as a completion of "a geo-political shift in post-1989 Europe". The end of formal restrictions of the free move of East Europeans is "in many cases enabling legal regularisation of migration and mobility that has long been occurring in practise".<sup>19</sup> Samantha Currie has researched Poland's EU accession's influences in the labour market position of Polish migrant women living in the UK. Her conclusion was that in spite of the enhanced security of the legal status, the EU membership has not had extensive qualitative impact on the everyday employment experience of CEE (Central and Eastern European) accession migrants in the UK.<sup>20</sup> According to Angela Coyle, Poland's EU accession has benefitted Polish women who work abroad as it has regulated working conditions and increased Polish women's access to more demanding and better paid

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<sup>13</sup> Zechner 2006, 85.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>15</sup> Hyvönen 2009.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Zechner 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Reuter & Kyntäjä 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Järvinen-Alenius, Keski-Hirvelä, Pitkänen, Kallioniemi-Chambers 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Favell 2008, 701–702.

<sup>20</sup> Currie 2009, 108, 122.

occupations in the formal labour market.<sup>21</sup>

The new East-West migration in Europe has also provided a comparable case with Mexico-US migration that has been a starting point for the body of migration theory and studies done in the social sciences.<sup>22</sup> Both the US and the EU are dependent on the cheaper skilled and unskilled labour from their neighbouring countries but are, on the other hand, facing political pressure for more effective border control.<sup>23</sup> In the next chapter, that introduces the historical background of my study, I will present more findings of the relevant previous studies.

## 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Until the 1990s, the number of immigrants in Finland was low and still in the 1980s numerous Finns moved to Sweden for work. Migration from Finland to Sweden was related to the poor economic situation in Finland, the high level of unemployment and the high demand of labour in rapidly industrializing Sweden<sup>24</sup>. A typical migrant was born after the II World War, had a low education and was from a remote district. During the time period 1945-1990, about half a million Finns moved to Sweden.<sup>25</sup> This process has some similarities with the migration from Estonia to Finland which will be discussed in this chapter.

### 2.1 Migration from Estonia to Finland

The number of Estonians living in Finland permanently has been increasing since 1990. In the following table are presented the number of Estonians in total and the number of the both sexes. As can be seen, the number of Estonian women living in Finland has been slightly higher than the number of men. In general, the number of Estonians in Finland has been constantly growing during the last 20 years.

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<sup>21</sup> Coyle 2007, 37.

<sup>22</sup> Favell 2008, 702.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 706.

<sup>24</sup> Korkiasaari in Korkiasaari & Tarkiainen 2000, 148.

<sup>25</sup> Snellman 2003, 12–14.

Table 1. Estonians in Finland 1990-2010.

Year	Total	Women	Men
1990	0	0	0
1991	720	389	331
1992	3380	1818	1562
1993	5893	3313	2580
1994	7472	4253	3219
1995	8446	4888	3558
1996	9038	5302	3736
1997	9689	5764	3925
1998	10340	6157	4183
1999	10652	6378	4274
2000	10839	6533	4306
2001	11662	6892	4770
2002	12428	7206	5222
2003	13397	7598	5799
2004	13978	7807	6171
2005	15459	8580	6879
2006	17599	9652	7947
2007	20006	10834	9172
2008	22604	11994	10610
2009	25510	13443	12067
2010	29080	15129	13951

Source: Statistics Finland. Statistical databases, Kansalaisuus iän ja sukupuolen mukaan maakunnittain 1990-2010. <http://pxweb2.stat.fi/Dialog/Saveshow.asp>, accessed on 28.9.2011.

The above presented figures indicate the number of Estonians who have registered as permanent residents in Finland. Thus the actual number of Estonians in Finland is probably higher, as many Estonians work in Finland only temporarily. Both the collapse of the Soviet Union and Estonia's EU membership in 2004 increased the volume of immigration from Estonia to Finland. In 1990, immigration from the whole Soviet Union increased and the number of immigrants was around 2000, three times more than in the previous year. The economic depression in the beginning of the 1990s decreased the volume of migration<sup>26</sup> and since the Estonian EU membership in 2004, the number of Estonians has more than doubled<sup>27</sup>. In 2008 Estonian citizens were the second biggest group of foreigners in Finland. They formed 15, 1 % of all foreigners and their number was around 20 000. The

<sup>26</sup> Vikat & Notkola 1996, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Number of immigrants from Estonia was 1651 in 2004 and 3147 in 2009. Tilastokeskus. Maahan- ja maastamuuttaneet lähtö- ja määrämaan, iän, sukupuolen ja kansalaisuuden mukaan 1987 – 2009, updated 22.4.2010. Accessed on 19.11.2010.

biggest group were the Russians, 19, 8 % and 26 200.<sup>28</sup> In 2010 there were already 29 080 Estonian citizens living in Finland as permanent residents, and 19 499 of them were living in Uudenmaa county.

The majority of Estonians living in Finland during the whole period from 1990 to 2010 has been women: in 2010 13 951 of them were men and 15 129 women.<sup>29</sup> In general, the post-1989 migrations are not male dominated as previous migrations, like the South-North movement of labour in the 1960s and 1970s used to be.<sup>30</sup> Morokvasic has stated that an important reason for women's migration from the previous Soviet republics is "the legacy of state socialism" that left gendered power relations intact even though some elements of equality were established.<sup>31</sup>

The rise of the number of Estonian immigrants is not the only transition that has happened, as for example legal practices and reasons to move have changed as well. In the 1990s and during the first few years of the 2000s, immigration from the area of former Soviet Union to Finland was mainly remigration.<sup>32</sup> In 1992, most of the immigrants were Russians and Estonians due to for example geographical closeness and the remigration of Ingrian Finns who were living in Estonia and Russia<sup>33</sup>. Already then employment situation of Estonians was better outside Helsinki region than immigrants from other areas of the previous Soviet Union<sup>34</sup>. Estonia's rapid economic growth, rising living standard and welfare, general stabilization and Estonia's EU accession have decreased willingness of remigration and increased work-related migration<sup>35</sup>. Before Estonia's EU accession, Estonians needed a work permit that was usually applied by the employer. The Employment and Economic Development Office favoured the application if the wage was reasonable and the labour market situation of the districts did not prevent. Wage had to be mentioned in the application and it could not be under the minimum wage. Accordingly, if there was no

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<sup>28</sup> Eurostat, European Commission. Population of foreign citizens in the EU27 in 2008 - Foreign citizens made up 6% of the EU27 population, News release, 16 December 2009.  
[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/3-16122009-BP/EN/3-16122009-BP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-16122009-BP/EN/3-16122009-BP-EN.PDF)

<sup>29</sup> Statistics Finland, Statistical Databases, Kansalaisuus iän ja sukupuolen mukaan maakunnittain 1990 – 2010, <http://pxweb2.stat.fi/Dialog/Saveshow.asp>, accessed on 6.4.2011.

<sup>30</sup> Morokvasic 2004, 8. Morokvasic refers to five other studies.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Davydova 2003, 175.

<sup>33</sup> Vikat & Notkola 1996, 31.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>35</sup> Liebkind, Mannila, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Jaakkola, Kyntäjä and Reuter 2004, 29.

workplace, a work permit could not have been granted.<sup>36</sup> Before Estonia's EU accession, Finland arranged a two-year transition period and the free movement of labour came into effect only after that. At the moment, it is possible to move to Finland for three months to look for a work. However, the compliance with the minimum wage is not necessary, if the employee does not require that.<sup>37</sup>

Workforce immigration from the new EU-member states caused political discussion in Finland that was related to the trade unions' willingness to protect the domestic workforce<sup>38</sup>. One of the themes in the parliament discussion was a concern of Estonian workers who were prepared to work for wages below the minimum wage and thus undermining the domestic competition<sup>39</sup>. However, Estonian migrants might nevertheless be more accepted than some others. Adrian Favell has argued that from the standpoint of populist politicians, migrants from the Eastern Europe are better welcomed than other more visible immigrant groups and that there is "a racial and ethnic logic inherent in the EU enlargement process" as borders to the East will be opened but shut to the South.<sup>40</sup>

## **2.2 Changing images of the neighbour**

Old myths and prejudices are still existing and influencing attitudes but not necessarily consciously involved in the Finnish opinions regarding Estonia. In the past, since the time of national awakening, Finns have often seen Estonia's and Finland's development as parallel. Finland, as a more "advanced" and "civilized" country and as a kind of "big brother", has been conceived as a model that Estonia should be following. In Finland, being a model has been seen as an obligation as well.<sup>41</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Estonia, Finland was thought to be an example for Estonia's own national, cultural and economic goals whereas in Finland Estonians or other non-Finnish Finno Ugrians were not esteemed in their own right nor considered to be equal with the Finns.<sup>42</sup> During the Soviet time, Finnish attitudes against Estonians were twofold: firstly, Estonians were a part of the Soviet Union and therefore "Russians" but, secondly, a somewhat pathetic and undeveloped kindred nation,

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<sup>36</sup> Hietala 2001, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Pellander 2009, 135.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>40</sup> Favell 2008, 712.

<sup>41</sup> Lehti 1998, 112.

<sup>42</sup> Alenius 2002, 62–63.

some kind of “distant cousins”. Estonians were a part of both “us” and “them”.<sup>43</sup> In the beginning of the 1990s, during the first years after Estonia gained its independence again, fear of Estonia was discussed in the Finnish media, which created an image of Estonia as a paradise of criminals, mafia and prostitutes.<sup>44</sup>

Raittila, who has studied Finnish media and its perceptions of Estonia, has argued that this order will change after Estonia’s EU accession. Then Estonians will not be considered as foreign immigrants anymore but as members of the same Europe with Finns. The same internal market in EU, freedom of movement and EU legislation will all diminish the distinction between the two countries. At the same time, Estonia is developing from a little brother to a competitor, as for example Estonian workforce is competing with the Finnish. Thus also the old elements of otherness will be disappearing.<sup>45</sup>

Previous studies have indicated that old attitudes of Estonians have influenced also experiences of Estonians living in Finland. Estonians are sometimes confused with Russians who are, according to Estonians, regarded more negatively than Estonians in Finland<sup>46</sup>. Estonians are not the only group from the former Soviet Union that are thought to be Russians. In her research about Polish immigrants in Finland, Magdalena Jaakkola noticed that also Polish are often thought to be Russian and therefore regarded more negatively than they would be otherwise<sup>47</sup>. At the same time, immigration of Poles and Estonians was regarded more positively than immigration of Russians and Somalis, hence it can be said that an ethnic hierarchy between the immigrant groups does exist<sup>48</sup>.

### 3 THEORETICAL APPROACH

The main concepts of this research are *ethnic identity*, *otherness*, *acculturation* and *transnationalism*. In this chapter I will introduce these concepts and discuss how they are understood in this particular research.

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<sup>43</sup> Raittila 2004a, 163, Raittila 2004b, 155.

<sup>44</sup> Kiin 1998, 24 & 28.

<sup>45</sup> Raittila 2004a, 308.

<sup>46</sup> Liebkind, Mannila, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Jaakkola, Kyntäjä and Reuter 2004, 228.

<sup>47</sup> Jaakkola 1994, 141.

<sup>48</sup> Jaakkola 2008, 35.

### 3.1 Ethnic identity and otherness

In the modern world, national cultures are one of the central sources of a cultural identity.<sup>49</sup> An identity is not something absolute and unproblematic but it is constantly reproduced in the actions of people. Thus, identities are actually names that we have given to those different practices that we use to locate ourselves.<sup>50</sup>

*Ethnic identity* can be defined to mean persons identifying him/herself with a certain group of people and feelings of belongingness and commitment into it. In addition, ethnic identity includes an idea of common values, notions of the own group and an idea of a common past.<sup>51</sup> The concept of ethnic identity contains also essentialist beliefs, which can be both negative and positive. Essentialist thinking is negative, if ethnic categories are seen as natural and unchangeable. This kind of idea of an ethnic identity can lead to racism and stereotypes regarding ethnic identity. On the other hand, an idea of the difference of own ethnic group can also be positive, as a member of a minority can resist to be characterized by being proud of his/her identity.<sup>52</sup> In conclusion, idea of identity includes a collective character, a sense of shared continuity and shared memories but also a common destiny. However, national or ethnic identities are not the only ones that define people's identities and allegiances but, in the contemporary world, people have multiple identities according to their gender perception, class allegiances and religious sentiments. These multiple identities can cause identity conflicts and dual loyalties.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to an ongoing process of self-definition, identity formation is also about “*other-definition*”<sup>54</sup>, defining who “we” are and who we are not, that is to make a difference between “us” and “them” or “we” and “the others”. Making difference between ethnic groups can be based on origins, history or special cultural features<sup>55</sup>. One starting point for this kind of othering has been the idea of “the West” which refers to “a society that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular and modern” and therefore it is a

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<sup>49</sup> Hall 1999, 45.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 223, 227.

<sup>51</sup> Liebkind 2006, 78.

<sup>52</sup> Liebkind 23.1.2009.

<sup>53</sup> Smith 1992, 58–59.

<sup>54</sup> Riegert 2004, 125.

<sup>55</sup> Raittila 2004b, 151.

historical and not a geographical construction. The idea of “the West” makes it possible to compare the differences between the West and the non-West and thus helps to explain their differences.<sup>56</sup> The West has also its internal others. For example the Jewish people have been this kind of group. Besides, West-Europeans have considered East-Europeans as “barbaric” and women have been represented to be more humble than men.<sup>57</sup>

Re-definitions of “the other” may occur as responses during the time of upheaval and change, like in the integration of Europe. It has been studied, for example, how transitional societies in the south-eastern Baltic countries have been described in the news media of Sweden and Denmark. Eastern Baltic countries were seen as little brothers that “we” were helping to become like “us”.<sup>58</sup> In the Finnish context, otherness of largest immigrant groups – Russians, Ingrians and Estonians – is based on cultural and political issues and not for instance physical appearance, as Finland does not have a history of colonialism, slavery or mass immigration.<sup>59</sup>

*Stereotyping* is a way to reduce, essentialize, naturalize and fix “difference” and thus a “part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order”. Stereotyping usually occurs when inequalities of power exist as “it classifies people according to a norm and constructs the excluded as ‘other’”.<sup>60</sup>

### **3.2 Acculturation and changes in the ethnic identity**

Moving to another country has, inevitably, influences in the person’s identity as well. Karmela Liebkind has argued that a mere ethnic or cultural self-identification does not tell either what kind of attitudes an individual has about his or her own culture or the level of identification with the self-applied category. However, the strength and character of the identification with the in-group determines much of the acculturation of an individual.<sup>61</sup>

*Acculturation* refers both to the cultural changes resulting from the group encounters that

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<sup>56</sup> Hall 1999, 78–79.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>58</sup> Riegert 2004, 125, 147.

<sup>59</sup> Raittila 2004b, 152.

<sup>60</sup> Hall 1997, 258.

<sup>61</sup> Liebkind 2006, 80.



occur due to migration and how people with certain cultural background manage adapting to other cultural contexts.<sup>62</sup> Berry, for example, has used acculturation as a term that refers to the common processes and outcomes, both cultural and psychological, of intercultural contact<sup>63</sup>. All acculturating groups are not similar and their differences are mainly consequences of three factors: voluntariness, mobility and permanence. Immigrants are entering the acculturation process as a result of migration while, for example for refugees and indigenous people, it is impossible to avoid. Similarly, some groups face these encounterings because they have moved whereas for others, like indigenous people and “national minorities”, the new culture was brought to them while they stayed still. In addition, some migrants are relatively permanently migrated, like immigrants, while for others, like international students and guest workers, the situation is a more temporary one.<sup>64</sup>

However, all of them need to deal with the question how to acculturate. According to Berry, there are two major issues that individuals or groups acculturating need to deal with in their everyday encounters. The first issue is *cultural maintenance* which refers to the considered importance of cultural identity and characteristics and an effort made to maintain both of them. The second issue is *contact and participation*, that is to what extent should individuals or groups communicate with other cultural groups or should they stay mainly among their own group.<sup>65</sup> According to the answers or attitudes against these issues, there can be found four different acculturation strategies. From the standpoint of non-dominant groups, when persons do not aim to maintain their own cultural identity and are seeking interaction with other groups, it refers to an *assimilation* strategy. If a person has an opposite strategy, that is he or she values the original culture and avoids interaction with other groups, it is referred as a *separation* strategy. If a person has a positive attitude both against maintaining his or her own culture and is also trying to be a member of a larger social network, it is defined to be an *integration* strategy. A *marginalization* strategy refers to a situation in which there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance, often due to enforced cultural loss, but also little motivation to interact with others, often because of

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<sup>62</sup> Berry 1997, 6.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 9.

exclusion or discrimination.<sup>66</sup>

As immigrant groups or individual immigrants arrive into a new country, they have different kind of attitudes about becoming members of a new society and maintenance of an original culture.<sup>67</sup> Phinney et al have argued that “these attitudes interact with the actual and perceived level of acceptance” as well as with official policies concerning immigration in a new country. For instance, if immigrants have a strong will to maintain their identities and if pluralism is accepted or encouraged, also ethnic identity is probably strong. On the contrary, national identity is likely to be strong, if immigrants feel pressure towards assimilation and groups feel accepted. If immigrants or certain groups face real or perceived hostility, some immigrants may reject their ethnic identity whereas others may become more proud of the ethnic group and express solidarity as a way to handle with negative attitudes.<sup>68</sup>

Karmela Liebkind has written about the role of an ethnic identity in the acculturation process and presented three differing characteristics. At first, according to Liebkind, “ethnic identity seems to be conceptually distinct from other formulations of the acculturation process and quite resistant to change”. Secondly, ethnic identity should be seen as a separate from the social identity, which originates from the social position of one’s membership group. For instance, according to Liebkind, “ethnic minority members may want to change their social identity but not necessarily at the cost of losing their ethnic identity”. Thirdly, it depends on the contextual factors of acculturating groups and surrounding society, what kind of ethnic identity most advances adaptation in the acculturation process. Besides, multiple group membership should be seen as a possible option for ethnic minorities which are acculturating. Lastly, there are various kinds of threats to identity and individuals have different responses to them. Some of the threats are related to the social identity due to a subjective perception of low status and others to the future scenarios of in-group and can cause a risk to its distinctiveness.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Berry 1997, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Phinney et al 2001, 494.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 494.

<sup>69</sup> Liebkind 2006, 91-92.

### 3.3 Transnationalism and transnational space

*Transnationalism* is a concept that refers to various phenomena that have reached a global scale at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century: “the globalization of capitalism”, “the technological revolution in the means of transportation and communication, global political transformations such as decolonization and the universalization of human rights” and, what is the special interest of my research, “the expansion of social networks that facilitate the reproduction of transnational migration, economic organization and politics”.<sup>70</sup>

Transnationalism refers to the “ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders across multiple nation-states”. The ties are both informal and formal.<sup>71</sup>

Another way to describe transnationalism is to divide it into macro-, meso- and micro-level. Macro-level refers to those circumstances that are regulated by different international agreements. Meso- or communal level refers to the transnational activity of organized communities. Micro-level or individual and family level transnationalism means non-institutional relations, which individual persons, families and others have across borders.<sup>72</sup> In the context of this research, EU enlargement process is an example of macro-level change whereas my informants represent the micro-level experience of the consequences of transnationalism.

