

Forms of Attachment to a Home Country: Lithuanians in the USA

Ieva Kripiene



This article looks at the ways Lithuanian emigrants in the U.S. experience attachment to their homeland. The text intends to conceptualize the importance of ethnicity, creation of emotional bond with the home country, fellow citizens, and the government. Empirical data were collected by the author of the article during the ethnographic fieldtrip in the USA. A pilot fieldwork was conducted in March, 2007, on the West Coast, California: San Diego, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, Mission Viejo, and Orange County. The main field study was done in April-June, 2008, on the East Coast: New York (NY), Pittsfield (MA), Jersey City (NJ), Philadelphia (PA), Brattleboro (VT); and in the Central part: Chicago (IL). The last stage of the fieldwork was completed in October-November, 2013, again, on the East Coast – in New York (NY). During the fieldwork, “emic” data and visual recordings were collected through participant observation and qualitative semi-structured interviews.

As the article points out, while living in the U.S., “Lithuanian” symbols help emigrants to maintain the transnational link with their country of origin allowing to create their private spaces of “home” where they feel safe and, sometimes, as if they have never left Lithuania. Despite the fact that Lithuanian Americans express predominantly negative attitudes toward their home country and people who remained there, it could not be argued that they have emotionally distanced themselves from their motherland in order to re-create their own identity by denying ethnic roots. Even negative narratives about Lithuania reveal the presence of nostalgia, the immigrants’ need to talk about Lithuania and the mass of questions that remain unanswered or unresolved.

Keywords: transmigration, Lithuanians in the USA, ethnic symbols, “home”, nostalgia.

The current trends of emigration from Lithuania, in a sense, cannot be called forced emigration, since the major reasons for emigration today are not “hunger-driven” or salvation, but rather search of a better life and better living conditions, a wish to learn about different cultures, as well as the intensifying tendencies of “brain drain”. Other forces of mobility are connected to various academic and professional opportunities, job exchanges, cooperation programmes, etc.

Recent developments of communication technologies, as well as democratic forms of national governments, enable the emigrants to maintain links with Lithuania and constantly re-evaluate changing conditions, which played a role in their decision to leave the country. So, in this article, I would like to analyse various forms of attachment that emigrants from Lithuania in the U.S. express to their country of origin more comprehensively and examine their emotional bond to Lithuania. I

Dr. Ieva Kripiene is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Project “Postdoctoral Fellowship Implementation in Lithuania”, financed by the Research Council of Lithuania. ievsia@yahoo.com

believe that this is an important step in shaping long-term strategies of cooperation with emigrants, assessing opportunities and implications of transnational mobility.

Anthropologic debates on transnational migration usually focus on individuals' need to change their place of residence, establishment in a country of destination, whether it is moving to a neighboring country or migrating across the continents. In some cases, a place of residence is changed once, leading to a stable settlement and even assimilation; yet in others – migration destination can be changed multiple times, including coming back to previous places of living or a birthplace. Consequently, people's (non)adherence to several places of residence comes by no surprise. Perhaps this is why there is a need not only to analyse push-pull factors of migration, trends of adaptation to a new country, but also to try to assess migrants' emotional bond with their country of origin, attachment or non-attachment arguments.

Historical perspective on migration from Lithuania

Historically, the emigration and re-emigration – or at least, everyday wish to return to the birthplace – are not new phenomena. Since previous observations from anthropological fieldwork as well as qualitative data from the interviews included representatives of different waves of emigration from Lithuania, I would like to present a historical perspective on emigration from Lithuania to the United States (Baskauskas 1981, Van Reenan 1990, Fainhauz 1991, Dapkute 2006), for it illustrates the context where different waves of emigration have formed. Different reasons for emigration presuppose different trends of establishment in a receiving country, varying prospects of migrants' self-perception and creation of relationships with the environment, different opportunities for the potential return, as well as different forms of attachment to the home country.