Transnational social spaces indicate that migration and remigration are not necessarily definite decisions but might become “a strategy of survival and betterment”. Also more permanent migrants usually maintain strong transnational links.<sup>73</sup> In contrast to classic accounts of migration, transnational perspective takes into account the simultaneous attachments to two nations that many migrants have<sup>74</sup>. Another example of the phenomenon related to transnationalism is the possibility of dual citizenship.<sup>75</sup> It is an actual example of the states’ reactions to the increased transnational mobility of people<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Guarnizo & Smith 1998, 4.

<sup>71</sup> Faist 2000, 189–190.

<sup>72</sup> Martikainen, Sintonen, Pitkänen 2006, 24.

<sup>73</sup> Faist 2000, 191.

<sup>74</sup> Morokvasic 2004, 8-9.

<sup>75</sup> Faist 2000, 218.

<sup>76</sup> Martikainen, Sintonen, Pitkänen 2006, 24.

In addition, transnationalism is sometimes seen as an emancipatory resistance “from below”, as an effort to escape domination and control “from above” practiced by capital and state. This liberatory view of transnationalism has, however, been criticized by various researchers.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.4 Estonian immigrants

*Estonians* who have migrated to Finland are ethnically and linguistically a diverse group of Estonians, Russians and Ingrian Finns who are people with a Finnish ancestry.<sup>78</sup> This diversity came up in this research as well, as the informants represent all the above mentioned groups. Because of the historical developments in Estonia, even in the group of eight informants, there are many different kinds of backgrounds. Even though most of my informants speak Estonian as their native language, many of them have an ancestry in the other former Soviet Union countries or in the Nordic Countries. In addition, they all speak Russian too. As I need, however, a kind of concept to categorize my informants, I will refer to them as Estonians.

Besides the different ethnic backgrounds, the informants have also had different reasons to move. Some of them moved to Finland as *returned migrants* or as a family member of a person with the Finnish ancestry. Another main reason for move was a work in Finland, so they could be called as *migrant workers*. The concept of migrant worker includes an idea of a temporary move, a person moves to another country to earn his or her living there, but is not planning to settle there permanently<sup>79</sup>. However, some of the informants have stayed in Finland longer time and some might stay in Finland even permanently, and could be thus called as *migrant* which refers to a person who has moved to another country permanently in order to earn his or her living there<sup>80</sup>. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to my informants as immigrants or migrants in the situations when the motivation for the move is not that relevant.

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<sup>77</sup> Guarnizo & Smith 1998, 5-6.

<sup>78</sup> Järvinen-Alenius, Keski-Hirvelä, Pitkänen, Kallioniemi-Chambers 2010, 4.

<sup>79</sup> Liebkind 1994, 9-10.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 9-10

## 4 METHODS AND SOURCES

The primary sources of the research consist of the eight interviews that I have done. By comparing previous research and official reports with the findings of my own data, I will construct a picture of Estonians in Finland and try to answer my research questions. Probably the most challenging, but also the most interesting, part of my work are the interviews. The data collected by interviews are based on the personal experiences of the informants. It is also bound to the time of the interviews and the skills of the researcher. In the interviews, the interviewer is inevitably leading the discussion but he or she should avoid influencing the informants' answers too much. The informants also tend to explain things in a positive way for themselves and refuse that they have had some negative experiences at all. Besides these challenges, using oral history materials and oral history as a method includes some special characteristics that need to be taken into account. In this chapter, I will discuss the methods and the practical aspects of this research process.

### 4.1 Oral history

The kind of research that I am doing could be done also in the other fields of social sciences. For example social psychologists have interviewed immigrants and studied their psychological wellbeing and acculturation process. What separates my research from their work is the relation with time. Even though I concentrate on contemporary society, my research is still a historical study, as the informants' interpretations of the past influence the way in which they understand their own experiences. According to Ukkonen, reminiscence of one's life is about both remembering the past but also interpreting and restructuring it, and also kind of changing it. Remembering is a way to share experiences and to compare one's own experiences with those of the others'. In addition, it is a way to consider the relation of the one's own past with the public history. Therefore, it is a way to produce interpretation that supplements, complies or criticizes public understanding of the past.<sup>81</sup> It can also bring out new standpoints and reach and produce the own histories of the informants'.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ukkonen 2000, 11–12.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 14.

Oral history is a method used by many historians who do micro historical research or “history from below”.<sup>83</sup> Oral history emphasises the experiences of the people who have been “forgotten” in the traditional historical writing and the importance of those people as mediators of their experiences.<sup>84</sup> Oral history does not necessarily explain the actual happenings of the past but it is about the meaning that those happenings have at the present situation. In many cases, the interviews and the subjective experiences of the informants reveal new details of the happenings. They reveal for example what informants’ intentions or beliefs in a historical situation were and also what they later think they did. Even if oral history would differentiate from the actual happenings, it brings forth the motives behind the actions. In addition, it clarifies the informant's own way of understanding the past. That is why it can be seen as reliable. As any source, also oral history is subjective, but more openly than some other sources.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, oral memory is also collective knowledge, as community regulates the ways of remembering and even defines what is worth remembering. Community maintains socially accepted interpretations of a past and, at the same time, it “forgets” the contradictory interpretation.<sup>86</sup> Thus remembering is also about processing happenings that have influenced many people and how the past of the informant is related to public history.<sup>87</sup> The research of social memory is interested in the interpretation of the past but also the ways how these interpretations are maintained in the society, how they are commemorated. Thus it is not only about reminiscence.<sup>88</sup> Memories and remembering a common past are important elements also in producing communities and their identities.

Interaction between the researcher and the informant is an essential element in the creation of oral history data. The starting point of the interaction in interviews is the past of the informant and his or her experiences. A researcher’s task is to bring forth informants experiences and to analyse them in relation to the previous knowledge.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Peltonen 2006, 145.

<sup>84</sup> Kalela 2006, 72.

<sup>85</sup> Portelli 2006, 55–59.

<sup>86</sup> Ukkonen 2000, 35

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>89</sup> Ukkonen 2006, 176 & 183.

## 4.2 Interviewing as a method to produce the data

Researching people's personal experiences without discussing with them, without interviews, would be impossible in this research, as I have not been able to find previous research that was concentrating on the temporal changes in the experiences of Estonian immigrants in Finland. As a method, interviews have certain benefits as well. They emphasise the subjectivity of the informant who is also seen as an active person who produces meanings. In addition, interviews are usable in situations when there is not much previous knowledge.<sup>90</sup> The usual purpose of interviews is to derive interpretations but not facts or laws<sup>91</sup>. Thus interviews are a suitable method for the kind of oral history research that I am doing. As I am interested in the personal experiences and perceptions, interviews are a necessity for me to be able to answer my research questions.

There are at least three different ways of doing interviews: questionnaire, unstructured interview and semi-structured interview or focused interview. For the purposes of this research, the semi-structured interviews were the best option. In semi-structured interviews, instead of asking the same detailed questions from all of the informants, the researcher concentrates on certain themes. This kind of method emphasises the informant's own voice but not the presumptions of the researcher.<sup>92</sup>

Instead of collecting a statistically representative sample, a qualitative interview can be based on a selected sample because the aim of the study is to understand a certain phenomenon in more detail instead of doing statistical generalizations. Every interview can produce many findings and thus the data can be qualitatively plentiful even though the number of informants is low.<sup>93</sup>

Informants' answers always reflect the researcher's presence and the way to ask things as well as the previous questions and answers.<sup>94</sup> Also while filling in the questionnaire, the

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<sup>90</sup> Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2006, 35.

<sup>91</sup> Warren 2002, 83.

<sup>92</sup> Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2006, 48.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 49.

informant can take a look on the later questions that influence his or her answers.<sup>95</sup> By doing interviews, the researcher aims to collect data that allow doing reliable conclusions. Thus, already during the planning process, the researcher should decide what kind of conclusions is he or she going to make.<sup>96</sup>

### **4.3 Description of my own interviews**

This chapter will describe my interviewing process, for example how I contacted my informants and how I did the interviews. The first two steps in this process were finding informants and planning the interview themes and questions<sup>97</sup>. Before planning my own interviews, I contacted two other researchers or research groups who had studied Estonians in Finland and asked whether a part of their data could be used. As it was not possible, I got some advice what kind of questions I could ask from my informants<sup>98</sup>. The most efficient way to find informants was using my own personal contacts to find the first four informants. After interviewing them, I used “snowball sampling”, that is asking contacts from informants, to find more. I contacted also one choir of Estonians living in Finland after one of my informants had recommended it. There was no answer, however. I planned contacting also some associations of Estonians in Finland, like Soome Eestlaste Liit in Tampere. In the end it was not necessary, as I found enough informants for the purposes of this research otherwise. All of the first four informants happened to be women and they were working either health care or welfare sector. As a result I decided to concentrate on women who are working in these fields or in other occupations that are common for women (for example education and cleaning) because I thought that otherwise my data would have been too biased.

I contacted informants either by phone or by e-mail in which I described the purpose of the interview. In some cases I used some time at the beginning of the interview for discussion about the purposes of the interview. In general, I tried to do attending interview as easy as possible for my informants by asking where they would like to meet. Two of the interviews were conducted in informants home, three at their workplace and three in a café or a

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<sup>95</sup> Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2006, 36.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>97</sup> The interview questions are presented in the Appendix number 2.

<sup>98</sup> Pauliina Järvinen-Alenius from TRANS-NET project gave me some examples of possible interview questions.



restaurant. The length of the interviews varied from about 20 minutes to about 1,5 hours but most of the interviews lasted about 50 minutes or one hour. Two of the shortest interviews were done with respondents who had lived shortest time in Finland. In these cases language may have been one the reasons for shorter interview as all the interviews were conducted in Finnish.

I had planned to do some preliminary interviews to test my questionnaire before the actual interviews but in the end there was not possibility to do them. I had planned beforehand a list of themes and questions to be discussed in the interviews but my method, semi-structured interviews, allowed me to ask complementary questions and change the order of the themes according to the situation. Besides of asking about the personal experiences of the informant, interviews offered a possibility to ask also about other's experiences, for instance about informant's children, parents or other contacts. Many of my informants told also about their friends and family. Some new themes appeared during the first interviews, and I was then able to discuss them in the next ones. Thus all the themes were not discussed with all the informants but maybe anyway somehow covered, because I found it important to ask them in later interviews. One of the features of semi-structured interviews is that also informant leads the discussion to the fields that are important for him or her. Therefore I am not sure, whether one preliminary interview had solved this problem because new themes appeared in many interviews.

I started transcribing interviews after the first three were conducted. I found it very useful for the next interviews because while listening previous interviews some new themes that I wanted to be discussed later came to my mind. In some cases informants understood my question differently than I had meant it, but it was also useful, as it gave me new perspectives. If I had chosen doing a questionnaire instead of semi-structured interviews, my research would have ended up differently, as the own voice of the informants would have been more subordinate to my presumptions. Interviewing has also been a learning process, and in many cases interesting questions have come to my mind only after the interview.

After all eight women were interviewed. The literature that I have used as "guidebooks" in my interviewing process, do not give clear answers how many interviews are enough for a

qualitative research like this. One way to evaluate the need for more interviews is saturation of the data. The idea is to continue interviews as long as new informants do not offer new relevant information.<sup>99</sup> Of course I could have done more interviews because each informant tells her own story and is valuable as such. However, during the last interviews new themes did not appear to my mind that might be a sign of saturation.

#### **4.4 Ethnicity, language and gender in the interviews**

Language and culture are important aspects in the interviews. For example the used concepts have to be explained that well for the informants that there is no confusion of their meaning.<sup>100</sup> As I have interviewed people with a cultural and linguistic background different from my own, I need to take into account what kind of difficulties it might cause. For instance, as a researcher I am an outsider of my informants' in-group but a member of the majority group. According to Warren, "the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to understand others' meaning making". This understanding is not an easy task, especially not in cross-cultural interviews.<sup>101</sup> Traditionally cross-cultural interviewing has referred to the collection of data by interviewing people across cultural and national borders. However, there are many research examples that describe insider-outsider challenges faced by interviewers conducting ethnic interviews also within their own societies.<sup>102</sup>

Language was one of the challenges that I faced in my interviews. Most of the informants spoke fluent Finnish but in 1 or 2 cases I assume that if their Finnish language skills had been better, the interview might have been easier for them. For example one informant seemed to be nervous before the interview, maybe because I used the recorder or because of the language. After the interview we continued discussing for a moment and she seemed to be more relaxed. In general, in the most of the interviews, language or nervousness was not a problem. Thus, even if my informants could not use their native language in the interviews, the choice of the language was not too severe a problem. Actually using other than one's native language can even have some advantages. Susan K. Burton interviewed Japanese women living in the UK and made notions about the language in the interviews

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<sup>99</sup> Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 60. Hyvönen 2009, 45.

<sup>100</sup> Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 48 and 53.

<sup>101</sup> Warren 2002, 97.

<sup>102</sup> Ryen 2002, 336.

and about the intercultural interviews in general. According to Burton, the possibility to use one's own language in the interviews makes the situation easier for the informant, as they are able to concentrate on contents and not on the language. However, also culture influences the situation. Women interviewed by Burton stated that they were able to speak to her more freely because they were not restricted by the cultural and linguistic values of their native language. By using a foreign language they were able to avoid these restrictions and to express their thoughts more openly.<sup>103</sup>

Also gender has an impact in the interviewing situation. According to Reinharz and Chase, gender shapes institutions, ideologies and interactions. However, as also race, class, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, abilities, physical conditions and other social dimensions intersect with the gendered contours, no two women's experiences are identical.<sup>104</sup> Of course the question of gender in the interviews does not concern only women. For example Schwalbe and Wolkomir have discussed the special elements of interviewing men.<sup>105</sup>

In addition, my own standpoint as a researcher needs to be considered. I am not only a member of the majority group but also a woman and academically educated. In contrast, my informants represent different nationality and also various educational backgrounds. Thus, some questions that I considered to be important might have been irrelevant for them. For example, as I have studied European studies, I might evaluate Estonia's EU membership as a more important that it actually is in my informants' experiences. Otherness is one of the theoretical concepts that I am using in my research and it interesting to ponder how "otherness" influenced my own interviews.

#### **4.5 Some notions about research ethics**

As doing interviews requires a direct contact with the object of the research, also the research ethical problems are especially complex. In a research that focuses on people, the most important ethical principles are approval based on informing, confidentiality, consequences of the research and privacy.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Burton 2006, 166–170.

<sup>104</sup> Reinharz & Chase 2002, 221.

<sup>105</sup> Schwalbe & Wolkomir 2002, 203-219.

<sup>106</sup> Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 19-20.

Before the interviews I told to my informants that I am doing the interviews to collect research data for my Master's thesis and that I am interested in their own experiences as Estonian immigrants in Finland. Therefore I assume that they had enough information about the purposes of the research. I informed them also that all the information will be discussed confidentially and that the identity of the informant cannot be recognized in the final work. Therefore I have used pseudonyms in the analysis and removed also other identification information.

I have used many data quotations in the analysis because they give a voice for my informants, and at the same time, increase transparency of my work as a reader of the thesis is able to evaluate the data and my conclusions based on it. All the quotations are in Finnish, as it was the language used in all the interviews. I have not translated them into English but I have shortly described the quotations in English. I assume that trying to translate them would have lost some relevant information, as the Finnish language used by my informants would have been almost impossible to translate so that all the meanings and aspects had been preserved.

#### **4.6 How the data were analyzed?**

The first phase of the analyzing process was transcribing the interviews. For the purpose of this study, I thought that transcribing only the discussion is enough and thus I did not transcribe for example breaks or tones. The next step was reading the whole data through a couple of times. While I was reading, preliminary categories began to take a form. Next I started classifying the interviews according to these categories into themes which are visible also in the analysis. Classification helps structuring the data and comparing the different parts of it. Later classes will help finding the important elements from the data and developing the theory. The data can be classified by using, for example, research questions, method, classifications of the previous studies, theory or the data itself.<sup>107</sup> In the classification, I used the research questions and also the data, as some themes appeared from the data itself.

After the classification, the researcher begins to combine the data again and tries to find

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<sup>107</sup> Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2006, 147-149.

regularities or similarities between the classes. After this is the turn of the interpreting the data, which brings out the social meanings and provides comprehensive understanding of the researched phenomenon. Thus, the analyzing process can be divided into two phases: analysis and synthesis. The analysis moves from the whole data to the parts by classification whereas synthesis moves back to the entity and the interpretation, back to the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon.<sup>108</sup> While I was interpreting the data and making conclusions, I returned also to the reading phase again, as I wanted to ensure that I was not misinterpreting my informants nor ignoring some central questions by accident.

In a qualitative interview research, the analysis usually begins with the description of the data. The description aims to clarify features and aspects of the research subject. The description should answer questions like who, where, when, how often and how much. In other words, it will locate the context of the phenomenon.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, in the first one of the next four analysis chapters, I am going to describe my research subject that is my informants and their backgrounds and motivation to move to Finland. Then I will move on to the more specific questions like their everyday life experiences in Finland and discuss their identity building processes in relation to those encounters. In the latest chapters of the analysis, I will discuss what kind of reasons have affected the identity changes of Estonians living in Finland.

## 5 FROM ESTONIA TO FINLAND

In this first chapter of the analysis I will briefly introduce my informants and give reasons for their move to Finland. What is more, I have described the situation of each informant more detailed in the Appendix 1.

### 5.1 Life in Estonia

Time of birth of my informants varies from 1935-1979 and thus they have grown up in different kind of societies or social spaces and are representatives of different generations. There are, however, some experiences that are common for them all. They have all lived in

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<sup>108</sup> Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2006, 149–152.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 145-146.

the Soviet Estonia and seen how Estonia became independent again in August 1991. Since Estonia's independence, there has been going on economic and political changes which have affected peoples' everyday lives in Estonia. Estonia's EU membership has been a part of this process, even some kind of conclusion of the process of becoming a part of "the West" or Europe again.

Besides of the age, there are also other differences, for example occupation. Six of my eight informants are currently working in the social- and health care sectors but in various occupations and have different educational backgrounds from psychologist to home aid and cleaning. One is a school assistant and one is a pensioner but worked before as a nurse. Thus their occupations are quite typical professions for women and also working environments at their work places are dominated by women.

Also family situations vary. Three of them moved to Finland with their family, two with their husband and children and one with her mother. Two of my informants moved alone for work but one of those got married in Finland with Finnish-Swedish man and started a family. The last three moved also alone for work but they have or had children and/or husband in Estonia. These dissimilarities have some influence on their lives in Finland as well. Some of them are planning to stay permanently in Finland whereas some are only earning money in Finland to benefit their families at home.