There is no doubt that driven by personal motives single Lithuanians have emigrated since old times (the first Lithuanian emigrant mentioned in written sources – A. Kursius – went to America as early as 1659); however, more attention is paid to a wave of “greenhorns” (*grynoriai*), known as

the first wave of emigration at the end of the nineteenth century, which lasted until 1930s. Russification policy of Tsarist Russia forced a number of intellectuals, priests and refugees from the Czarist army to flee the country during that period (especially, after the Military Conscription Law in 1874), as well as many participants of the uprisings of 1795, 1831, and 1863. However, most of these emigrants, counted to about 635,000 by D. Fainhauz, especially, after the barren years of 1867 to 1868, were poorly educated peasants, who left to work in American coal mines, factories, slaughterhouses with the sole purpose – to make money and return to Lithuania or to fund their families moving to the U.S. (Fainhauz 1991). Most of the emigrants stayed in the United States; religious ones grouped into the Lithuanian parishes and communities, established organizations, published newspapers, and tried to keep their own language and customs alive.

The second big wave of emigration took place during World War II. Seeking to avoid the Soviet deportation to Siberia and in search of political asylum, Lithuanian intellectuals took off to the West. At that time, about 60,000 people left the country. In the fifth decade of the twentieth century, *dipukai*, i.e., people from Displaced Persons Camps (DPs), resettled in the United States, Canada, Australia, Great Britain, and other countries. Thus, DPs from German refugee camps arrived to already established Lithuanian communities and parishes in the USA. The biggest social, cultural and political centers of Lithuanian political migrants first emerged in Pennsylvania (Fainhauz 1991) and were followed by Lithuanian Communities in Chicago and Los Angeles.

For the DPs, Lithuania remained a homeland whereto, after regaining the independence they hoped to return, to give a hand to Lithuania, to help their sovietized compatriots become “true Lithuanians” again. Some of the Lithuanian emigrants who came from refugee camps in the United States have accepted the U.S. acculturation model and successfully settled in terms of social and economic wellbeing across the U.S. Most of them attended colleges, became politically active, did not experience discrimination by general American society; on the contrary, they established affiliations and close ties, created mixed marriages, and, if willing, got rid of visible marks that distinguished them from the host society (Baskauskas 1981, 278). How-

ever, the majority of DPs continued living in the U.S. according to a complex, well-integrated social networking model that was formed back in refugee camps – they took part in associations within the ethnic group boundaries, applied common symbols and marks (Baskauskas 1981, 279), supported the efforts of active members of local Lithuanian communities to incorporate the newcomers into parish's activities, organizations, organization of and participation in common events. Upon the emergence of political circumstances that allowed the return to their own or their parents' country of origin, just a very small part of the emigrants took up the challenge. Regardless of the model of integration, a large part of DPs met the requirements and acquired American citizenship.

A third major wave of economic emigration to the West began after the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990, when massive changes in the political and economic situation have occurred. The transition from centralized to the market economy has resulted in decreasing number of jobs, wage decline, as well as growing taxes and uncertainty about future. Of course, individual emigration cases took place several years before the collapse of the Soviet Union, too. The name of this wave – *tarybukai* (little Soviets) – is derived not from nuance of establishment in a receiving country, like *grynoriai* (greenhorns), not from a local name of a temporary residence before leaving for a receiving country, like *dipukai* (DPs), but from the political regime of the country of residence, which, as earlier waves of emigration representatives in America believed, undoubtedly formed political, cultural, and moral values of the emigrants. However, the members of *tarybukai*, migration waves of which continue to this day, for their very distinctive social features, varying goals and ways of emigration have acquired various other names, for example, “third-wavers” (*trečiabangiai*), “new-wavers” (*naujabangiai*), “new aliens” (*naujieji atėiviai*). Slowly, *third-wavers* get involved in ethnic organizations inherited and reformed by DPs from *greenhorns*; there are more cases of assimilation or individual propagation of Lithuanianness. Sense of nostalgia as well as desire to return to Lithuania are also strong within this wave, yet, even if formal political, economic or technological conditions for return are met, this is not a common practice among emigrants.

Theoretical Perspectives on Forms of Attachment to a Home Country

In order to analyse the forms of migrants' attachment to a sending country, we should discuss “home” building strategies within the emigration and pay attention to the components studied by theorists (see more: Rapport and Dawson 1998; Svašek 2002; Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Barnard and Spencer 2006; Parutis 2006).

In the late twentieth century, migration studies interpreted migration processes as movements of individuals from one country to another, “pushed” and “pulled” by the forces of capitalism,” while, “more recently there has been a greater interest in the cultural contexts of migration, examining the ideas and values around which migration is organized and the changes in these ideas and values that migration brings” (Barnard and Spencer 2006, 371). Thus, we will focus on “home” building within the emigration, the use of ethnic items for creating “emotionally safe home”, by trying to distinguish different strategies of different emigration waves and different generations. For the purposes of this article, we will limit our discussion to the significance of “Lithuanian” symbols in migratory experiences, as well as to homeland related emotions, both positive and negative, present in ordinary routine.

Migrants constantly cross the “boundaries” between the familiar and the unknown, “own” and “strange”, a homeland and a foreign country, and “simultaneously become foreigners in the country where they live while becoming foreign to the country from which they came” (Waldinger, Soehl 2013, 334). Therefore, M. Svašek raises the question of what and where the “home” is when the state borders and cultural boundaries are crossed both voluntary and being forced by certain circumstances (Svašek 2002, 495). Within the migratory processes of uncertainty and ambiguity, migrants are trying to find or create something close, familiar, to be engaged in the activities which would not allow to completely lose bonds with their home country or that of their parents.

As some theorists argue, “only through displacement one comes to feel a real sense of belonging.” V. Parutis states that “in order to realize where your “home” is it is necessary to become estranged and alienated from it to some degree” (Parutis 2006, 1). During our field study a number of examples

revealed that immigrants from Lithuania realized only after they had emigrated how dear Lithuania was to them, how strong the feeling of nostalgia could be, even causing radical life changes. They said to have realised that they were proud of being *Lithuanians* and that *their real home*, regardless of their country of residence, would always be Lithuania. Moreover, it is common to *take one's home together* and reconstruct it in the new environment, adapting to the new circumstances, and “create a place where personal and social meanings are embedded” (Al-Ali and Koser 2002, 7).

The concept of “home”, particularly in the context of transmigration, is rapidly changing with the challenges of globalisation. According to Al-Ali and Koser, “a postmodern approach to the lives of transnationals, where local space is opposed to global one, leads to formation of global identities and “home” as multi- or translocal” (Al-Ali and Koser 2002, 6). Therefore, transmigrants, while crossing geographical borders of their home countries, often remain committed to their motherland and simultaneously create “home” in a new country.

Paraphrasing A. Giddens, M. Svašek argues that it makes sense to form a theoretical distinction between a place of residence and space (Svašek 2002). A place should be understood as an actual, everyday structure in which we are housed (Parutis 2006). “Space, by contrast, is the general idea people have of where things should be in physical and cultural relation to each other (...). It is rather a mental picture than a particular locality” (Svašek 2002, 498). In our case study we may draw clear parallels between the idealisation of “native home” by displaced Sudeten Germans, analysed by M. Svašek, and the political emigrants from Lithuania, since both of these groups, after having lost their physical residence, were forced for the decades to be content with only the idea of native “home”, which was idyllically formulated, based on ethnic symbols, and, territorialized.

Contemporary “home” is “neither here nor there, rather, itself a hybrid, it is both here and there – an amalgam, a pastiche, a performance” (Rapport and Dawson 1998, 7). Over the time, ties with the country of immigration become stronger, whereas ties with the country of origin begin to weaken. A successful creation of home in the new environment reduces migrants’ nostalgia for home as well as their chances to return. “Therefore,

home in the minds of migrants is often something that no longer relates to space and time, but to their origins, which become the basis of their identity” (Parutis 2006, 5).

Methodology of the fieldwork

The anthropological fieldwork was conducted in the United States, where “the largest, best organized Lithuanian diaspora has been effectively functioning to this date” (Kuzmickaitė 2004, 15). Nevertheless, this study is nearly an anthropological research “at home”, among “our own people”, for the researcher is culturally and socially close to most of the study informants – her mother tongue is Lithuanian, too, moreover, she is acutely aware of the social, cultural, and economic context, which they have left behind. On the other hand, various factors, for instance, that she does not reside in the U.S., does not face the same problems as they do, does not always have a good sense of the political and economic context of the informants’ country of residence – have increased the distance between the researcher and informants. For the emigrants, she was not “one of them”, but the one, who *is still staying in Lithuania for some reason*. Therefore, the researcher did not experience the trouble of so called “cultural blindness”, when some things are seen as obvious and self-evident, thus, not necessary to put on a record.