## **5.2 Move to Finland**

As I have shown in the previous chapters, the situation in Estonia as well as in Finland has changed during the last 20 years that is the time span of this research. This development has also influenced the reason of move of my informants. Even though all my informants are women, they form a very heterogeneous group. As they are different aged and have moved to Finland in different times, also their reasons to move vary. The first two informants moved to Finland when Estonia was still a part of Soviet Union, one in 1990 and another in the beginning of 1991. Move away from Soviet Estonia has obviously been different than move from EU-member Estonia.

Three of the four informants who moved during the 1990s moved because of their or their

own Finnish or their family member's Ingrian Finnish background and only one moved to work in Finland.

Vuonna 98 muutin Suomeen A-statuksella eli se tarkoittaa sitä että mun äitini on inkerinsuomalainen ja ja hän halusi muuttaa ja sitten mina tuln hänen hänen perässä. Ja ja sitten menin opiskelemaan koulunkäyntiavustajaksi. Joo kyllä juuri juuri se olikin ja itse en ollut ajatellut että olisin muuttanut mutta kun hän muutti ja silloin oli juuri sellanen tilanne että mun loppuivat työt ja ei ollut silloin perhettäkään että oli helppo tavallaan vaihtaa sellasta. (Sandra)

For those who moved in 2000s, the main motivation was to earn money for example for renovating an apartment in Estonia or to pay children's education. Another factor that was emphasized by the informants who moved during last ten years was the difficult economic situation in Estonia, low wages and in one case even unemployment.

Että...tuln sitten rakennussiivoukseen. Olin rakennussiivoojana noin vuosi...ja sitten sain kaupungille töihin, kun mul toi kielitaito parantu että emmä osannu sitä Suomea ennen yhtään. Sanoin vain moi ja hei en ymmärtäny yhtään. Joo-o mutta nyt mä oon ihan tyytyväinen, mä enemmän ku kaks vuotta ollu kaupunkilla töissä sis laitoshuoltajana että ihan tyytyväinen siihen. No...se oli se että...pieni palkka Virossa...että ei oikeesti riittäny. (Darja)

Ööö...halusin tulla töihin ja että mulla olis oma asunto, työsuhdeasunto mutta se on ihan hyvä ja sitten ehkä mä mietin jos lapsia tarvis tulla tänne jos ne haluavat tulla tänne et ne voi sit muuttaa tänne oppimaan tai asumaan tai mitä vaan mut lapset ei halua tulla tänne. Mul on ihan pikkuinen se asunto myös, keittiö huone yhdessä...Mä olen ostanut nyt asunto Tallinnassa. Nyt mä...niinku teen sitä remontti järjestän remonttitöitä. Sitten on paljon niitä ensiks asuntovelka ja sitten remontti pitäis järjestää, että jos se remontti on maksettu sitten ehkä vois mennä vuosi tai kaks vielä. (Maria)

In many cases migrants did not have an idea of a permanent move but instead they were planning a short time working in Finland:

Joo, se onki hauskaa siinä mielessä, että mun mielestä kaikki eestiläiset ketkä täällä on niin kukaan ei ole tullut sillä ajatuksella että et tulevat jäädäkseen. Kaikki tulee vaan tekemään jotain töitä ja et sitten no sitten ehkä vuoden tai pari ja että saa niinku jotakin tietsä säästettyä ja sitte vaikka ostettua Eestissä asunnon tai remontoit remontoit olemassa olevan tai jotain tämmöstä. Ja minäkin 2003 sitte, mä olin mul oli vakituinen työpaikka Eestissä vankilapsykologina ja mä tuln niinku vähän semmosena työntekijävaihdoksessa ja (kaupunki Suomessa) vankilaan. Ja mä aattelin että

mä oon tässä nyt jonkun ajan ja mul asunto Tallinnassa ja halusin sitä remontoida ja vähän kerään rahaa säästän ja säästää rahaa ja sitte ehkä vuoden puoltoista maksimissaan ja nyt se sitte on nyt on jo kohta kaheksan vuotta. Mä oon aatellu että mä olisin todennäkösesti palannut takaisin takaisin että mikäli ei olis syntyny perhettä ja tullu...löytyny miestä. (Anna)

It can be argued that there are some similarities between the recent move from Estonia to Finland and from Finland to Sweden in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for example unemployment, short distance between the countries and thus relative easiness of the move and that immigrants received help and advices from the friends who have moved earlier. On the other hand, there are also differences. For example staying in contact with relatives and friends living in the previous country of residence is nowadays easier due to internet connections.

Expectations of life in Finland varied according to the reason of move. For Eliise, who had spent parts of her childhood in Finland and escaped from Russia to Estonia during the second world war, Finland appeared as something that she was missing and where she hoped she could move back later in her life. Because of this emotional tie, her expectations of Finland were high and when the reality did not match with the idea, she became disappointed.

Ei niitä odotuksia mitä mä omassa sydämessä pitin lapsuudesta asti. Mä kuvittelin aivan toisenlaisena, sen takia mä kyllä voin sanoa rehellisesti, että monessa mielessä se ei ole vastannut niitä odotuksia. (Eliise)

For those who moved to Finland to earn money because of the low wages and bad economic situation in Estonia, life in Finland appeared brighter.

Eei mä tulin vaan. Aattelin vaan et tuun kokeileen. Mä aina on mahdollisuus mennä takasin et mutta se on tullu ihan hyväksi iteaksi että olen jääny tänne...Mä oon ihan onnellinen et mä tulin sil vuonna 2007 tänne et ennen sitä kriisiaika tai tota lama-aika että kerkeisin...Mä tiedän että se lama-aikana siel oli ollu Virossa oli kauhee pula sitä työpula ja rahapula on tähän tähän aikana vieläki että...No rahoja riitti just ja justi noin että pitäs lukea kruunua että...riittääkö tilipäivä. Joo ja sitten mä...kyllästyin siihen. Sen taki laitoin sen hakemuksen toho internetissä että. (Darja)

Ei muuta ku vaan et no mä saisin näin paljo rahaa et mä saisin autta lapsia no opiskelussa. Kui no vähän tukea niitten elämässä et mul ei ollut muuta ja kyllä



se et no olen vähän aikaa sillon et menen takasin ku lapset pääsivät omalle jalolle, mutta nyt on vähän vielä jäänyt tota aika. (Lisette)

Ootko nyt ollu tyytyväinen sitte Suomessa asuessa?

Kyllä... tyytyväinen siinä, et no... et mul on nyt mahtollisuus autta mun lapsia mitä mul ei ole, ei olis ollut jos mä oisin jäänyt Viroon. He eivät toimi, no, ei olisi päässyt ikinä yliopistoon, missä he nyt ovat. Et no, et kyllä... olen tyytyväinen siitä. (Lisette)

Many of the interviewees told that their friends who had been living in Finland before them, had helped them at the beginning of their stay and that they have now friends who are planning to move too. Moving has become easier and the example given by those who have already moved encourages.

Mitä mä kuulen, minä alusta mä luulin näin no et se väli on kaukana ja näin, mutta no et mä jätin koti pois ja jotain tämmöstä, mutta nyt mä ne ihan haluavat vaan tulla myös tänne (naurahtaa). No... mä en uskonut tätä mut nyt mä kuulen et, et mitä eteenpäin ja nyt täyty tulla myös tänne. (Lisette)

Onks se vaikuttanut sulla sitte siihen muuttoon et sul oli ystäviä täällä Suomessa?

Juu kyllä just. Ne oli kenen luokse tulla ensimmäiset kymmenen päivää. Kun ei ollut henkilötunnusta eikä mitään, se oli helpompi... (Maria)

Hmmm... on niitä kuka tuli ennen minua vuosi ja niitä kuka... haluaa tulla vielä... et se ei ole mitään parantunut siel se olo... mmm... vaikea tilanne. (Maria)

In Maria's case, move was an answer to economic difficulties in Estonia. For Marta, the short distance between Estonia and Finland was the reason why Finland was a good place to move.

Oisitko voinu aatella, et oisit muuttanu johonki muualle ku Suomeen?

Mä luulen et yks iso plussa on se et se on kuitenkin lähellä niinku mun kotiin niinku silleen. Aattele että ku meillä mummolleki piti ajaa. Siellä oli yli 400 kilometri tai 300 jotain sinne aina mentiin bussilla neljä tunti. Mä oon jotässä ajassa täällä, tää väli 80 nyt käy nopeat laivat, puoltoist tunti kaksi, et se oli niinku iso plussa miks niinku uskaltais jäädä tänne varmasti se et se on niin lähellä, että en mä, voi olla et kuule jos mul nyt sanois jotain et joku et mene

johonkin maahan, mä sanon et en varmasti kyl mee mihinkään. (Marta)

Whatever was their reason to move to Finland, they all faced same kind of encounters in Finland in many different situations. In the next chapter, I am going to discuss more these encounters.

## 6 EVERYDAY ENCOUNTERINGS IN DIFFERENT SOCIAL SPACES – LIVING AS AN ESTONIAN IN FINLAND

As the informants are facing different kind of situations while living in Finland, they also need to consider their position constantly. Many of them have faced the relative nature of acceptance: depending for instance on their language skills, occupational skills and communication skills they are treated differently. Thus there is a need for different self-understanding or identity in different spaces and living as a foreigner in a country seems to be an ongoing identity process. In addition to many social spaces, also different identities or loyalties do influence. For example gender, class and religion are examples of factors that influence in addition to ethnic background. As I have stated before, my informants consist on various different occupational backgrounds, age groups etc. Thus no experience is similar with another, even though all the informants are women and Estonian. In this chapter I will talk about the various social spaces in which immigrants need to act.

Ari Hynynen has studied an urban space as a place of integration and argued that “the everyday life of immigrants is integrated to the urban space by the mediation of different places”<sup>110</sup>. For example, immigrant’s home is a place for “cherishing one’s one cultural identity” but it is also a place that enables becoming familiar with the rules and norms of the new society through the contact with neighbours and the regulations of the housing estate. Besides, immigrants have encounters with the new society’s different institutions. Hynynen refers to work places and places of consumption as “hard” institutions which enable integration into the economic structures of the society. They, in addition, have implications to the identification because they entail social credibility and equality among

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<sup>110</sup> Hynynen 2004, 210.

the majority.<sup>111</sup> The third area of encounters are “soft” institutions, participating social networks in free time meeting places like cafes, places for hobbies and multicultural meeting places. Significance of these places is not only facilitating feeling at home but also enable to develop skills needed in “hard” places.<sup>112</sup> All the spaces are present in the lives of my informants as well. I have not organized this chapter according to Hynynen’s classifications but instead taken advantage of his concepts in a way appropriate to my own work.

## 6.1 Work and profession

In the same way as occupational situation influenced my informants’ lives in Estonia and their reasons to move to Finland, it makes the difference also in their lives in Finland. Some occupations are more valued, better paid and more stable than others. This can be seen also in the appreciation of Estonian work force.

Mä luulen että se on semmonen se riippuu kyllä ammatista tai...missä ne on töissä. En mä osaa sanoo sitä. No menee hyvin, sanotaan näin. Kenellä kuinka...mä en tiiä mitä niillä rakennusmiehillä on kuka niitä on ilman töitä jäänyt, menee takasin kotiin ja mä en tiiä, mä en tiiä semmoisia. (Maria)

Olen kuullut tämmöstä sanomista no et hän on pyytännyt toimistolta ei suomalaista koulutyttyö vaan virolaista siivoojaa, et no tämmöstä mä olen kerran kuullut. Niin et kuka kuka tekee vaan keikkatöitä ja ei ole ammattilainen ja no, et olen kuullut tämmöstä sanomista kyllä. (Lisette)

Appreciation of the work depends on the occupation but also on the need of the employee. Also other factors, like the context influence. Lisette had experienced that she, as a professional, has been more valued than “a Finnish school girl” who is working only part-time.

Level of education is one aspect that distinguishes people and professions and improves immigrants’ position in Finland. Anna, who has worked as a social worker, supposes that she has been better treated because her education has enabled her to work in a more tolerant and pleasant working environment. In contrast, she knows other Estonians who have

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<sup>111</sup> Hynynen 2004, 213–215.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 215, 217.

experienced some kind of exploitation. She assumes that well educated Estonians are doing best in Finland.

No mä olen mul on niinku tuttavita jotka on niinku vähän niinku semmosis huonommin koulutetuilla aloilla ja jossain niinku terveydenhuoltoalalla siivousalalla tämmösillä ja...he on niinku kokenut tämmöstä työpaikalla vähän syrjintää tai siis jotain niinku semmosii liittyen niinku työsopimuksiin ja tämmösiin palkkajuttuihin ja työehtoihin ja et ei ole oltu ihan yhtä rehtejä kun on oltu suo...suomalaisten kanssa työntekijöiden kanssa. Se on varmasti yks asia semmone työ...työlainsäädännön vilpiti ja tämmöset tämmöset...Mut sitten mut sitten olisko muuten jotenki syjintää tai tämmöstä niinku tämmöstä niinku suvaitsemattomuutta...äää...hmm...on ollu ehkä jonkinmoista hyväksikäyttöä ehkä hyväksikäyttöä. (Anna)

Et mä oon niinku poikkeuksellisen niinku hyvää kohtelua saanut, mut mä ajattelen et se ehkä johtuu siitä mun koulutuksesta ja et mä en ole täällä niinku ollu joutunu tekemään siivoustöitä. Oon kuitenkin tehny semmoista noh...koulutetun ihmisen työtä ja siellä tietysti niis paikoissa on niinku muut ihmiset ja kollegat ja näin kans ollu sit enemmän varmaan suvaitsevaisia ku jossaki tämmösissä enemmän hanttihommissa. Mut sit tietysti joo siin moni (yhdessä Helsingin lähiössä) mä olin sosiaali sosiaalitoimistossa töissä sosiaalityöntekijänä ja siellä sit kyllä parit haukut niinku kuulin niinku eestiläisyydestä. (Anna)

Että tota...hmm...että ne niitten kohdalla oon huomannu että on niinku ero tavallaan, et kaikista parhaiten on mun mielestä...parhaiten on ehkä...parhaiten ovat menestyneet Suomessa kuitenkin semmoset hyvää kolutusta omaavat eestiläiset, jolla on niinku tavallaan niinku...on vakituinen työpaikka ja mielekäs työ ja ja...Ja mun työpaikat missä mä oo ollu tää viimeinen on tullut vakituinen edelliset on ollu tämmösiä määräaikaista, mutta et on ollu tosi mielekkäitä ja oon niinku nauttinu työstäni ja se on tärkeä osa kyllä elämää et nauttii työstä mitä tekee 40 tuntia viikossa ja sillä lailla. (Anna)

One occupational group that was mentioned by many informants was construction workers. This implicates that there are concepts and attitudes of other Estonians inside the group of Estonians living in Finland.

Mun mielestä ne pärjää mahtavasti. Ne on joskus mä ku mä olen huomannut virolaisia tullut tänne enemmän sitte mä olen huomannu liikenteessä tai jotakin. Tai venäläisiä on ollut liikenteessä sitten mä huomaan heti sitä, et ne tuo semmosta Tallinnan liikennetyyliä tai jotakin tämmöstä et tai mua vähäsen hävettää ku mä olen kaupassa ja kuulen eestin kieltä ja ne ne huuta sielt jostakin (nauraen) se on niin semmonen et apua juostaan karkuun nopsaa et ne on ku jostakin maalta tullu tai jotakin tämmöstä et ne ei oo et ne varmasti ne onkin maalta jostakin tullu töihin tänne et ku siel maalla ei oo töitä ja ja...ku varmasti

kuka kenellä on töitä siellä ne pysyy oma työpaikassa ei ne tule niin helposti pois mut ne kenel ei oo ne tulee sitten. Kyllä siel on hyviä käyttäytyviä myös mutta yleensä ne rakennustyömiehet on vähän tämmösiä et apua...(nauraa).  
(Sofia)

In Sofia's comment, there can be seen some kind of unwillingness to be associated with the group of Estonians and embarrassment of the behaviour of other Estonians in Finland. For example yelling in Estonian in shops and traffic style from Tallinn are considered as a something peasant and awkward and the informant clearly does not want to be connected with this group. Some had also absorbed an idea of construction workers who are cheap labour force and therefore a threat to Finnish workers.

Sitten ku niitä nyt tulee jos otetaan vaikka rakentaja, ku ne ottaa niinku halvemmalla, sitten suomalainen oma työvoima on työtön et kuinka oikein se sitten on. Niinku työnantajalle se omalta on helpompi ku se on halvempi, mutta toiselta kyl niinku silleen jos omat ihmiset on taas työttömänä, mun mielest se taas ei oo niin oikein, et se on niinku just semmonen kiikun kaakun että, että niinku niitä on nyt niin paljon ja se kilpailu on kovaa, että...mutta kyl mä, mä en tiedä. Mun mielest se riippuu ihan ihmisestä, ei mun mielestä sil oo mitään väliä minkä kansalainen, et jos haluat tehdä töitä sitten sä tekee sitä töitä ja mahdollisuuksia on täällä tosi tosi paljon. (Marta)

Construction workers were also mentioned when I asked about differences in attitudes against Estonian men and women. In Anna's opinion Estonian men have ruined their reputation in Finland by alcohol use but Estonian women are, instead, regarded more positively and even valued as spouses.

Eestiläisiin naisiin varmasti suhtaudutaan paremmin ku miehiin et siitä mä oon melko varma...Eestiläiset miehet on viimevuosien aikana niinku tehny jotenki heijän mainettaan just tämmösellä alkoholikäytöllä ja täällä pilannu aika paljonki et ku täällähän käy niinku tai maaseudulta jossa Eestissä on enemmän työttömyyttä niin voi olla että yhestä kylästä kaikki miehet käy Suomessa jossain rakennustöissä ja sit ne on semmosia perheellisiä miehiä ja viettää pitkät viikot täällä ja Suomessa ja viikonlopuksi Eestiin ja ne ei osaa mitään muuta niinku tehdä iltaisin ku juopotella ja jotain tämmöstä et se on niinku kurjaa, mut mun tota mun miehen työpaikalla on eestiläisiä miehiä töissä ja on kertonut että...no...ei ei kiva. Ehkä semmonen huono kulttuuri tai...mmm, et näil eestiläisil naisilla ei oo semmost mainetta ja sitte eestiläiset naiset on Suomessa (naurahtaa) aviomarkkinoilla aikalailla mun mielestä aika hyvin hyvin arvostettu jos näin voi sanoa mmm et jotenki no ei pidetä pahana sitä.  
(Anna)

Also Anna connects negative idea of construction workers with country people and tells how most of the men of one village might move to Finland for work. Both Anna and Sofia are constructing their own identity as Estonians by comparing themselves with other Estonians in Finland. Even though they are Estonians, they represent another social group than the men working in the construction trade. Thus, in this case either, ethnic identity is not the only group to be identified with but they have other group memberships that are based on social positions.

## 6.2 Personal relations and free time

In addition to profession and working life experiences, another very central element in the lives of the informants' is their families and friends. In this chapter, I am going to discuss more the situations that the informants have faced in their personal relationships while living in Finland. In the next quotation Maria describes how her friends were especially important during the first few months of her stay in Finland because with her friends she was able to share her experiences. Also hobbies, like singing in an Estonian choir, has been important but now she has become too busy to continue in the choir.