Collection of ethnographic data took place in three phases. Having established initial contacts with potential informants living in California, while still being in Lithuania, the exploratory field study was carried out in March, 2007, on the West Coast of the USA, in California (CA): San Diego, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, Mission Viejo, and Orange County. The main field study was done in April–June, 2008, on the East Coast: New York (NY), Pittsfield (MA), Jersey City (NJ), Philadelphia (PA), Brattleboro (VT), and in the central part: Chicago (IL). The third phase of the study took place in October–November, 2013, again, on the East Coast: New York (NY). Informants were searched in dating websites, using a “snow ball” method, and, finally, visiting Lithuanian community venues.

Empirical data were collected by the methods of semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The method of observation was used on

a daily basis both, in formal and informal environments¹ – at the work or leisure places of today’s immigrants from Lithuania and Lithuanian-Americans. Intense and persistent visits that researcher paid to informants’ meeting places and their homes allowed her to become “one of them”, to gain confidence and critically observe behavior and actions of individuals in informal, ordinary situations, allowing to collect reliable data.

The data observed was regularly described in the “journal of field notes” by recording the non-verbal communication, the informants’ moods and changes of moods, informants’ gestures and meaningful position in the course of the conversation, fragments of informal conversations, the informants’ relationship with the surrounding people or with the environment, personal reflections of the researcher, as well as most frequently recurring and most highlighted by informants topics. In the study journal, there have been described over 100 spaces, events, meetings observed during all phases of the field study. It should be noted that during the first phase of the fieldtrip, the researcher has stayed with the families of nine informants (from 2 to 8 days each). Ethnographic study involved making photographs of the informants’ activities and relationships. Of high importance are also the data from secondary sources of information, for example, personal photographs of informants or the snapshots that document activities with the researcher involved. This allows the researcher to interpret attitudes of the informants and emotional involvement in certain activities.

Another method of inquiry, supplementing the observation methods described above and offering as much valuable information, is a semi-structured

¹ It is worth mentioning Maironis Lithuanian School in New York, Alexandra Kazickiene Lithuanian Saturday School in Riverhead, St. Casimir Lithuanian School in Los Angeles and the celebration of the March 11th that took place in it, Transfiguration Roman Catholic Church and Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic churches in New York City, St. Casimir’s Church in Los Angeles, Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid Organization, the parish hall, where Lithuanian American Community’s New York County 4-district council meetings took place, Mother’s Day celebration festival, Consulate General of Lithuania in New York, the basketball team’s practice hall, Lithuanian Square, Brattleboro “Neringa” camp in Vermont, as well as bars, cafes, restaurants, parks, saunas, private houses of informants.

interview with open-ended questions, which, after the verbal consent of the informants, were recorded with the voice recorder. The informants were informed that data collected would be used only for scientific purposes, anonymously. Throughout all the phases of fieldwork, there were 43 interviews conducted in total. Informants’ age ranged from 24 to 71 years, involved 25 men and 18 women. During the first interviews the researcher has noticed that informants were very reluctant to speak about their education, work experience acquired in Lithuania, their current immigration status, while some openly said they wanted to forget everything that happened before arrival to the U.S. and start a new life here, look for new opportunities; they said they wanted to be appreciated for what they were now, rather than what they had been *there*. Therefore, in each case, the researcher did not attempt to learn about social characteristics of the informants and classify them accordingly.

Upon her return from the fieldtrip, virtual relationships are maintained, key informants, who and provided the most useful information for the study and eventually became friends, are met during their holidays in Lithuania. There are good conditions to maintain the access to the field, retain within the problematics of research spaces, keep in touch with the informants and continue “observing” their lives.

The meaning of symbols in the transnational migration

As the findings from the fieldtrip have shown, a central basis for emotional security of Lithuanian immigrants in the U.S. is “Lithuanian” symbols. They not only help to maintain transnational links with Lithuania, but also allow creating their “home” in the U.S., ethnic private space of home where migrants feel safe, and, sometimes, even as if they have not left their home country.

Since most items do not mean anything *per se*, but rather hold the importance as symbols that “give us the capacity to make meaning” (Cohen 2003, 16), thus, such items make you feel like in Lithuania. A 25-years-old student in the United States says, *I do not focus on items from Lithuania so much, I rather focus on the feeling that I am in Lithuania. This way, I create Lithuania at home in America.*

First and foremost, migrants refer to the tricolor flag and the coat of arms of Lithuania as the decoration of their homes. It should be noted that such symbolic artifacts are not usually brought along by the informants as necessary household items. Usually, their relatives and family's elderly take care of this, seeing Lithuanian identity as closely connected to the citizenship and ethnicity, whereas young people downplay such feelings. *Yep, you know, grandma has sent me a flag, so I've got the flag now, not so openly displayed, in a small vase... this flag. Such a small, my grandma's, says a 28-years-old woman.*

During the fieldtrip, the researcher has found out that, regardless of age or social status, immigrants from Lithuania have at home variety of things: paintings, amber or stoneware, candles, Lithuanian seaside sand, T-shirts with "Lithuanian" attributes, table cloths, small angels, maps of Lithuania and Europe, Lithuanian carvings, historical books, photo albums about Lithuania. Informants have often admitted that they had not kept such symbols at home back in Lithuania and nobody had ever made such gifts. Therefore, it can be assumed that today's immigrants actively support "little transnationalism" (Vertovec 2009), expressed by active social memory, connection with family members.

Every time my daughter goes to Lithuania she buys lots of books, and I also always bring them along and, and... You know, photobooks about Lithuania, it's an exhausted topic, and yet, there are different kinds of interesting ones, for example, History of Lithuania by Bumblauskas, such a thick recent book "History of Old Lithuania" that we have brought. Now, my husband said he bought a book in Lithuania about the Battle of Grunwald, a very attractive and interesting book edition, well, that one is for sure to be brought (a woman, 67).

At home of practically all informants, you can find family photos, pictures resembling travel impressions – *photos capture the longing, I feel good and do not think I'm so lonely anymore*, confides 52-years-old woman, whose daughter is living in Ireland, and the other one has stayed in Lithuania. On the house number plate, people tend to glue a tricolor or *Lithuanian squirrel* in order to inform passers-by that Lithuanians are living here. The same is true for small Lithuanian flags on car number plates or stickers with symbols of Lithuania on people's

cars. Quite negative comments are on *Rupintojėlis*, the agonizing Christ, as a symbol of Lithuanian culture, which Lithuanians are even ashamed to acquaint foreign friends with:

Well, a symbol of Lithuania is official and national, namely, national. Oh, right, there is such uncle, he's sitting, with his cheek resting on the palm of his hand, and thinking... and its name is Rupintojėlis, just try to explain it to a German or American... why, the hell, is he sitting and thinking and does nooothing at all? (a man, 36).

Some of the youth tend to have a *clean walls policy* and do not exaggerate things. So, when they are being sent items resembling their country from relatives in Lithuania, perhaps, so that Lithuania and its identity would not be forgotten, they do not bother to stow all of them at home.

Jesus, they bring a lot, send everything here, I barely manage to throw those things away, no end to this stuff. Why to keep it? To hang a coat of arms in the room? Nope, no crosses in my room either (a woman, 28).

Emigrants who do not appreciate "Lithuanian" symbols, explain that any item, even with the symbolic meaning, needs to have their practical use. A 26-years-old informant told me that upon her stay in Lithuania, her mother reminds her every time to buy an amber necklace, but she adamantly refuses, since she will neither wear such jewelry in Lithuania, nor will she put it on in America. This is partially due to continuous traveling mood and no permanent place of residence, and partially – due to withstanding archaic traditions. *Well, I think a Lithuanian, perhaps, is a little exaggerating with that homeland of his, as if to the edge of doom (a woman, 33).*

It is therefore not surprising that DPs' home, as a "muzealisation" of "Lithuanian" symbols (Kockel 2002), for some of today's immigrants from Lithuania is a beautiful style, for others – a weird hobby, a whimsy, a pastime. None of the *third-wavers* has mentioned that "Lithuanian" symbols in houses of political refugees were a *chance to spiritually survive the pain of losing Lithuania, the support to Lithuanian artists*, as a frequent DP tells.