Miten sit näiden virolaisten ystävien kanssa et puhuttekte sit paljon tästä Suomessa asumisesta tai jostain yhteisistä kokemuksista täällä tai?

No silloin aluksi. Ensimmäinen vuosi, ensimmäinen puoli vuotta, ensimmäiset kuukaudet sitten on hyvin tärkeää paljon puhutan tästä et miten pärjätään ja miten olis parempi ja mikä säännöt täällä on, mutta nyt on jo semmonen tottumus et ei enää. Eestiläises laulukueoros kävin mut nyt lopetin kun mul on niin paljon tekemistä siel Eestissä, ei ehti enää, vuosi mä kävin siellä. (Kuoron nimi) on nimi, ootko kuullut? (Maria)

Hobbies, like the choir, are an example of soft institutions that enable immigrants getting familiar with the new society. Also other personal relations can work as such. However, forming relationships with locals in a foreign country is not an easy task and also intercultural family relations were sometimes seen as challenging. In general, many of the informants mentioned that they have not faced prejudices in Finland but some elements of them can be seen in their personal relationships. When I asked about experienced prejudices related to gender, for example Anna connected it with her marriage and others' attitudes of marriage between an Estonian and a Finn.

Mun mielestä pidetään ehkä vähän pahana sitä, jos avioituu niinku thaimaalaisen naisen kanssa niin siinä on vähän joku semmonen seksi semmonen väritys ehkä liian voimakas tai joku semmonen, mut jos eestiläisen naisen kanssa niin mun mielestä siihen niinku katsotaan melko suopeasti tai. (miehen, nimi poistettu), mun miehen, suku on todella hyvin suhtautunu minuun että...on ottanu niinku melko avosylin vastaan ja sillä lailla. (Anna)

Even though Anna's experiences are mainly positive, she has experienced some forms of negative attitudes. She is aware that some kind of negative attitudes against Estonian women marrying Finnish men exist, but if Estonian wives are compared with Thai women, they are more valued. Although she has been well accepted by her parents-in-law, she and her husband are afraid to talk about their plans to move to Estonia with his parents, because they are afraid of their reactions.

Eei, en ole. Mut jos me ei olla uskallettu kenellekään (miehen, nimi poistettu) sukulaisista kertoa, että et me ehkä halutaan muuttaa Eestiin et se on kyllä, se ois kyllä tosi paha paikka, et mä pahasti pelkään että (miehen, nimi poistettu) vanhemmat, ne on niin kiintyneitä niinku lapsenlapsiinsa ja et jos ne kuulee tästä asiasta ne saattaa sanoa että ne jättää (miehen, nimi poistettu) vaikka perinnöttömäksi tai jotain että uhkailla niinku että ettei tää käy niinku ollenkaan muutetaan johonki niinku ns.ulkomaille heijän nähden...että sillä lailla...että kyllä ne...pitää niinku Eestiä melko semmosena kuitenkin tietyllä lailla vähän ehkä kehitysmaana tai tämmösenä villinä villinä paikkana. (Anna)

According to Anna, her parents-in-law see Estonia as a "wild place" that reminds a development country. On the other hand, sceptical impressions are not probably only about suspicion but also lack of knowledge and inexperience of meeting foreigners, as can be seen from the next quotation.

Hänellä (ex-miehellä) on hyvin hyvin mukava perhe ja sukulaiset ja siellä (maakunta Suomessa), että hän on (maakunnasta) kotoisin ja erittäin kiva äiti ja isä ja sukulaiset niin tota tutustuin näihin heihin sitte, että se oli semmonen...kiva aika. (Sandra)

Miten ne hänen sukulaiset, suhtautuks he sitten hyvin sinuun?

Joo, että ne heillä oli myöskin niin he ovat savolaisia ja he asuvat siellä (maakunnassa) niin tota ja ihan (maakunnan) murretta puhuvat, et ainakin isä isä ja äitinkin aika paljon, niin tota he kuulemma olivat puhuneet että miten he tulevat, niin et mistä he puhuisivat minun kanssani kanssani tai niin ennen sitä tutustumista, mutta kyllä...et se oli sit ihan silloin kun ennen kun tavattiin tai tapasin heidän vanhemmat. Että ei kyllä se ihan tota hyvin tullaan juttuun hyvin

ja tosi mukavia isovanhempia...erittäin hyviä tota isovanhempia nyt (lapselle, nimi poistettu) on, että se oli vähän sellasta et voi olla et he eivät olleet paljon ennen jutelleet niinku ulkomaalaisten tai mui virolaisten kanssa, että voi olla, että joskus muutaman sanan, et mut se...joo kyllä se silloin ku mä tulin äidin äiti tuli Helsinkiin juuri silloin kerran, niin silloin tavattiin ensimmäistä kertaa, niin ihan hyvin tultiin silloin juttuun ja (muutamasta sanasta ei saa selvää).  
(Sandra)

There are also some other prejudices against Estonian women in Finland, for example related to prostitution.<sup>113</sup> Marta had faced some stereotyping related to her ethnic background in her relationship with a Finn.

Nyt mä oon kohta ollu kolme vuotta kihloissa suomalaisen miehen kanssa, et vaikka me ei asuta yhdessä, mutta se on tosi ihana. Nyt se uskaltaa kertoa, mikä ennakkoluulo sillä oli, ku sillä ei ollu ketään tuttuja niinku ollu eestiläistä... niinku et haluuvat vaan rahaa eikä mitään muuta, mä sanoin et tee...mä tuun toimeen itte, mä oon tullut jo koht 20 vuotta itte toimeen, et mua ei kiinnosta, et oonks mä kysyny paljonko sä saat palkkaa et mua ei kiinnosta se, et jos sul on jotain kuvitelmii, et sori, se ei oo mun vika, että et silleen. Et no, plus sitten niinku tutuilta et niinku joo et aha eestiläinen, joo niiden mielest se on se venäläinen et niinku ne on kuitenkin niin kaks eri asiaa niinku silleen, että vaikka se on ollut Neuvostoliiton alla, mutta kuitenkin se on ihan erilainen, et samalla lailla ku Latvia ja Liettua, et ne on taas ihan erilaiset vaikka ne on kuitenkin kartalla niinku lähellä että. (Marta)

Another stereotype which can be seen in this quotation is seeing Estonians as Russians because of the Communist past of Estonia. This kind of stereotyping seems to be very common among Estonians but also with others from former Soviet republics.<sup>114</sup>

A few had noticed some differences in the importance of family ties in Estonia and Finland. For those who were planning to move back to Estonia, one important reason was that their parents are living there and they saw it as their responsibility to take care of their parents. Instead, Finnish way was to leave elderly alone stunned Eliise.

Meillä on esimerkiksi täällä eestiläisillä oli se vähän outoa ja on nytkin, että esimerkiksi eestiläiset pitivät omia vanhempiaan ja ihan kuolemaansa asti luona, ei niitä lähetetty, se oli ihan viimeinen joku eritapaus kun oli pakko vanhainkotiin äiti tai isä lähettää tai ettei pystynyt hoitamaan, mutta täällä on se ihan näin näin ilmiselvää, että kun vaan äiti isä vanhemmaksi tulee, vaan

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<sup>113</sup> Liebkind, Mannila, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Jaakkola, Kyntäjä, Reuter 2004, 238–239.

<sup>114</sup> See chapter 2.2.



johonkin hoitokotiin tai vanhainkotiin ja ja sitten sinnekään ei mennä katsomaan tai kylään, että kuinka monet vanhukset ovat valittaneet, että monta vuotta, että eivät ole lapsiaan nähneet. (Eliise)

In addition to the family relations, also friendships require identity negotiations, as making friends in a foreign community might be more challenging than at home.

On molempia on ihan tota on virolaisia tuttuja ja on ja toki silloin on myöskin tämän (lapsen nimi) isän isän sukulaisia ja tuttuja ja lähipiiri ja sukulaisia ja tota on kyllä molempia et on virolaisia ja suomalaisia. (Sandra)

Miten sitte muita ystävyysuhteita?

Ystäviä on sellaisia mutta varmaan tiedätte itse että ei suomalainen niin hyvin ystävyysty. Jos menet Eestiin niin sieltä saat kymmenen kertaa enemmän ja nopeammin ystäviä ja heti sinut hyväksytään ja sellaisena kuin sä olet ja mutta... (Eliise)

Eliise has had an experience that becoming a friend with Finns is more difficult than with Estonians. On the other hand, Sandra emphasized the own activity of immigrant trying to get to know local people.

Joo se on just se on hyvin paljon itsestä kiinni myös että kun kun se voi olla että jos maahanmuuttaja tulee Suomeen niin voi olla että se että että se riippuu ihan siitä onko hän itse aktiivinen ja haluaako hän, etsiikö hän kontakteja ja sellasta keskustelua ja, että voi olla että se on toki vähän että pitää vähän tietty kynnyks ylittää että uskaltaa alkaa puhumaan sellasta... ei ehkä ihan oikeeta suomen kieltä kirja kieliopillisesti oikein oikein puhua vaan että... mutta mutta kyllä aina kannattaa kannattaa olla rohkea, että se riippuu hyvin paljon ihmisestä itsestään, että miten hän... sopeutuu tähän yhteiskuntaan(?), se on hyvin yksilöllistä ja toki kun kun on luonteeltaan sellainen ehkä ei ole niin ulospäin suuntautunut sitten se voi olla et se on vaikeampi ja voi olla toki että on sitten muutkin ajattelevat ehkä hän ei etsi kontakteja sitten taas sitten se on molempien puolinen että se ei ei niinku lähte(?) niinku aina(?). (Sandra)

In addition to the friends in Finland, many informants had maintained strong friendships also in Estonia. Furthermore, friends from Estonia visited them as well as they keep on visiting their friends and families in Estonia.

Ai kaikki ovat siellä, et ei mitään ole muuttunut. Kaikki ihan sama ja se se tietokone, sähköposti ja se kaikki on. Myös puhelin, no, saa soittaa. Mun meil

ystävittärel on ihan ne et aviomiehet Suomessa töissä ja kyllä no me tapaamme myös täälläki ihan paljo ja no käymään luontossa ja missä vaan. (Lisette)

### **6.3 Estonians and other immigrant groups**

As I have brought out in the previous chapters, Estonians are nowadays the biggest immigrant group in Finland. Finnish and Estonian languages are kindred languages and there are many connections in the histories of these two countries. In this chapter, I will take a look whether these issues have an impact in the everyday lives of Estonians in Finland, especially compared to other immigrant groups.

As was stated in the chapter 2.2, Estonians and also Poles are sometimes confused with Russians and therefore regarded more negatively than they otherwise would be. Both of these groups have an experience that their groups are regarded more positively in Finland than Russians. In the many parts of the data, there are examples that the informants feel that because Finland and Estonia are said to be kindred nations, Estonians are well regarded in Finland. Another reason mentioned was that most of the Estonians have been working in Finland and not been dependent on social benefits. On the other hand, the free movement inside the EU has increased the work related immigration of Estonians into Finland, and in some interviews, it seemed that Estonian workers are treated and seen as any other immigrant workers.

Many of the informants emphasized positive experiences and negative experiences came up only after more specific questions. For example Sofia had heard about negative attitudes among Finns only from the persons she knows in Finland but she had not faced prejudices herself.

Jotkut suomalaiset itte on mulle sanonut ei ei tää suomalainen ole niin hyvä. Se on mul on niin hyviä kokemuksia ei mulla ole huonoja. Sitten se sanoo mä en tiedä missä sä oot asunu ,voi olla et mä oon niin sinisilmänen, mutta en mä oo huomannu. (Sofia)

Eliise had experienced that there is a lack of confidence against foreigners or persons who are regarded as non-Finnish. Even though she has Finnish roots, she has faced some mistrust.

Että jos sä olet tullut jostain muualta sinuun ei luoteta, vaikka mitä sä tekisit, vaikka kuinka hyvin kaikkea järjestäisit, niin tällainen epäluottamus on, se piilee jossakin täällä syntyville, se on se mahtollista ja onkin näin, että se on nykyajan meidän yhteiskunnassa tällainen henki sisällä. Sillon ku mä lapsena olin, niin oli aivan toisenlaista. Ei mitään sellaista epäilystä. (Eliise)

Almost all informants had experienced that Estonians have some kind of special position as kindred nation and that Finns are interested in Estonia and Estonians.

No se on ehkä virolaisena vähän helpompi sopeutua, kun se on niin lähellä. Kulttuuri kulttuuri on niin samanlainen ja ne tavat ja kaikki niin tuttua ja kuitenkin ja Pohjoismaan tai Pohjoismaissa on kuitenkin aika samanlainen temperamenttikin et se on vähän niinku se lähempää se, se ei ole niin, ihmiset ei ole niin korkea tavallaan. (Sandra)

Sandra mentions also that adaptation into the Finnish society would be easier for Estonians because of cultural similarities. Also historical reasons might reduce prejudices against Estonians in her opinion.

Ei mun mielestä virolaisiin suhtaudutaan erittäin hyvin, että tuollasen historian takia voi olla että ehkä muihin muun maalaisiin on vähän sellainen vähän varovaisempi tai varautuneempi suhtautuminen, mutta mun mielestä virolaisiin on jotenkin suhtaudutaan kyllä ihan hyvin että ei mitään valittamista. Se on toki myöskin itsestä kaikki kiinni kun on itse toki on ystävällinen ja ja avoin niin saa sellasta samanlaista palautetta, et se on ihan tota sellanen kaksipuolinen juttu aina ihmisten välillä. (Sandra)

Anna has noticed that Estonians are better regarded than Russians and explains it with the similarities in languages and history. She also mentions that Estonians have been working in Finland and have positive reputation and that is why she has not faced prejudices but got positive comments for instance about her language skills.

Ehkä se on kuitenkin sit et et ne eri kansallisuudet on Suomessakin vähän eri arvoisia. Eestiläisiin suhtaudutaan niinku 80 % paremmin ku venäläisiin. No ensiks sen takia et se kieli on niin läheinen ja joku heimolaisuus ja tällainen ja sitte...no ja sitte no sit se menneisyys ja historia ja tällöset tekijät ja kaikki ja ja no et eestiläiset on kuitenkin Suomessa enimmäkseen...no tehny ehkä paljon töitä ja tällösiä et ei ole ehkä niin paljon mitään niinku moi moittavaa tai...et et kyl se varmaan jotain semmosta on, että eestiläisillä onneksi on Suomessa enimmäkseen hyvä maine ja sen takia mä en ole joutunu missään

virastoissa ja semmosissa kärsimään. Päinvastoin hirveesti kehuaan et mitenkäs mä oon niin hyvin opetellu puhumaan Suomea ja tämmösiä...tämmösiä juttuja. (Anna)

Especially Ingrian Finns are seen as more Finns than other immigrants. A Finn had said to Sofia that she is almost like a Finn as she is married with an Ingrian Finnish man. She also states that idea of differently valued immigrant groups has been fed her by Finns and that she had not thought about it beforehand.

No no ku mä joskus olen miettinyt että joku suomalainen on mulleki sanonut näin et no sitten sä olet jo lähes suomalainen, ku olet inkerinsuomalaisen kanssa naimisissa. Sit mä olen et aa olenko...okei (nauraa). Et mä ei ole itte tämmöstä miettinyt ollenkaan, mutta ne on itte syöttänyt tämmösiä ajatuksia mulle, et sit mä olen saanu tietää tää et aha, mä olen lähes sama mikä ne toisetki. (Sofia)

Especially those who had worked as home aid for elderly, had an experience that Finns are interested in Estonians and Estonian history. Both Marta and Lisette had had customers that were very interested in to tell about their own life stories and talk about Estonian history.

Et mä muistan, mä olin kotihoitajana, sitten oli, must oli ihana niitten mummeleitten ja ukkeleitten kanssa keskustella, sitten ku ne puhu mitä ne on niinku tehnyt ja sitten ne peit...niin piilotteli tämmösiä ja tämmösiä tyyppejä. Sitten olis vaan pitänyt ottaa nauhalle, et sieltä tuli niinku toisenlaista historiaa, että et silleen kuitenkin se niinku niin sanotusti veljeskansa ollut et on tehty (?) ja mä muistan kouluajasta aina ku olit joku olympialaiset tai silleen aina pidettiin peukkuja suomalaisille, et joo mene mene, et silleen että tai just...et tai kuitenkin se on niinku niin lähellä. Et se on se voi olla et on yks iso plussa. (Marta)

Ne eläkeläiset tut tutut ihmiset, he haluavat puhuta tämmösestä historiasta, et kyllä tämä kiinnostaa ja no...me yhdessä puhumme mitä kaikki olis voinut olla no toisenlaista (naurahtaa). Et kyllä mä olen kiinnostunut no mistä va no juuri niiden vanhusten ih ju jutuista, heidän lapsuudesta, mistä he ovat tulleet ja sitten no vertailee mun mummon juttuja ja tämmösiä. No se Oksanen ja Puhdistus ja kaikki tämmöset jutut. He kysyvät et onko se totta, et no mitä mä ajattelen siitä. (Lisette)

These quotations show that there is a difference between Estonian and other immigrants because of historical reasons. Finns are interested in the history of the “kindred nation” and thus also interested in knowing about the lives of Estonians that they are communicating with. These attitudes might be stronger among older Finns as they have themselves seen the

similarities and differences in the histories of Estonia and Finland whereas younger people might be less aware and for sure have less personal experiences of the matter.

However, this different attitude seems to exist only in the personal relations, as while meeting Finnish officials, Estonians are treated like any other immigrants. Lisette has not noticed difference in attitudes against her and other immigrants and explains it by saying that all non-Finns stand in the same lines in the offices. She thinks also that all the immigrants have same kind of problems in the interaction with civil servants.

Mä en usko et se suhtuminen on erilainen olenko mä virolainen tai olenko mä tumma muunlainen tai jotain tämmöstä. Mä uskon et se on ihan sama, mutta on jonkin verran suhtu suhtautumista et no et mä en ole suomalainen, jotain on. Mutta sii...no kaikki menevät sinne samaan riviin, et ei soomalainen tai no, tai jotain muuta, et se ei tule siitä, et mä olen virolainen. (Lisette)

Mut et virolaisiin ei suhtauduta sitte erilailla ku vaikka muihin maahanmuuttajiin?

Näin mä luulen kyllä, kyllä näin. Koska me emme tunne ne Suomen lakeja, tapoja, no, no kyllä meil täytyy mennä sinne verotoimistoon ja KELA-toimistoon ja tämmösiä no, ja kaikil on ihan samanlaiset onkelmat siellä (naurahtaa), et kaikki ei ei suju hyvin, no tämmöstä ei-ymmärtämistä tulee. (Lisette)

Also Darja comments that Estonians are immigrants like any others but learning Finnish language might be easier if the person is motivated.

Emmä usko. Kui joo kai se virolainenki maahanmuuttaja ihan sama ku muutkin. Mä ajattelen...joo se kielen oppiminen on kyllä vähän helpompi mutta ei ne kaikki virolaiset osaa sitä suomea. Ei ku ne ei viitti opetella kyl kato mmm. (Darja)

As a conclusion, it could be argued that there are some elements of different kind of attitudes against Estonians and other immigrants. Attitude, however, varies according to the situation.

#### **6.4 Language, identity and encounters with the locals**

For persons who moved to Finland alone, significance of Estonian language has been

different than for those who moved with family or have got children while living in Finland. Maintaining Estonian language skills and teaching parent's native language for children was considered important, so that children are able to communicate with their relatives in Estonia. Informants wanted to teach Estonian language for their children instead of speaking Finnish with an accent. Thus, even though the informants are now living in Finland, ties with relatives and friends living in Estonia are still important to maintain.

Joo. Mä en voinut äidiltä vaatia et se rupeis opiskelemaan suomea. Sitten tietysti ittellä oli alussa helpompi puhua eestiä. Lapset puhuu ihan hyvin eestiä et ku me ollaan siellä ne niinku pystyy kommunikoimaan niinku sillä ja tuottamaan itte eestin kielellä... Turha mun olis niille yrittää niinku vääntämään sitä suomee ku ne oppii sen kuitenkin tarhassa ja silleen niinku oikeesti jos mä oisin puhunut väärin tai jossakin joku...silleen et ainakin ne puhuu molempia. (Marta)

Joo, meil on kotona viron kieli täysin, mutta joskus mä olen niin innostunut tai kyllä ne lapsetki vetää mua siihen et että niillä on leikkikieli suomi, ne haluaa puhua suomen kielellä, mutta sitten mä olen yrittänyt vastata viron eestin kielellä mutta joskus tulee näin et puhun myös suomea, mut mä yritän sitä välttää enemmän et ne just puhuisivat ja selittäisivät viron kielellä. Sen takia niillä on, kun mä vertaan niiden samanikäisiä lapsia sitten Eestissä sitten niiden sanavarasto on paljon pienempi, puolet pienempi. (Sofia)

Besides of easing communication, some mentioned that Estonian language is a part of their identity and a versatile knowledge of languages was seen as enrichment.

Joo se on mulle myös yksi yksi sellainen hyvin tärkeä asia on se, että kun meillä on mun pojallani on kaksikielinen perhe, että kun me ollaan erottu nyt (lapsen, nimi poistettu) isästä mutta mutta että hän on suomalainen ja minä olen virolainen ja sitten hyvin tärkeää on se että pitää sitä omaa kielitaitoa yllä, että niin että se toki poikani kanssa puhun kotona viroa ja ja sitten just ku on virolaisia kavereita vielä täällä Suomessa ja Virossa, että se on hyvää sellasta harjottelua kyllä päivittäin niinku juteltua ihan molemmilla kielillä ja aika aktiivisesti. (Sandra)

Miks se on sun mielestä tärkeää ylläpitää sitä kielitaitoa?

No se on just se identiteetti, identiteetti silloin säilyy se oma identiteetti ja se ja se ja ylipäätään se että kun, olen sitä mieltä esimerkiksi voin antaa lapselle, no voin antaa lapselle oman äidinkieleni sen sijaan että puhuisin sellasta aksentilla suomea ja toki toki jokainen kieli on rikkaus ja kun se tulee niinku automaattisesti ihan luonnostaan ja ihan minun oma oma äidinkieli niin kyllä se on hyvin tärkeä myöskin lapsen kannalta, että hän oppii puhumaan ja

tuntemaan sitä virolaista kulttuuria ja kieltä ja kaikin puolin muutenkin, että kun on kesäisin myöskin Virossa kylässä ja näin niin sitten hän saa sitten sellasta harjotella myöskin viron kielellä puhumista enemmän. (Sandra)

In the private sphere, within one's own family, Estonian language was emphasized whereas in public life, for example at work place, learning to speak fluent Finnish has been essential for the informants. For communicating with locals, language was, obviously, very central issue.

Even though one's own native language is an important part of the identity and a resource while living in a foreign country, insufficiency in Finnish language skills had caused some negative encounters. For example speaking Finnish language with an accent had paid others attention.

Sellasia yksittäisiä tapauksia varmaankin voi olla on ollut tai että jos ihminen kuulee heti toki ensimmäisestä lauseesta, että mä puhun aksentilla suomea, että se ettei ole mut...no hyvin hyvin harvoin, että ei tule ihan mitään mieleen sellaista tällä hetkellä, et mikä olisi. Voi olla joku sellanen, että jossain bussissa tai tosiaanki kassalla tai jossain. Mut se ei ole se ei ole sellainen yleinen suhtautuminen tai sellainen asenne vaan se on niinku se joku yksittäinen joku yksi ihminen se voi olla luonteeltaan ihan sellanen ei kohtelias tai jotain, se on ihmisestä kiinni, et se ei ole sellanen yleinen asenne tavallaan. (Sandra)

Sandra had not experienced very negative encounters because of her accent and she mentioned that there is no common negative attitude but some individuals are less polite. At the same time, Anna had felt it disturbing that others had paid attention to her accent and she experienced it frustrating that strangers are asking about her background and that she is not allowed to be "privately".

Mä en saa edes lausetta pääse lopettamaan ku kysytään, että hei ootko sä Virossa, et vaikka kuinka hyvin niinku puhuis suomea niin se oman kielen äidinkielen korostus tai se aksentti siinä säilyy ja...ja mä niinku valitin hänelle, että että miks ei anneta niinku olla privaattisti tai että aina pitää kertoa kaikille (naurahtaa) melkein ventovieraille...no et et kuka on ja mistä maasta ja milloin tullut ja et se on niinku vähän niinku rasittavaa. Ihan tämmöset niinku vaikka junakeskustelu tai jossain kahvilassa kahvilan myyjän kanssa tai jotain semmosta. (Anna)

Marta instead, sees same kind of encounters as amusing and says she does not take those

situations so seriously.

Miltä se sit tuntuu et se tulee esiin aina, et oot virolainen, tai just jos vaikka asiakkaat tälleen ottaa esiin sen?

Emmä tiedä...

Onks se häiritsevää vai kivaa vai?

Ei se oo häiritsevää, et joku voi sanoo et terveisiä sinne päin tai just et ne puhuu just et on tuttui sieltä sieltä ja ei ei ne niinku koe silleen, ne vaan nauraa enemmän, hauska niinku silleen ku mä kirjotan välillä väärin, työparit tai silleen että joo sut pitäis lähettää ekaluokalle et sä et osaa kirjottaa (naurahtaa) niille, en mä koe sitä niinku no, mutta voi olla et se riippuu riippuu musta et mä en ota sitä niin vakavasti. (Marta)

As Marta notices, different people experience same kind of situations differently. Many informants explained their negative experiences with bad mood or told that they have been treaded exceptionally well. Many previous studies of immigrants' experiences have presented same kind of results. In this research I am not, however, going to emphasize immigrants' explanations for these situations but think what kind of different roles they take in various situations they experience in their everyday lives.

As can be seen in the many above quotations, the informants have needed different roles in different situations or social spaces in Finland. One might be a valued member of the work community but face negative attitudes in her private life or while meeting Finnish officials. Therefore, there is both positive and negative stigmatization related to Estonians living in Finland. Even though some negative attitudes do exist they are still better regarded than some other foreigners. In all these diverse situations, there is also a need for different identities and self-understanding. Besides of everyday life situations, also structural changes have had an influence in the lives of the informants. In the next chapters, I will examine changes in Estonian identity and in the attitudes of Finns and what kind structural changes might have caused them. In this chapter I have argued that different situations require different identities, in the next ones I will take a broader look at the elements that influence Estonians' identity construction in Finland.



## 7 STRUCTURAL CHANGES - CHANGING IDENTITIES?

Like very common everyday life encounters have an impact in the lives of Estonians in Finland, also some larger societal changes do influence. In this chapter I am going to discuss how the political history of Estonia, like the collapse of the Soviet Union and consequences of the EU accession, has influenced identity construction. Because of these ongoing developments, identification process is going on all the time. Living in Finland as an Estonian immigrant has changed and it can be seen in the identification process. Societal structures mattered, when informants were negotiating their own history in linkage with the history of two countries in the interviewing situation.

### 7.1 Estonian identity?

Due to the eventful history of Estonia, Estonian population consists of various ethnic backgrounds both from east and west sides of the country. Many of my informants told that they have relatives from several countries of the previous Soviet Union but also for example from the Scandinavian countries. Thus defining who Estonians are and who is Estonian seemed to be problematic sometimes and defining who we are and who we are not was not clear at all. However, they all felt that at least a part of their identity is Estonian.

Mä oon niin sitä ku tätä, mä oon niin virolaista ku venäläistä. Välillä mä en tiedä itekki kumpi mä oon oikeesti. (Darja)

In the next quotation Sofia describes her ancestry that is from many different countries and states and that she does not know who she actually is. She has Estonian passport but she feels that she is a mixture of various nationalities.

No itte asiassa mul on äiti Venäjältä, isä on Eestistä, sitten..sitte ku mu isä sano et vielä etukäteen... et Ruotsista on vielä sukujuuria etet en mä olekaan niin puhdas. En mä tietä kuka mä oon mutta kaikki sekaisin mä oon. Ja äitin puolelta on Ukrainasta vielä et mä oon niin sekaisin, et mua ei oo...ei oo enää puhtasta suomalaista ei oo puhtasta venäläistä ei oo puhtasta ruotsalaista mä luulen. Et se on kuitenkin...tai Viro on mennyt niin sekaisin. Siel on ollut käynyt niin paljo on sotaa, on erilaista ollut on saksalaisia on ruosalaisia, erilaista aikaa on et siel ei sais enää sanoa et mä oon...Vaun mulle annettiin tää passissa et mä oon eestiläinen, okei sitte mä oon eestiläinen...ei voi mitään. (Sofia)

Maria describes Estonians as quite similar with Finns, kind of kin, but which are accustomed to be in contact with Russians. Therefore they are something in between Russians and Finns.

Miten...näkyys se jotenki sun arkielämässä täällä et oot virolainen? Muuten ku et oot siel kuorossa ollu?

Mmmm...ei tässä, mä en tiää, mä en osaa sanoa onko siel jotain eroo...en usko, se on sittenki niin läheinen se suomalainen on läheinen niinku sukulainen kun me ollaan totuttu tottu tottumus on venäläisen ihmisten kanssa. Ne on hyvin nopeat, kiireelliset ja temperamenttiset, mut suomalaiset on tietysti semmoset hitaampi mut ehkä se eestiläinen on semmonen keskimäinen et vähän hitas ja vähän temperamenttisempi. Mulle tuntuu...(Maria)

Even though Eliise's relatives are Finns, she is married with an Estonian, lived most of her life in Estonia and studied there and, therefore, she feels that she is half Estonian as well. Idea of one's own ethnic identity can thus change according to the situation and experience of life.

Mun suvussani ei ole ketään muuta ku suomalaisia. Et on kyllä paljon monet muut sekoittuneet mutta nyt vaan tää eestiläispoika (puhuu miehestään, joka välillä käy kuuntelemassa haastattelua) on nyt sekoittanut, mutta sitten perheessä on meillä kaksi lasta. Poikani on ihan pitää tätä eestiläistä puolta vahvasti isän puolta ja tytär taas on ollut jo sielläkin Eestissä enemmän suomalainen kun eestiläinen. Minä ainakin olen nyt puoleksi eestiläiseksi tullut koska kun Eestiin jäimme niin kaikki opintothan mulla menivät ylioppilaaseen lukemiseen asti Eestissä ja ja eteenpäin vielä sitten lääketiedettä ja psykologiaa. (Eliise)

In addition to the historical developments and those influences in the Estonian identity, also living in a foreign country seems to emphasize some aspects of the national identity. Sandra mentions that she appreciates some aspects of Estonian life more now when she is not living there anymore. Being Estonian is still a very important part of her identity that she wants to move on to her child as well.

Mites nyt ku oot asunu Suomessa, niin onko jotkut virolaisuuteen liittyvät asiat korostunu sitte?

No se on juuri että...että se on juuri että kun sinne pääsee kuitenkin se on se

sieltä niinku historiasta kaikki sanotaan että historiasta kaikki ollaan kotoisin sieltä menneisyydestä, niin toki että se jos sitä sitä ei että voi olla että sitä voi arvostaa enemmän kun siellä on niin rajoitetun aikaa, että ei ole niin koko ajan, et jos olis koko ajan niin se olis ehkä...niinkun sitä ei huomaisi, se kuitenkin se aika on rajoitettu ja se on kuitenkin se mitä pitää niinku tärkeänä ja mitä mikä niinku haluaa lasten myöskin oppivan ja näin se toki korostuu aina että kun tulee justiin tai sellasella euforiassa vähän siellä muutama päivä, et aaa mä olen Viro Virossa taas, että kyllä ku se että, se on. (Sandra)

In many interviews, informants made a difference between Finns and Ingrian Finns and Estonians and Ingrian Finns. As can be seen in the Sandra's next comment, because her mother is an Ingrian Finn, she is not "a pure Estonian" but also a half Finn. However, she feels that she is Estonian.

Mä tunnen suomalaisen niinku, että mä oon niinku ihan suomalaisessa elämässä niinku sisällä, että mä tunnen ja tiedän nää piirteet ja kaikki, mut toki että toki virolaisena mä itseäni niinku tunnen virolaiseksi, vaikka mä olenki puoleksi suomalainen äitin puolesta, että mun äitini on inkerinsuomalainen ja isäni on oli virolainen. Niin että sitä ei tule mietittyä että keneksi tuntee, että ihminen niinku keskustelen ihmisten kanssa niinku ihan tavallisesti tavallaan, mutta ei...että toki kaikki tietävät et ja niin että jotenkin se on niinku luonnollinen, mutta en mä itseäni ja mä tykkään suomalaisesta tota ihan musiikista ja ja ja...että ei, mutta ei tunne itseni suomalaiseksi mutta...tykkään paljosta paljon ihmisii samasta kulttuurista tai ihan tapoista, musiikista tai ihan mistä tahansa, että se on ihan niinku mulle tuttua. (Sandra)

For the informants, ethnic identity, or being Estonian, seemed to be a way to locate themselves. To be able to discuss identities, concepts like Estonians and Finns are necessary, but also a way to categorize people and in worst case also essentialise presumptions connected with ethnic categories. However, ethnic identities are also important in immigrants' lives. According to Riku Perhoniemi's and Inga Jasinskaja-Lahti's follow-up research from 1997-2004, in which they studied integration of several immigrant groups, Estonians were less identified with their ethnic group than some other immigrant groups, like Russians, Vietnamese and Somalis, and more with Finns, even if ethnically Finnish Estonians were separated from the group of Estonians. Turkish, Arabs and Ethnic Finns were most identified with a Finnish identity and less with their own ethnic identity. For Ethnic Finns from Russia and Estonia, the ethnic identity of their previous home country was also more important than Finnish identity but however, among them Finnish identity was stronger than in other groups. The more immigrants identified with their ethnic

group, the less they identified with Finns.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, from the integration point of view, it could be argued that it is not positive development that more Estonians do not identify themselves with Finns. Nonetheless, in contemporary transnational world in which people are ready to move to another country for work, maybe trying to integrate in a foreign country is not the most essential purpose. Also environment in which people are living, changes constantly. In the next chapter I will pay attention to the temporal changes that have happened in my research period and try to ponder whether they have influenced attitudes as well.

## **7.2 Changes in the attitudes and experiences**

According to my data, it seems that at the same time as reasons to move have changed from remigration to the work based migration, there has also been some kind of change in the attitudes of Finns. Estonians are not seen as a part of the Eastern block and called Russian or "ryssä" anymore but are cheaper labour force instead.

In the following quotations Eliise describes how she was denigrated as "ryssä", a nickname used referring to Russians, during the first few years while she was living in Finland and how shocked she was because of that.

Jopa ryssiksi haukuttiin, että millainen loukkaus. Jos suomalainen olis sitä ymmärtänyt ja ymmärtäis nyt etes, kuinka suuri loukkaus on sanoa suomalaissyntyselle ihmiselle, että sä oot ryssä (haastattelussa mukana ollut mies sanoo jotain eestiläisistä) ja eestiläiselleki sukulaiskansalle läh eestiläisethän on eniten läheinen kansa suomalaisille, sanotaan sä oot ryssä. Se oli totella totella alkuvuosina hyvin järkyttävää. En olis koskaan uskonut tämmöstä. (Mies sanoo jotain ryssämaasta) Joo sieltä päin, sitten oli kaikki ryssät, jotka sieltä päin. (Eliise)

However, she thinks that attitudes have changed to a more tolerant direction as Finns have learned more about Estonia.

Mä luulisin, että se on muuttunut parempaan suuntaan, enemmän ymmärtäväisemmäksi, koska he ovat jo itse paljon siellä käyneet ja olleet ja nähneet kuinka ahkerat ja millainen kulttuuri, sivistys on säilynyt Eestissä, vaikka he olivat toisen vallan alaisina. Sittenkin se pieni Eesti säilytti oman

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<sup>115</sup> Perhoniemi & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2006, 55–56.

kulttuurinsa, kirjallisuus ja kaikki. (Eliise)

She thinks that Estonians are no longer disfavoured in Finland but are however, some kind of cheaper labour force.

Aaa joo no tietenkä siinä mielessä, et nyt heitä hyväksytään toisin, että ku tänne tulee tai on tullut joitakin töihinkin niin tietenkä niille annetaan kaikkein halvimmat työpaikat ei mitään semmoista heidän ammattin tasolla olevaa työtä ei ole annettu, mutta suhtautuminen näin työkeskeisessä piirissä mä olen kuullut, että on ihan on tietenkä kiusaamistakin ollut kuten suomalaistenkin kesken täällä syntyneitten, että mutta semmonen niinku muuton ku kysyt että virolaisten tänne tuloa, että sitä kyllä nyt enää enää ei paheksuta mitenkään, on tapahtunut tämmöinen muutos, että ei nyt kukaan enää sano, että eestiläinen joku ryssä on. En ole kyllä yli 10 (mies sanoo jotain) joo en ole kuullu kyllä yli 10 vuotta ainakin jotain semmosta 15 enemmänkin semmosta sanomista kuullut. (Eliise)

Also Darja has an experience that Estonians are seen as a useful and cheap workforce. In her previous work place all the workers were foreigners and only supervisors were Finns.

No...mä en puhu nyt itses itestäni, mutta kai niitä aa ajatellaan ku tota...halpatyövoimaa. Nii se on. Siel paikassa edellisessä paikassa missä mä olin töissä siellä oli se ihan ihan noin ei sitä etes tota noin...pelätty sanoa tai mitään...kaikki ties sitä. (Darja)

Aivan. Onks sieltä ajalta jotain huonoja kokemuksia sulla?