There are people whom you visit and may immediately say, you just walk into their apartment and can immediately tell that Lithuanians are living here. The whole lot – carved wooden plates with Lithuanian motifs and towel-horses, and hanging bands... Just very much of that (a woman, 67).

An item, falling neither in a category of “Lithuanian” symbols nor Lithuania-resembling household articles is a body art. At one basketball training, researcher have accidentally noticed a permanent tattoo on the player’s stomach, which was not publicly displayed and represented the image of Lithuanian Vytis.

Thus, today’s immigrants from Lithuania perceive home as a stable physical place of residence (Svašek 2002, Parutis 2006), it is not connected to such emotions and feelings that political refugees from Lithuania have attached to their home. Therefore, “Lithuanian” symbols do not deserve a special attention, are not collected at home and even cause a discontent when being sent by relatives from Lithuania, especially – impractical items that symbolize “Lithuanianness“ and emphasize ethnicity in a foreign community. This could be explained by modes of continuous movement of third-wavers, constant construction of cultural identity, the search for new forms; thus, confirming the position of U. Kockel, who claims that detachment of material objects and everyday experiences from their real-life context, called “muzealisation” or fixation, enables talking about the “invented culture”, rather than inherited or preserved (Kockel 2002).

Narrative of disappointment in Lithuania

The fact, that today’s immigrants from Lithuania have chosen the role of emigrants would cause an assumption that they are not satisfied with what is happening in Lithuania, with existing private lives, however, during the study, the *emic* approach was applied, that is, a “demotic” discourse analysis was conducted (Baumann 1997) in order to hear their own attitudes, arguments, as well as observe how much of the opinion, expressed emotions about Lithuania are important for decision of the *third-wavers* to be transmigrants, perhaps, to pursue assimilation in America, or, maybe, to return to Lithuania, or simply create an (un)attachment to a home country.

The disappointment... disappointment in Lithuania, yeah, complete... in other words, waiting for hitting the bottom so that then, perhaps, to start from nothing again. When returning before the European Union, after the European Union – it was like a ghost

town for me so ... somehow ... all of them... as I say, all of the brains gone. After all, the brain drain has stopped, ‘cause the brains have long been drained from Lithuania (a man, 36).

However, a DP interviewed in California would oppose the latter informant, in the discussion with other representatives of her migratory wave she objected that the majority of today’s emigrants from Lithuania are educated individuals:

Hey, look, there are, as far as I meet them through my son, there are indeed. You know what, most intelligent ones and those who have the best opportunities, are not afraid to stay in Lithuania, as they see that they’re going to have a bright future. The ones leave who cannot do anything in Lithuania (a woman).

American Lithuanians are frustrated by the abundance of scandals in Lithuania and by the unwillingness, inability, incompetence of politicians to work for the good of the country, by their *meddling in politics* for purely selfish gain; *the old Soviets just want to fight the new politicians*. Most of the informants are convinced that just a few percent of those holding ranks in Lithuanian Parliament are worthy of being in that position. *I don’t like this kind, this carnage in Seimas and stuff like that, and I’m far from willing to read about all this, I’m totally not interested*, said a 37 years-old man, who has gained a master’s degree in one of New York’s universities.

Immigrants from Lithuania are concerned about the situation of teachers and retirees in Lithuania since elderly parents of many informants remained living in Lithuania. Much pain is caused by listening about high numbers of accidents and people killed in them. Low level of intelligence and personal culture of news commentators online are depressing. Country’s economic and political instability is truly worrying. Giving a real example of what happened to his relatives, a DP from California criticizes the spread of corruption in Lithuania:

If you want the country to even begin to live rightly, we have to put the court system in order, but look what’s going on now? There is a backing system in force, everything is run under the table. They demand from anybody and for anything. My brother had run a company, so, they told him – either you pay 50 thousands Litas or the company will go bankrupt. He still tried to fight it, but how can you fight? He was forced to fall to pieces. The corruption becomes like the rule, destroying everything (a man, 75).

Bribery has also shrouded an evaluation system in schools. The latter cited DP continued his story as follows:

I have heard from relatives that even in Lithuanian schools parents bribe schoolteachers so that their child is a good pupil. While teacher smiles, praises, a child thinks that it's for his merits, but, in fact, it was daddy who just bribed a teacher (a man, 75).