Ei ole. Aika kivaa. Kaikki me oltiin siellä ulkomaalaisia ihan siis ihan kaikki. Pomot olit vaan tota suomalaisia ja kaikki nää Afrikkat ja Viro ja ei Venäjältä ollu mutta...tota...Afrikasta oli paljon joo. (Darja)

In the next quotations, Anna describes very detailed the change that has happened in the migration from Estonia to Finland. During the Soviet time, getting married with a Finn was seen as a kind of “liberation” but nowadays the situations is more equal or “normal”, as Estonians can freely travel between the countries. She supposes that Estonians who moved in 2000s are mentally healthier than the ones who moved earlier as they have been living in Finland more like “white men”.

Must tuntuu että et jos nyt vaikka 2000-luvulla muuttaneet eestiläiset on kaikki tai enimmäkseen niinku...enemmän hyvinvoivia ja just niinku henkisesti enemmän hyvinvoivia Suomessa kun tämmöiset ketkä aiemmin muuttivat. Että

tota...jotenkin niinku sillon vaikka Neuvostoliitto-päivinä niin jotenki koettiin että jos pääsee naimisiin Suomeen et se on niinku semmonen vapautuminen (naurahtaa) jostain van vankilan kahleista ja...ja ja sitte no ikäänkuin se tilanne ei ole ei ollut niinku tasavertainen tai tai semmonen normaali tai semmonen...noh se mikä nyt on että nyt on kuitenkin eestiläiset kekä tulee tänne niin ne tulee melko lailla sivistyneesti ja ne saa...ei tartte niinku loikata mihinkään. Voi vapaasti matkusta kahen maan välillä ja viettä lomiam ja tuoda tänne omaa perhettä tai olla tuomatta ja ja kaikkea tällaista, et mä uskon että niinku...eh...ne jotka täällä vaikka 2000-luvulla eestiläiset on tullu Suomeen niin ne on enemmän ku ns. valkoisen ihmisen tavoin täällä voineet asua olla ja kokea olonsa ku ne ketkä vaikka 90-luvulla 80-luvulla 70-luvulla sitä ennen...että...no...ymmärrät mitä mä tarkotan. (Anna)

According to Raittila, the otherness of Estonians is not based on appearance but on cultural and political factors<sup>116</sup>. Therefore, I was surprised that skin colour appeared in two interviews. Anna described how Estonians can nowadays live in Finland like “white men” and also Sofia referred to some exterior features:

Mun anoppi sanoi näin että on ollut, hän on tuntenut et vähän ettei ole suomalainen, et meillä kuka on tullu ulkopuolelta tässä on tämmönen viisi viisi mitä tää tämmönen tähti punainen tähti ku tässä otsassa et olis näkyvänä mutta mä en ole huomannut mutta hän hän on itte huomannu kyllä. Et sitte on ihan toinen linja tai jotakin eri tavalla mutta mä en oo kyllä huomannu. Kyllä ei sais mä oon aina saanu hyvää palvelua joka puolella että tai se varmaan riippuu ihmisestä myös millä asenteella menee tai lähestyy ihmisiä et se on ihan tärkeä. Ku itte on ennakkoluuloa ja sittesä voit vaan luulla et toinen ajattelee näin. (Sofia)

Mun veli sano ku se oli täällä töissä rakennusalalla sitten hän sanoi et me ollaan ku valkeita neekereitä (naurahtaa) hän sanoi suoraan tai mä sanoin suoraan eteenpäin et sillä tavalla. (Sofia)

All these examples reflect mistreatment and prejudices against Estonians and maybe foreigners in general. However, it is difficult to say whether these kinds of attitudes still exist in reality. For example knowledge of Estonia has increased among Finns as they have been able to travel more in Estonia and became to notice the similarities of the two countries. Travelling to Estonia is nowadays easy and it is a very common place to visit among Finns.

Se se voi olla niin niin varmaankin nyt kun suomalaisetkin matkustavat paljon

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<sup>116</sup> Raittila 2004b, 152.

paljon enemmän Virossa, Viroon on helppo mennä ja jos haluaa tavallaan tehdä sen sen lyhyen lyhyen matkan ulkomaille, niin helpoin tai niinkun lähin lähin maa on Viro niin aika paljon paljon aika paljon matkustetaan Viroon ja sitten se sen mukaan tulee niinku tutuksi enemmän ja jos siellä käy niin näkee, että se on niinku ihan niinku mikä tahansa muu eurooppalainen kaupunki, että se ei ole niin...niin että siel on kaikki samat kaupat ja samat samat firmat ja samat tuotteet kauppoissa ja että se on hyvin samanlainen ku Suomi suomalainen...Helsinki...et varmaankin varmaankin suomalaiset pitävät Viroa niinku tavallaan toki sillon historiasta oli Viro niinkun tavallaan, miten se sanottiin vähän vitsi vitsimielellä et onkse niinkun Suomen pikku pikkuveli. Oletko sä kuullut sellasen (naurahtaa) sanottavan et se Suomi olis niinku Viron pikkuveli, ei ku vast päinvastoin, niin... mut niin että se suhtautuminen niinkun Virossakin oli samanlaista suhtautumista, et niinkun taas se pidettiin vähän isompana veljenä Suomea, että mistä se nyt johtui, mut...mut varmaankin että kun nyt hyvin paljon sinne matkustetaan niin varmaan tulee tutuksi, et uskon että on...(Sandra)

According to my data, it seems that the informants are aware of the structural changes and many of them have an idea how it might have influenced Estonians possibilities to move abroad and the experience of living in a foreign country.

Onks ne jotenki erilaisii ryhmiä jotka on muuttanu sitten vaikka sillon 90-luvulla ja nyt viime vuosina Suomeen?

Maahanmuuttajia paluumuuttajia on muutti muutanut ihan vuosikymmeniä muistaakseni. Niitä on että niitä on aina sillon niitä ketkä ovat silloin joskus lähteneet niin he ovat palanneet takasin, mutta mut nyt on toki enemmän myöskin ei-paluumuuttajia eli ihan...ihan virolaisia tavallaan että ei ei...eli joo varmaankin että on on lisääntynyt se et jos ne rajat ovat tavallaan enemmän tai se on niinku luonnol luonnollista, että toki jos sillon ku oli suljettu yhteiskunta niin toki siel sillä sitten vaan ei voi voinut matkustaa mihinkään. Se voi olla että sitä suurempi mielenkiinto on aina tai uteliaisuutta vaan haluavat tutustua Suomeen ja sitten suomalaiset Viroon, että se on ihan semmosta molemmanpuolista, kun se on ollut suljettuna sitten tämä raja sillon oli hyvin vaikea kuulemma matkustaa...Neuvostoliiton aikana. (Sandra)

As Sandra states, travelling between Estonia and Finland has become easier and borders are not as difficult to cross as they were in the Soviet Union time. Another change that has eased possibilities to move to another country has been Estonia's EU membership. In the next chapter I will discuss some influences of the EU membership at the level of experiences of common Estonians.

## 7.3 EU-membership and being European

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many developments have taken place in Estonia, among others economic changes and new political relations. One of the central changes happened during the 2000s has been the EU membership. A starting point of this thesis was that I wanted to discuss how a high level political change appears at the level of common Estonians. In this chapter I ponder these questions in relation to the answers of my informants.

### 7.3.1 Increased security and easier travelling

Maybe due to the historical reasons, EU did not implicate only for instance freedom of movement and common currency but it was also seen as a security question and as a kind of cover against foreign threats.

On varmaankin ja se se yhteinen raha ja kaikki että nyt on aika iso muutos tämä tämä raham raha-asia, että tota nyt on tietysti. Et toki onko se virolaisille itse virolaisille...et se aika kun se raha vaihtuu, että toki se tuo mukaan sellasia muutoksia ja erilaisia ajatuksia anteeksi (haastateltavan puhelin soi)...juu niin se Virolle varmaan hyvin tärkeä asia se tämä EU:ssa oleminen ja ja itse asiassa (sanasta ei saa selvää) Natoonkin Natoakin niin mun mielestä on ihan hyvin. (puhelin soi taas) Joo että tota se on tärkeä Virolle mun mielestä, että se on sellainen yhteinen että sieltä tulee sitten tällanen tavallaan suojakin... (Sandra)

Eliise sees that without EU, Russia would have had more power to influence Estonia and she tells how parts of Estonia are now full of Russians. In her childhood, during the Second World War, Eliise escaped from the Russian part of the Soviet Union to Estonia, which might have influenced her negative views of Russians that came up in the interview.

Ajattele, jos se ei olis nii Venäjä on nyt tässä itsenäistymisen jälkeenkin kuinka paljon jo kertoja uhkaillut Eestiä ja jos se ei olis EU-maa niin mitä kaikkea olis voinut tapahtua ja ja me tiedämme, että esimerkiksi Eestin pohjoisrannikko on jo melkein kaikki venäläisiä. (Eliise)

Besides of being a security issue, EU has had very practical influences in the lives of the informants. Many of them mentioned that travelling is nowadays much easier and faster, as there is no passport control anymore.



Se oli kivaa kyl kui kun et...rajat avattiin että ei tarvii mitään passikontrollia se oli hyvä et ei ole mitään jonottamista siellä rajalla satamassa ja menee helpompi ja nopeampi. (Maria)

No se et mä pääsin kouluun tai tai työelämään paljo paremmin tää on auttanut mua. Sitten on auttanut matkustamisessa...matkustamisessa on auttanut mennä sinne puolelle tosi helppo. (Sofia)

No joo varmaan et tavallaan et matkustaminen on helpompi ja...kaikki tämmöset, mut en mä niin hirveesti oo ajatellu sitä eurooppalaisuutta tai jotenki et se kuitenkin aika lailla abstrakti käsite, et eihän se oo mitenkään konkreettista että...että et enemmän konkreettista olis ajatellu et olenko minä nyt suomalainen et mä olen asunu täällä kaheksan vuotta tai jotain ku että eurooppalainen tai jotain. (Anna)

No en mä nyt sitä sillä lailla että...mmm...varmaan jos mä matkustaisin jonnekin sitte mä voisin sitä sanoa mutta en nyt täällä paikalla ollessa että. (Darja)

Also moving to another country for work has become a more achievable option for Estonians. Freedom of movement of labour inside EU and acknowledgement of degrees had both had a positive influence.

Joo no se on niin helpompi on toki sen sen raha rahan takia, että sitä ei ja toki, että jos matkustaisi esimerkiksi johonkin muualle Eurooppaan että toki tämä Schengenin-sopimus...auttaa toki helpompi matkustamaan ja et...mitäs vielä. Et varmaankin...joo tai sitten jos hakis työpaikkaa jostakin Euroopan maasta tai se varmaankin olisi myöskin että jos...eli ja Viro tulee vähän enemmän tutuksi sitten Euroopassa ja sen mukaan sitten ku tuntevat ja tietävät Virosta, siitä maasta, et on siellä paljon muitakin pieniä valtioita, jotka ovat paljon pienempiä ku Viro, esimerkiksi Keski-Euroopassa (muutamasta viimeisestä sanasta ei saa selvää). (Sandra)

No...kiva se on ku saa tota...jonnekin muualle matkustaa töihin vaikka vaikka töihin, ku tiedetään että Virossa ei oo kauheen paljon sitä töitä että...se kiva ku saa toisessa maassa jossain...tehdä töitä. (Darja)

Especially Sofia and Anna both had experienced difficulties in the acknowledgement of their Estonian degrees. Sofia had high expectations of the influence of the EU membership on her possibilities to work, as she already has an Estonian degree. However, she has been forced to do some supplement studies to be able to work as a laboratorian. She feels that in spite of her degree and work experience she is still in an unequal position in relation to

others.

Sen jälkeen kun Eesti meni EU-maahan... silloin...mä ajattelin no niin mun ei tarvii mitään enää todistaa mitä mä osaan tai mitä mä ei osaa. Ja sitten oli työterveysasemalla haettiin laboratorinhoitajaa. Mä menin omaan venäjänkielisten diplomin tai lopputodistuksen papereiden kanssa sinne ja ne tekivät sieltä kopiot niistä ja ne sanoivat et kyllä me halutaan sua ottaa mutta valitettavasti vissiin ei saa. (Sofia)

Kymmenen vuotta olin kotona ennen kotiäitinä. Meil oli oma firma mun miehellä mutta hän teki sitä rakennustöitä ja kun tuli se lama sitten se ku totta kai me mietittiin et parempi lopettaa tää firma ettei miinuksella tarvis tehdä mitään et...ettei menis niin huonosti vielä. Pitää mennä itte töihin ja sitten ku tuli EU-maa mä olin ihan innoissa et pääsen tekemään oma haluttu ammatti, tää on ihan ku harrastus mun tuli mieleen käyn korkeakoulua ja kaikkea et ihan harrastus. (Sofia)

Mä olisin aikaisemminki halunnu tehdä tätä työtä mutta ku ei pääsenyt tekemään kui ei ollu lupaa. Nytki vielä täysin mä en voi tehdä kuin vain opiskelin ja kuitenkin mul on tää tehty tää koulutus on saatu. Ja mä olen ollu mul on työkokemuski alalla olemas mutta silti. Tää on vähän nöyryyttävää tai semmosta et mä oon kuitenkin toisen arvon tasoinen tai jotakin tämmöstä. (Sofia)

Instead, Anna had a positive experience of the acknowledgement of her social worker degree. However, her psychology degree was not acknowledged and that is one of the reasons why she has planned to move back to Estonia. She is wondering why, even though the free movement of labour, she cannot work as a psychologist in Finland.

Aha, joo ja minä tulin 2003 äää elokuussa...ööö...joojoo, mulla muuttui toi muuttui toi systeemi että mun ei tarvinnu enää hakea mitään mähän tulin tänne tämmösellä oleskeluluvalla mä hain niinku ei viisumia mut oleskelulupaa. Mähän työnantajalta (Helsingin kaupunginosan) vankilasta sain työnantajan todistuksen tai sopimuksen työsopimuksen ja sit menin Tallinnassa Suomen suurlähetystöön ja hain sieltä passiin sitte ensiks...no jotain se oli no joku aika ja sit piti sitä jatkaa ja jotain tällaista, mut sit se loppui. Ei tarvinnu enää ollenkaan tämmösiä muodollisuuksia... (Anna)

Mut sit se mikä mikä on tavallaan vaikuttanu mä kuvittelen että se mun sosiaalityöntekijän pätevyyden saaminen sen takia suhteellisen mutkattomasti onnistui myös, mutta minähän hain myöskin niinku psykologin psy psykologin tutkinnon psykologian tutkinnon niinku laillistamista, et mä saisin toimia Suomessa laillistettuna psykologina ja mä kävin kaksi vuotta...äää niinku tämmöstä kirjeenvaihtoa ja vähän niinku taistelua lainausmerkeissä tän tän tota nykyisen Valviran kanssa, silloin se oli Teo Terveystieteiden

oikeusturvakeskus ja mä en minä hävisin mä en saanut sitä laillistusta ja se oli mulle on edelleenkin niinku semmonen pettymys että miksi mä Eestissä saan toimia psykologina mutta en saa Suomessa et eiks niinku EU:ssa oo kuitenkin se työvoiman vapaa liikkuvuus ja kaikki, että pitäis niinku...olla se oikeus myöski, mutta ei...ei onnistunu siinä ja se oon siitä siihen kyllä pettynyt, et se on myös yksi syy miks kyllä...Eestissä tykkäsin enemmän et saisin hakea myös psykologin töitä ja sillä lailla. (Anna)

These examples show that working in Finland in a social and health care field in a position in which a degree from an institution of a higher education is needed, there are also problems in the acknowledgement of the degrees. Being unable to get employed in a position corresponding to one's education can be a reason for an immigrant to move away from Finland, as in Anna's case. In addition, she does not seem to be dependent on the possibly higher salary in Finland but other things, like pleasant work, can be a more significant factor.

### **7.3.2 Lowering borders?**

Estonia's EU accession has had some general benefits, for example working visas are not required anymore which lowers barriers to move to another EU country to work there.

See se mun tulo on se...se 2004 toukokuu. Mä en nyt muista mitä se oli se oli ensimmäinen kerta, siitä alkaen ku ei tarvinnu sitä työviisumii tai mitä vaan. Et se oli se ensimmäinen kesä ku mä pääsin tänne ja sillon ku se...mmm oliko se nyt 2005 6 mä en muista oliko 6 toukokuu kui oli se...mitäs sielä oli (naurahtaa) kui oli...eli se 2004 oli se ku ei tarvinnut ei minkäänlaista viisumi Suomeen ja se 2006 toukokuu ku mä aloitin töitä (kotisiivousyrityksessä) oliko se kui ei tarvinnu sitä työviisumia. Et no et mä olen ollut ihan ensimmäinen niistä järjestyksissä...no käyttänyt niitä mahdollisuuksia mitä juuri silloin on tullut. Et no, et se Virossa se elämä on hirveen paljon huonommaksi ja vaikeemmaksi mennyt et no et me olemme no tämmöset ainoat, et et ei no kenelläkään oo vaan yksi ihminen ketä se siellä auttaa, et siel on monta perhettä ketä me auttamme kuka on tullut tänne...No minul (?) äiti, poika ja tytär kuka minua siellä odottavat. (Lisette)

On se varmasti sen jälkeen on niitä tullut tosi paljon tänne, et Suomeen töihinkin. Aikaisemmin oli jo kielletty kolme kuukautta voisi tehdä ja sitte piti olla myös eri lupa. Ja sillon oli kovat arkistos. Mä muistan mun isäki oli täällä ja se oli vähän...sinne passiinki kirjoitettiin kuinka paljon päiviä vois olla että tää oli tosi semmonen et ja ku sä olit yli se oli tosi paha juttu. Sillon oli huono, et oli nöyryyttävää totisesti ja tämmöstä... Joo kyllä se on paljon parempi nyt ihan oikeesti. Sillon mä tunsin aina et olit virolainen ku tulit just tullista läpi et ku suomalaisille kolme neljä tämmöstä boksi mistä ne menivät

läpi ja sitten meil oli vaan yksi, et kaikki jonottivat, oli niin huono juttu. Tosi huono, mutta nyt on hyvä siinä mielessä totisesti. (Sofia)

Sofia mentions that she had felt humiliated as there were different queues for Estonians and Finns before Estonia's EU accession and it made her feel that she really is Estonian, a foreigner in Finland. Even though borders still exist nowadays, they are not that important anymore and Sofia sees it as a highly positive development.

No mä ei ajatellu tämmöstä, mutta kyllä kyllä tää on hyvä et et nyt on nyt on mä olen ajatellu vähän sitä et et tää on yksi maa sitten yksi valtio. Kaikki iso Eurooppa on vaan yksi. Ei oo enään täysin, kyllä ne on vähän rajat on olemassa, mutta sä saat liikku tääl ja samat oikeudet on joka puolella, et tää on tosi hyvä asia. Mutta tätä mä vielä näin hyvin ei ymmärtä et miksi ne koulutukset erittäin ei kelpa yhestä toiseen mennä. (Sofia)

Also Sandra states that Estonia is now a part of Europe.

On mun mielest erittäin positiivinen, että se se kuitenkin se kuuluu se tavallaan kun se Viro kuitenkin nyt Eurooppaa ja kuuluu Eurooppaan ja kuitenkin naapuri siellä on niinku hyvä olla sellasia yhteisiä...yhteisiä tavallaan sitten se on tavallaan puolin ja toisin että Viron on helppo sitten helpompi lähestyä ja Viron on helpompi mennä mennä niinku Eurooppaan tavallaan. Siellä on niinku...niin. (Sandra)

Even though importance of the borders is diminishing, they still do exist in minds of my informants. In the next quotation Anna describes how Estonia is still less European as it is a former Soviet Union country and thus not "equal" with some West-European countries. Therefore, mental borders between East and West seem to exist still.

Hmm no varmasti nähdään Viroa vähemmän eurooppalaisena ku jotain Ranskaa tai Saksaa, kuitenkin Viro mun mielestä koetaan semmosena entisenä Neuvostotasavallana valtana ja tämmösenä niinku tavallaan niinku itäeurooppalaisena maana ööö entisenä itäeurooppalaisena siis. Että tota...et ei ne varmaan ei oo niinku silleen samanarvoisia...samanarvoisia mutta tota...mut mä uskon et semmoset fiksummat suomalaiset niin ne niinku jotka seuraa uutisia ja politiikkaa ja kaikkee et ne ne kyllä tietää et Eestissä ollaan monessa mielessä niinku...Suomea edellä et tavallaan niinku se talouselämän joustavuus ja kehitys. (Anna)

She describes how Estonia is still seen as a "former East-European" and seems to combine

the difference with the geographical location. As an example of understanding the common past and how it influences the present, this quotation seems to confirm that the idea of the otherness of East-Europe in relation to West-Europe has existed and still makes a difference. On the other hand, Anna emphasizes that in some respects, for example in respect of the flexibility of economic life, Estonia is more advanced than Finland.

However, some elements of the change do exist. Sandra states that Estonia is not a closed country anymore but more a part of Europe than before.

Varmaankin se helpottaa helpottaa ku tavallaan että ihmiset se ei ole, kun kuitenkin se oli sellasena suljettuna valtiona vuosikymmeniä niin niinku nyt kuitenkin on se se tilanne niinku tavallaan normalisoitunu ja nyt se niinku koko jatkaa tätä että se on on niinku vielä enemmän osa sitä Eurooppaa tai Keski-Eurooppaa ja. (Sandra)

She continues that a part of the process is learning to be European after the Soviet time.

Joo kyllä ihan tota kyllä että ihan ihan...ainakin nyt on...se on niinku luontevampi on koko tämä tämä, että nyt ei ole tai tavallaan että se ei tunnu niin isolle asialle esimerkiksi mennä muutamaksi vuodeksi opiskelemaan tai töihin johonkin ulkomaahan tai tai eteenpäin tai mi kauemmaksikin, että ei ole se niin lopullinen tavallaan. Siis se on kuitenkin kaikki tulee niinku sieltä historiasta tai sieltä että kuitenkin se on niinku sellasena Neuvostoliittona aikana minä olen syntynyt ja sellasena ja toki että silloin oli ihan tällasia eri propaganda ööö systeemi ja tämä että se oli siinä se on sellasella. Virolaisilla on myöskin opettelemista, että he osasivat niinkun ja halusivat olla niinku osa sitä Eurooppaa, et niinku sellasta normaalia Eurooppaa sellasta että...niin mut kuitenkin parikymmentä vuotta sitten kun tultiin ollaan oltu, sitten oli vielä tämmösen suljettu systeemi. Nyt on ihan eri eri juttu. Se on sitä on kuitenkin, että sitä opitaan niinku olemaan eurooppalainen. (Sandra)

There were also different kinds of opinions of the significance of the EU membership.

En mä usko, et no nyt erityisesti EU-maana, mä uskon et no virolaiset Virossa ja suomalaiset Suomessa, et me olemme naapurit. Ei se se mitään merkitystä no...kyllä se, no me tiedetään et asutaan Euroopassa ja ettei...me olemme vaan naapurit, mä en tietä. (Lisette)

In the previous chapter, in Sandra's quotation<sup>117</sup>, she asked whether I have heard that Estonia would be a "little brother" of Finland. To use academic concepts, Estonia could be said to be an "other" in relation to Finland and from a broader perspective, the whole Eastern Europe has sometimes been said to be West's other, an internal other of Europe. As I mentioned before, Raittila has predicted that this kind of composition would be changing since Estonia's EU membership. According to my interviews, it could be argued that some elements of change in attitude do exist. However, the more important reasons seem to be economic factors and for example a free competition of work places in which the informants have experienced that they have succeeded. Thus the possible change has not happened due to the mental consequences of the EU accession but because of practical changes that it has caused in the lives of the informants'.

Most of the informants did not have a very exact knowledge about EU but EU and Euro were mentioned in some interviews even before I asked about them, for instance in relation to very practical questions like travelling between the two countries and acknowledgement of Estonian degrees in Finland. I believe this indicates that EU has had some meaning in my informants' everyday lives. However, after the interview few informants commented questions related to EU and Europe and mentioned that they were difficult to answer. I assume this implicates that EU accession and other political changes are very abstract and their influences can thus be difficult to evaluate.

## 8 BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES

Before I conducted the interviews, it was not my purpose to discuss the transnational elements of the space between Estonia and Finland, and how it affects the informants' lives. However, after completing the interviews, I found it such a central theme of the discussion that it is impossible to ignore in the analysis. The new theme emerged in the interviews, Estonians living between two countries and transnational space between Estonia and Finland, will be discussed in this chapter.

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<sup>117</sup> Page 52.

## 8.1 Visiting Estonia

Although the informants live now in Finland, they all have relatives in Estonia and they do visit them more or less regularly. Visiting Estonia seemed to be an essential part of the everyday life of the most of the informants.

Joo voi, se ei ole vaikeeta, mutta mutta toki mielelläni menen aina sinne ja toki että se on nyt ettei ole vaikeaa tulla, mut toki se on, ei ole se ei ole se tuntuu niin luonnolliselta, kun sitä on vuosia jo kuitenkin kulkenut kahen maan välillä niin sitä ei niinku pohdi enää niin sellasena erilaisena asiana et et ei haluaisi tulla tai et olisi hyvin haikeaa jättää tai jotakin, ei ole, mut se on ehkä voi olla se on silloin kun on muuttanut, että silloin on käynyt läpi näitä juttuja enemmän, mut nyt on jotenkin tavallaan siitä on tullut rutiini. (Sandra)

Mun sukulaiset on kaikki Virossa. Siinä mielessä kun mä tulen sieltä aina takaisin sitten on tämmönen sydämesä jotakin revitään tai jotakin tämmöstä tuntusta on mutta sitte kun mä olen täällä sitte ei ole mitään hätää, mutta joskus on tämmöstä ”oi mä en haluais mennä takasin” mutta...ei se mitään...(Sofia)

The regularity of visiting Estonia seemed to depend on the level of integration. Especially Sofia told that sometimes it is very difficult to leave Estonia and come back to Finland. Eliise states that her family has so much to do in Finland that they do not have time to go to Estonia but Sandra, in contrast, tells that she visits Estonia at least once or twice in a year because she has good friends and relatives there.

Näin vanhoja jo ollaan, mutta ihan terveitä ja voimme hyvin ja sen vuoksi ei tässä ole mitään valittamista, täytyy vaan pärjätä ja ja en muista edes milloin me olemme Eestissäkään käyneet, ku tääl on niin paljon tekemistä. (Eliise)

Joo ihan joka vuosi käydään ainakin nyt ainakin kesällä viikko tai pari ollaan nyt oltu siellä sitten talvilomalla tuli käytyä myöskin, että käytään. Siellä on vielä sukulaisia ja sitten on hyviä kavereita että. (Sandra)

On the other hand, Sandra has also managed to create close relationships in Finland, which make her want to stay in Finland. Thus, she has meaningful relationships in the both countries.

Joo no se on nyt on jo aika monta asiaa tuolla on. Mun lapsen isä on suomalainen ja ja ei sitten on työpaikka ja on koti ja näin niin täällä, niin kyllä mulla on kyllä aika, etten ole ainakin lähivuosina muuttamassa mihinkään

muualle, että ihan täällä. (Sandra)

Maintaining social relations in Estonia influences also life in Finland. For example Anna has found her relatives', friends' and colleagues' opinions about living in Finland disturbing.

No...mulla on semmonen olo että...mua niinku pikkasen tiiätsä hävettää minun eestiläisten ystävien sukulaisten entisten työkavereitten edessä, et mä oon Suomessa, että...Eestissä on vähän semmonen niinku näkökanta, että Suomeen tulevat tällaiset enimmäkseen eestiläiset, ketkä eivät niinku pärjää Eestissä, jolla ei ole mitään niinku koulutusta tai on semmonen aika heikko koulutus tai ovat muuten vähän semmosia, vähän niinku onnettomia. Et Suomi on semmonen pehmomaa ja hyvinvointivaltio ja täällä otetaan kaikki vastaan ja kaikille löytyy töitä ja kaikki on pärjää kuitenkin. Et Eesti on vähän enemmän semmonen villi länsi ja sit mä niinku koen, että mä...mulla on hirveen hyvä koulutus, mul on monipuolist työkokemusta, mulla on niinku, no, kaikin puolin energiaa ja halua tehdä ja olla ja mä koen että mä täällä Eestissä mä en niinku pääse oikeen niin, täällä Suomessa en pääse niinku toteuttamaan itseäni niin hyvin ku Eestissä, että mä koen, että mua ei oteta niin vakavasti täällä tässä tämmösissä ammatti- ja elämäntilanteissa ku mitä Eestissä otettiin. (Anna)

Although living in Finland might have offered better and more stable incomes, life seems to be similar everywhere. Marta describes that her friends in Estonia might think that life in Finland is something unbelievable and she has been trying to remind them that living in Finland is more expensive than in Estonia.

Mä en tiiä paljo et voi olla, et kuvittelevat et täällä on niinku kaikki niin ihanat ja ollaan ylikkaimia et sitte ku välillä puhut niitä niin sit niinku yrittää niinku muistuttaa et ei se nyt ihan noin ole. Samalla lailla et sitte ku yrittää niille mustavalkoselt kuvata et jos saat noin paljon käteen sielt menee noin paljo ja sitten menee vuokraan noin paljon sitten kun se on niinku niin erilaista kuitenkin ollut että että mä oon nyt käynyt itte...aattele, mul on ollut monta vaihtoa. Mul on ollut mul on ollut rupla kruunu vaihtu kruunu krooni euro sitte täällä markka euro. Silleen et mul on niinku. Emmä nyt niin vanha oo mut silleen niinku ajassa kuitenkin ollut niin monta rahavaihtoa niinku tullut että...(Marta)

In Marta's comment can be seen also the changes, like currency changes, that have occurred in the transnational space between Finland and Estonia. Changing currencies reflect political changes or changes in the structures that have influenced my informants' lives. As a conclusion, faced attitudes and encounters have an impact in my informants'



lives in Finland but also in Estonia.

## 8.2 Two home countries?

For those who had been living a longer time in Finland, Finland had become an important place and for Marta even a second home country. She describes how her own background is in Estonia but for her children Finland is more important.

No se on mun äidinkieli ja mun kotimaa. Mä voin sanoo et mul on kaks kotimaata ku mä oon täälläki ollu niinku puol ja puol, niinku tällä hetkellä ku täyttää 45 niinku fifty-fifty (naurahtaa) tulee niinku silleen, et no lapsille on tää tärkeempi. Tietysti mua vetää sinne päin niinku ensiks mul on helpompi olla siellä ku mul lapsuutes kaikki on siellä. Koko kesäloman mä viettän siellä, niin paljo ku mahdollisuus käyn siellä tietysti, mutta ku mä tuun tänne mä tuun tänneki kotiin. Mun koti on kuitenkin täällä. Et tääl on lapset ja kaikki muut että...mä voin sanoo et mul on kaks kotimaata. (Marta)

As I stated in the chapter 3.4, the possibility to have a dual citizenship is one example of transnationalism. For my informants, a dual citizenship was not a central question however. Only one had applied Finnish citizenship and lost her Estonian citizenship because dual citizenship was not possible then. For some, applying Finnish citizenship was not relevant question at all and some thought that it would be a waste of money with no benefits. Because of the EU, applying Finnish citizenship was not important anymore.

On ja mä ajattelin kun se meni EU-maahan et mun ei tarviikaan enään hakea Suomen kansalaisuutta sen takia minkä takia mun tarvis mitä etuu se antais mä en nää siitä mitään etuja vaan sitä et mun pitäis maksaa ja käydä tekemässä tentti ja...ei mitään. Ja lapsilla on kaksi kansalaisuutta, yhellä on kuka syntyi nyt 2006 että mutta yhellä on kuka syntyi 2000 hänel on Suomen kansalaisuus sen takia silloin piti luopua vielä. (Sofia)

This aspect has been noticed also for example by Järvinen-Alenius et al. They have stated that because of the open borders inside the EU and because as EU citizens Estonians have almost the same rights in Finland as Finns, the motivation to apply for Finnish citizenship was low among their interviewees. Estonian citizenship was also seen as a part of one's own "roots" and ethnic identity.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, even though there are transnational elements in the lives of my informants, space between Estonia and Finland, and actually in the whole

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<sup>118</sup> Järvinen-Alenius, Keski-Hirvelä, Pitkänen, Kallioniemi-Chambers 2010, 23–24.

EU area, differs from other transnational spaces, for example Mexico and US that has been compared with the East-West migration in Europe. Implications of transnational living are not similar everywhere but they depend on the other structures.

According to my data, it seems that Estonians living in Finland are becoming a peculiar group which has started to form their own specific habits. Two of the informants mentioned the special language that they use with their Estonian friends who are also living in Finland. Darja and Marta both describe how they use a kind of cocktail-language of Estonian and Finnish that cannot be understood by Estonians who have not lived in Finland.

Miten sitte näiden virolaisten tuttujen kanssa, puhutko heidän kaa mistään tämmösist Suomessa asumiseen liittyvistä asioista?

Ne on kyllä vaihtelee vaihtelee, että tota...vaikka mistä ja sitten me puhutaan niin hauska ku (nauraa) virolaiset jos ihan virolaiset rupee kuuntelee sit ne ei varma ymmärrä puolia ku me puhutaan viroa ja suomea sekaisin. Niin ku me...joo asutaan täällä sitten ollaan totuttu suomen kieleen, että kaikki on suomeks että (naurahtaa).(Darja)

Puhutko eestin kieltä muiden kanssa Suomessa ku sun lasten?

No eestiläisten kavereitten kanssa tietysti mutta seki tulee välillä tietsä semmosta sekoitusta semmosta cocktailimuotosta jos niinku ne jotka asuu täällä ja niillä on tullut semmonen oma sekoituskieli (naurahtaa) niinku silleen mutta jos niinku menee ja puhuu eestissä välillä ne sanoo et kuule sanoppas se nyt kerran uudestaan ja vähän rauhallisempi ku siel on kuitenkin tulee semmosii tietty sanoja mitä sä itte et huomaa, tulee sisälle.(Marta)

Changes happened in the way which they speak Estonian, their native language, might be paid attention to in Estonia as well. In the following quotation Anna describes how her way to speak Finnish has been noticed in Finland and how she thinks that her friend's way to speak Estonian might be noticed in Estonia. Anna's friend has been living in Finland since her teens and her way to speak Estonian has changed according to Anna, to a more Finnish way to speak.

No esimerkiks se se (tuttavan nimi poistettu), joka on viistoista vuotiaana vanhempiensa kans muuttanu tänne, niin mä hänelle valitin että mua häiritsee se, että aina ku mä avaan mun suuni Suomessa, niin...mä en saa edes lausetta pääse lopettamaan ku kysytään, että hei ootko sä Virosta, et vaikka kuinka hyvin niinku puhuis suomea niin se oman kielen äidinkielen korostus tai se

aksentti siinä säilyy ja... ja mä niinku valitin hänelle, että että miks ei anneta niinku olla privaalisti tai että aina pitää kertoa kaikille (naurahtaa) melkein ventovieraille... no et et kuka on ja mistä maasta ja milloin tullut ja et se on niinku vähän niinku rasittavaa. Ihan tämmöset niinku vaikka junakeskustelu tai jossain kahvilassa kahvilan myyjän kanssa tai jotain semmosta, niin tota... niin hän sitten sanoi että et et hänellä ei ole mitään sellaista, et häneltä ei kysytä et kun hän on niin nuorena muuttanut niin hänen suomen kielen taito on no tietyllälailla parempi ja enemmän ku suomalaisempi tapa puhua. Mut sit mun teki mieli sanoa hänelle, mut mä olin kohtelias mä en sanonut, että et... et kuule Eestissä kyl kysyttäis sulta melko heti että ootsa asunu kauan Suomessa. Et hänen eestin kieli on sen verran muuttunu muuttunu sekä lauserakenne et korostus, puhumisen no tapa ja kaikki tällaiset ne on hyvin hyvin suomen kieliset suomalaiset. (Anna)

Thus it can be argued that living in a foreign country has consequences in the home country too and it influences one's identity and the relation with the home country. Communicating with the relatives and friends living in Estonia was an important element in the lives of the interviewees, as it seems that it has eased living in a foreign country and made it easier to stay in contact with people living in Estonia.

### **8.3 Multiple attachments and “place polygamy”**

The ease of communication due to internet and mobile phones is another central element in the lives of the informants. Internet has reduced the importance of geographical distance and allowed staying in contact with relatives and friends living in another country, even to such a degree that borders might lose their significance.

Ja sit jossain vaiheessa joku kysyi multa no et miten mä niinku kaipaen Eestiä, eestiläisiä ja ystäviä sukulaisia ja sit mä sanoin että tietsä että mulla on niinku mun pään sisällä niinku asuu ne Eestissä. Ei se että jos sä niinku joka päivä olet yhteydessä Eestiin Skypen kautta puhelimen internetin kautta, luet joka päivä eestiläisiä lehtiä, katsot eestiläistä tv:tä tietsä sit sul välil tuntuu et ihan todellisuuden taju rupee häilymään et sitä niinku ei ei niinku sit melkein välillä unohtaa että on et ei olekaan Eestissä. Ja se oli joskus 2005 ja semmosia kausia, että... että tota ilmeisesti silloin mulla niinku alkoi vähän niinku semmonen ikävää jotenki ja Eesti-ikävä ja sitte niinku sit uskottelee itselleen että tää internetti ja virtuaalimaailma ja kaikki se tekee niinku elämästä semmosen... global villagen et et mitä väliä siinä on et missä me asutaan että jos joka puolelta on mahdollisuus pitää yhteyttä omiin läheisiin ja omaan niinku synnyinmaahan. (Anna)

Many of the informants live fluently between two countries – they work in Finland but

important parts of their lives are in Estonia too.

Ai kaikki ovat siellä, et ei mitään ole muuttunut. Kaikki ihan sama ja se se tietokone, sähköposti ja se kaikki on. Myös puhelin, no, saa soittaa. (Lisette)

Maybe new kind of communication possibilities and easier travelling has brought about that they do not have a need to integrate with the Finnish society as they do not plan to stay in Finland for good. Internet connections seem to have made this easier, because it eases maintaining social relations with acquaintances in Estonia and immigrants do not have such a great need finding social relations in the new country.

In the following quotation, I asked Darja whether she has absorbed any Finnish habits and she answered by telling that she has made an Estonian home for herself in Finland.

Mitä sitte mitä sä ajattelet suomalaisuudesta? Ootko omaksunu jotain suomalaisia asioita?

No emmä tiedä tota... äää... en varmaa oo, ku mä oon tehny oma koti tänne että tota noin... suomalais... oma Viron koti täällä Suomessa. (Darja)

All three above quotations can be understood by using Ulrich Beck's concept place polygamy that is a "marriage to several places at once". Belonging to different worlds at the same time is, according to Beck, a form of globality in one's own life, which leads to the "globalization of biography". Consequences of globalization are not only something abstract but also in the middle of people's lives through multicultural families, work, social relations, culture and consumption. People's lives are not anymore tied to a particular place but new technologies "are everyday means of bridging time and space".<sup>119</sup> Thus also my informants have been able to maintain their social relations in Estonia while they have been living in Finland.

For some of the informants, the main motivation to move was renovating their apartment back home or earning money for children's education. Maria, who had moved for work to pay the renovation of her home back in Tallinn, questioned the idea of move in her own situation. As can be seen in the next quotation she does not think that she has really moved

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<sup>119</sup> Beck 2000, 73–74.

to Finland albeit she has been living in Finland since 2007.

Onks se mitä luulet et onkse vaikuttanu yleensä siihen että virolaiset muuttaa Suomeen?

No mä en tietä kuinka paljon niistä muuttaa...muuttaa en mä nyt ole muuttanut tai olenko? (Maria)

She seems to think that many Estonians do not move but are only temporarily living and working in Finland. Maria's interview made me to think the difference of home and apartment. In two parts of the interview she referred to Estonia as "home" or visiting Estonia as home.

Jos mä olen Suomessa sitten mä en haluu mihinkään matkustaa vaan kotiin. Kun on se perhe siellä. (Maria)

Miten koet sitte et miten niinku virolaiset pärjää Suomessa? Meneeks heillä hyvin täällä...niinku yleensä?

No...mmm...taas verrattuna niinku virolaisten kanssa tai eestiläisten kanssa tietysti on hyvää ja paremmin...muttaa jos sä...no mä luulen että se on semmonen se riippuu kyllä ammatista tai...missä ne on töissä. En mä osaa sanoa sitä. No menee hyvin, sanotaan näin. Kenellä kuinka...mä en tiä mitä niillä rakennusmiehillä on kuka niitä on ilman töitä jäänyt, menee takasin kotiin ja mä en tiä, mä en tiä semmoisia. (Maria)

In these quotations, Estonia is the real home in which people are returning to and Finland only a temporary place of residence because of work. An intention of temporary move has been noticed also by other scholars. Järvinen-Alenius et al found out that most of their Estonian informants living in Finland were planning only a temporary move and had therefore difficulties to state when they actually had moved, as the decision of the move was done gradually. According to Järvinen-Alenius et al, people wanted to take the advantage of open borders after the Soviet time, when leaving Estonia was very difficult.<sup>120</sup>

Nowadays, migration is not a permanent decision to move to another country as it was for them, for instance, who emigrated from Europe to the United States, but a temporary attempt to enhance the quality of life. Due to the temporary nature of residence, immigrants

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<sup>120</sup> Järvinen-Alenius, Keski-Hirvelä, Pitkänen, Kallioniemi-Chambers 2010, 18–19.

have meaningful human relationships in the both countries, simultaneous attachments, that all need to be taken care of. Family, for instance ageing parents in Estonia, requires attention but new relations made in Finland are also important.

Jaanika Kingumets made an important notion in her research, as she stated that because the Estonians she had interviewed had an idea of returning back to Estonia at some point in their lives, they found it important to keep up tight connections with their families and friends back in Estonia. Kingumets interpreted it as a way to “build future security”.<sup>121</sup> Besides, she argued that because of the geographical closeness of Estonia and Finland, maintaining good relationships required regular visits to Estonia. Due to the short distance, showing the importance of the relationship required regular visits.<sup>122</sup>

#### **8.4 Moving as an empowerment?**

As travelling between Estonia and Finland has become easier, it has also opened new possibilities which did not exist in the Soviet time. According to Morokvasic, transnationalism offers “a space of possibilities” for migrants from Eastern Europe.<sup>123</sup> She writes that “commuting for work is an alternative to emigration” and that it offers social promotion at home. Polish women that she has interviewed, aim to maintain both their jobs and family ties back home by commuting for work abroad. She continues that “They are genuinely living in/between two worlds, one foot there, another here, with their base being their hometown or village”.<sup>124</sup> In contrast to the previous situation, Eastern Europeans are now “free to leave and to come back”<sup>125</sup>. Achieving material prosperity also allows women to ask for more tolerant and egalitarian relationships and to abandon unsatisfactory ones<sup>126</sup>. Morokvasic has also stated that leaving home for work can actually be “a strategy of staying at home”<sup>127</sup>. Therefore, transnational networks can be empowering and enable resistance from below but they can also cause opposite outcomes. Even though women’s participation in certain migration flows has increased, it does not necessarily reflect more freedom of move but also a proliferation of precarious jobs in which mobility can be very

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<sup>121</sup> Kingumets 2008, 86.

<sup>122</sup> Kingumets 2008, 94.

<sup>123</sup> Morokvasic 2004, 9.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 16. Morokvasic refers to two of her previously published texts that are written in French.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 7.

restricted.<sup>128</sup> Some of the same kind of elements can be found in my data as well.

Et pääkaupunkissa asumisen kokemus...ei mä luulen no, et jos mä olisin jäänyt sinne (kaupunkiin Virossa), et kyllä mä no, en olis siellä ollut tyytyväinen no et no pakko pääsetään mihinkään vähän matkustamaan ja näin et no et nyt se Suomen välin matkustaminen, sekin on tärkeää. (kaveri sanoo taas jotain) Eiii no et se on hyvä tämmönen, et näköala on mennyt isommaksi tai no, ei se on antanut paljon lisää. (Lisette)

For Lisette, move to Finland has, in addition to better incomes, offered new prospects as she has been able to travel and live in a capital city. Her experience could be described even as a kind of empowerment. She thinks she is more satisfied with her situation now in contrast to what it had been she had stayed home, she feels she has got much more.

## 9 ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROCESS AN THE RESULTS

The topic of the research has changed during the process and I have ended up emphasizing different themes than I had planned. Hence, when I started doing the interviews, I had other main themes in my mind than at the end of the interviewing. Of course, if I had known in the first place the final major themes of the research, the data might be better. However, I also think that this change has been a natural part of the research process – as the level of knowledge increases also new themes appear.

The data I have collected are also relatively small compared to for example quantitative research data. However, I suppose it is large enough for this research. As I have stated before, the purpose of interviews is not to do generalizations but to find different experiences. In a qualitative research, it is possible to talk about transparency and generalisability of the results but differently than in a quantitative research. The idea is not to claim that the found phenomenon would exist in the larger scale but, instead, when researcher finds for example certain ways to describe and categorize immigrants, he or she can assume that those ways are, at least in some level, commonly shared in a culture. Categorizations found by qualitative research are always shared in some level, not totally

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<sup>128</sup> Morokvasic 2004, 21–22.

individual.<sup>129</sup>

Semi-structured interviews that I have done are a data based method of doing research in which interviews are used to make interpretation, not facts or laws. The aim is to understand other people's meaning making. As I brought out previously, sometimes informants understood my interview questions differently than I had meant them. On the one hand I found it useful because it gave me valuable new perspectives and helped me understanding my informants' life situations in Finland. On the other hand, it made me to consider whether I should have explained my questions or the used concepts more clearly. As the point of doing interviews is to understand the informants meaning making, how can I be sure that they have answered the same questions I have asked, if they have not really understood them.

Finally, the way how I did the classifying and analysis might have been more difficult to execute if the data had not been my own and if I had not been that familiar with it. The process of planning the interviews, interviewing and finally transcribing the data gave me a good insight of the quality of the data. Therefore, while I was writing the analysis, a few times parts of the interviews that I had not classified originally or I had classified differently, came to my mind and in the end, appeared to be very interesting. As the topic of the research became more and more exact during the whole process, I think it is understandable that new themes or questions appeared and that I came up with new viewpoints or perspectives about the old ones. However, if the data had been bigger or if it had not been my own, if I had not been that familiar with it, it might have been more difficult to change perspectives and classifications.

The research frame of this thesis has been challenging and even difficult as I have been interested in the consequences that very large structural changes have had at the level of people's everyday lives. Because of the vagueness and abstractness of these questions, I have approached these themes through practical everyday life situations. I think that I have reached elements of the changes and have some kind of answer how it is to live, work and move from one country to another in a constantly changing setting.

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<sup>129</sup> Ruusuvoori, Nikander, Hyvärinen 2010, 27–28.



## 10 CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I wanted to discuss how structural changes, like the end of the Soviet era in Estonia and Estonia's EU accession have influenced Estonians' possibilities to move to Finland and their lives in Finland. My approach to these questions was to concentrate on the way how the informants are constructing their identities in relation to structural changes and everyday life situations.

There can be found some difference in the identity processes of the informants who have moved in different times, therefore it can be said that structure matters. Moving from Estonia in the 1990s has been different than at the end of the 2000s. At first, there are some practical changes, like residence permits are not needed anymore. Secondly, reasons to move have changed from returning migration to work based migration. In addition, the attitudes of Finns have changed to a more tolerant direction. However, even though Estonians might not be denigrated as "ryssä" anymore, they may be a resource of cheaper labour force.

Another theme of the research was examining the everyday encounters of immigrants and their need to renegotiate their self-understanding and identity in those encounters. I covered two categories of different social spaces, private and public, in which these encounters happened. The first one, public spaces, include encounters in working life, in the offices and in the hobbies too. The second category encounters in private space take place between family members and friends. Both of these social spaces have been essential in the everyday lives of the informants. Even though all of them were women and are or have been working in the occupations dominated by women, all the experiences have been different – it cannot be said that there would be a common experience for all Estonian women. The time of the move, social position, profession, family situation and personality have all made the experiences dissimilar. Even though all the interviewees of the research are Estonians, they still have various positions in the society according to their education and profession. Living in Finland as a quest worker is different than as a permanent resident. Moving and living with family influences the experience too. Thus, the informants are not only members of their ethnic group but social position influences the experience

too. As I brought out earlier, Karmela Liebkind has stated that ethnic identity should be seen as a separate from the social identity that is based on the social position of one's membership group<sup>130</sup>. According to this research, it seems that a person's self-understanding and social identity are connected with his or her own social position and not only membership group's. Although the informants identified themselves as Estonians, in certain situations they did not want to be connected with the group. Informants mentioned some negative features of Estonians living in Finland, like excessive alcohol use of construction workers or that many of the quest workers are from country side, and did not want to be associated with them but made a difference between themselves and these groups. Even though all are Estonians, their social positions vary. Therefore, ethnic identity is not the only group that one identifies with but there are other group memberships based on one's social position too. The way how one constructs one's identity depends on the context and the interaction with the others.

Estonian immigrants in Finland seem to form a particular group among the other immigrants. On the one hand, the informants were well adapted into the Finnish society but on the other hand, they have significant family members and friends in Estonia. In contrast to many other immigrant groups, Estonians speak good Finnish. However, they also have an accent that distinguishes them from the locals - they are not completely "in" in the Finnish society but not outsiders either. The level of acceptance is always relative: as Sofia stated<sup>131</sup>, she feels that she is almost like the others but not quite ("lähes sama mitä ne toisetki"). In addition, the way how a person sees the past of his or her country and people influences the way how he or she interprets his or her experiences and sees the everyday life encounters. In the interviewing situation, the informants were kind of negotiating their own history in relation with the history of Estonia and Finland, in other words, locating their own personal past in relation to a public history. Memories and remembering the common past are a way to produce communities and identities. Ideas of the common past have made it easier for Estonians to live in Finland than it is for some other nations and many of the informants had experienced that Finns are interested in them because they represent a kindred nation. At the same time, this kind of speech that emphasizes the similarities of the two nations is also reproducing the idea of kindred nations that have a

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<sup>130</sup> Liebkind 2006, 91–92.

<sup>131</sup> Page 40.

partly similar history and possibly a common future.

Current migration between Estonia and Finland seems to differ from the previous more permanent migration. One aspect that has been emphasized in this research is the temporary nature of residence; migrants do not have exact plans how long they are going to stay. They have meaningful relationships in both countries but for some reason, because of family members or work, they have decided to move to another country. Maybe one consequence of Estonia's EU accession has been that it has made living between two countries easier by lowering borders. One could assume that this kind of temporary nature of migration effects also immigrants' willingness to acculturate into the receiving society because maintaining social relations across borders is now probably easier than ever. However, becoming a full member of a society requires language skills and learning social practices of a new society. If immigrants manage these challenges, they have good opportunities to integrate in to the new society. The fact that the informants live in between the two countries and are able to live in the both societies is also a great advantage for them. Some of the informants mentioned that Estonians are now competitors of Finns and Finnish workforce. Free mobility has brought along a more equal position, as also Angela Coyle noticed in the case of Polish women<sup>132</sup>.

As a conclusion, I have researched experiences of common people which probably would not have been researched otherwise. Interviewing people who have themselves lived through these changes and encounters offers a human element in the context of structural change and is valuable as such. This research addresses the differences in individuals' experiences and brings forth that experiences of immigrants who represent same nationality and ethnic group differ greatly according to the background of the individual. For example education, profession and how the person sees his or her situation in relation to the others and his or her own past and even his or her in-group's past influences the way how one explains one's experiences, locates them and constructs one's identity. Therefore, immigrants should not be scrutinized only as representatives of their ethnic group but as individuals whose life stories are all different.

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<sup>132</sup> Coyle 2007, 37.

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# APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INFORMANTS

(Pseudonym, year of birth, year of move, occupation, family, place of residence)

**Marta**, born in 1966. Moved alone to Finland in 1990 to work as a nurse. Two children. Engaged with a Finn. Helsinki.

**Eliise**, born in 1935 in Ingria. Moved to Finland in 1991 with her husband and son, her daughter was already living in Finland. Helsinki.

**Sofia**, born in 1971. Moved to Finland 1998 with her Ingrian Finnish husband. Works as a nurse and has three children. Helsinki.

**Sandra**, born in 1966 in Kohtla-Järve. Moved to Finland in 1998 with her Ingrian Finnish mother. Works as a school assistant. Divorced and has one child with a Finnish man.

**Anna**, born in 1971, moved to Finland in 2003 to work. Married with a Finnish Swedish and has two children. Now on a maternity leave but has a permanent position as a social worker. Järvenpää.

**Lisette**, born in 1964. Moved alone to Finland in 2004 to work and to earn money for the education of her two children living in Estonia.

**Darja**, born in 1979 in Russia. Moved alone to Finland in 2007 because of the low wages in Estonia. Helsinki.

**Maria**, born in 1965. Moved alone to Finland in 2007 to work as a nurse and to earn money to renovate her apartment in Estonia. Has two children in Estonia.

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### 1. Taustatiedot

Kertoisitko aluksi omasta elämästäsi ja elämäntilanteestasi?

Miten ja miksi päätit muuttaa Suomeen? Kotipaikkasi nyt?

Kuinka kauan olet asunut Suomessa?

Millainen käsitys sinulla oli Suomesta ennen muuttoasi? Toteutuivatko nämä odotuksesi?

Mitä tuttavasi Virossa ajattelivat muutosta Suomeen?

Aiotko jäädä tänne pysyvästi? Jos et, niin millaisia suunnitelmia sinulla on?

Kertoisitko koulutuksestasi ja ammatistasi? Oliko työpaikan löytäminen helppoa?

Minkälainen suomen kielen taito sinulla oli muuttaessasi?

Mikä merkitys äidinkielelläsi on arjessasi? Käytätkö päivittäin? Kenen/keiden kanssa?

### 2. Perhe ja ystävät

Millaisia perhe- tai ystävyysseiteitä sinulla on Suomessa ja Virossa? Muuttiko perhe mukana?

Mikäli sinulla on yhteyksiä Viroon, vaikuttavatko ne jokapäiväiseen elämääsi? Millä tavalla?

Minkälainen ystäväpiiri sinulla on Suomessa?

Onko sinulla virolaisia tuttuja tai ystäviä Suomessa? Mitä virolaiset ystävät ja muut kontaktit merkitsevät sinulle? Jutteletko virolaisten tuttujesi kanssa asumisesta Suomessa?

### 3. Virolaisuus, suomalaisuus, eurooppalaisuus

Minkä maan kansalainen olet?

Mitä virolaisuus merkitsee sinulle?

Tunnetko itsesi enemmän virolaiseksi vai suomalaiseksi vai molemmiksi? Miksi? Miten tämä näkyy käytännön elämässä? Venäläisyys?

Ovatko jotkin virolaisuuteen liittyvät asiat korostuneet asuessasi Suomessa? Näkykö virolaisuus arkipäivässäsi? Minkälaisissa tilanteissa? Esim. työpaikallasi? Työkaverit, asiakkaat, muita virolaisia työntekijöitä?

### 4. Virolaisena Suomessa, suomalaisten käsitykset virolaisista

Miten kuvailisit virolaisia maahanmuuttajia Suomessa? Minkälaisena näet virolaisten

aseman Suomessa yleisesti ottaen? Miten virolaiset pärjäävät täällä?

Miten sinuun on mielestäsi suhtauduttu Suomessa? Virolaisena naisena? Kertoisitko joitain käytännön esimerkkejä? (Koulutus, työnsaanti? Ruokakaupassa tai viranomaisten taholta, suomalaisten tuttavien?)

Mitä luulet suomalaisten ajattelevan virolaisuudesta? Tiedätkö joitain käsityksiä? Mitä ajattelet näistä käsityksistä? Arvostetaanko virolaisia työntekijöitä Suomessa?

Eroavatko virolaiset muista maahanmuuttajaryhmistä Suomessa?

#### 5. Viron EU-jäsenyys

Mitä ajattelet Viron EU jäsenyydestä? Pidätkö EU jäsenyyttä tärkeänä? Positiivista vai negatiivista? Muistatko milloin Virosta tuli EU-jäsen?

Tunnetko itsesi eurooppalaiseksi?

Onko EU jäsenyys mielestäsi vaikuttanut virolaisten muuttamiseen Suomeen? Pidetäänkö Viroa ja virolaisia Suomessa eurooppalaisena, yhtenä toisena EU-maana?

Onko se vaikuttanut omaan elämääsi Suomessa/mahdollisuuksiisi muuttaa Suomeen?

Erottuvatko EU-jäsenyyden jälkeen Suomeen muuttaneet jotenkin aikaisemmin tulleista?

Onko mielestäsi eroa 90-luvulla muuttaneiden ja vasta viime vuosina tulleiden välillä?