Disappointment is expressed not only in formal institutions, officers in Lithuania, but also in the attitude of remaining inhabitants of Lithuania who, maybe, being jealous, or, maybe, resenting that emigrants are not involved in Lithuania's development process, condemn the emigrants and do not try to understand in what difficult conditions they are living: *Lithuania's people are either uninformed or misinformed, they do not realize how we live here (a woman from Riverhead)*. While on the other hand, people staying in Lithuania keep sending the symbols of "Lithuanianness" to America as if inviting emigrants not to forget their motherland, ethnic roots, not to hide and openly display their origins, as if expressing their reliance on those well-representing Lithuanian culture in a foreign country.

The state of Lithuania is doing everything to be despised by us, however, it does not want to be despised. After all, we send money home. In any case, the money flows to retirees. So bad, it's very silly that Lithuania condemns emigrants (a man).

However, dissemination of information that conveys the true living conditions of emigrants would remedy the situation, so that Lithuania would not repel or condemn those who have left for the United States. *Third-wavers from Riverhead, half-seriously – half-jokingly say: to reach mutual understanding with Lithuanians in Lithuania, we need to exchange places of residence for five years.*

The informants highlight that they have got familiar with negative attitudes of Lithuanians in Lithuania towards emigrants via the media, through hearsay. However, the validity of invited reviews in publications, motivating emigrants to return to Lithuania, with emphasis on their acquired competencies and significance for Lithuania, is questionable. The informant, who came with a Lithuanian friend to the church, before the start of the Mass, said:

I do not get what's going on in Lithuania, so many articles are against emigration and calling us back. It's even irritating, 'cause if everything was all that

good, then people would not run from Lithuania like this (a woman, 26).

The study revealed one tendency: there was no emphasis on economic reasons for emigration from Lithuania; instead, emigrants have stressed that leaving Lithuania was induced by accidentally won "Green Card", an impulsive decision to travel, study, take the opportunity to "Work and Travel in the USA," do the "Au Pair in the USA" program, also, frustrated personal life, desire to try oneself in facing new challenges, as well as marriage to a foreigner acquainted via the Internet. Nevertheless, some informants are openly happy to have left Lithuania for in their homeland nothing but deprivation, a lack of opportunities and no work in accordance with one's education could be expected.

I don't spit in Lithuania's face, but I could not find a job matching my profession. And since I studied and worked in Lithuania I cannot work as a cleaner there (a woman).

While living in the U.S., informants try not to be overly concerned with negative things that take place in their homeland, as they perceive it. Although loved ones, parents, friends of *third-wavers* are living in Lithuania, they try to distance themselves from the analysis of political, economic, and social situation in Lithuania, since it no longer has any direct impact on their lives; nonetheless, the "little" transnationalism (Vertovec 2009) is activated by the social memory when liaising with relatives. As one *third-waver*, an active member of Lithuanian community in Riverhead has put it, *here you even stop worrying about that nonsense produced by Lithuania. You focus on the community, children and try to do your best for your children*. So, at practical level, there is a clear disappointment in Lithuania, in opportunities to reside there, while at the emotional level by engaging the selectivity of social memory (Svašek 2002), Lithuania is beloved and idealized.

The role of nostalgia in everyday life of expatriates

Despite the fact that interviews with Lithuanian Americans are predominated by negative attitude toward Lithuania and people remaining there, one cannot conclude that migrants have emotionally distanced themselves from the mother country

and recreated their own identity by denying ethnic roots. Even the negative narratives about Lithuania evidence the presence of nostalgia experienced by immigrants from Lithuania, their need to talk about Lithuania, and the existence of unanswered or unresolved questions.

In the era of globalization, the recent technological boom along with a better access to the means of communication, enabled emigrants to not feel isolated from their mother country, virtually and directly communicate with relatives, friends in Lithuania, follow everything what is going on in the homeland. Today's communication technology as well as symbols of "Lithuanianness", brought along or invented, make emigrants feel like living in Lithuania day to day, allow them being "surrounded" by Lithuanians, when needed, or, in other words, let them create "Lithuanianness" not in their living place, but in their space (Svašek 2002).

The vast majority of research participants mentioned they were reading Lithuanian newspapers online and contributing to the "yellow press" by writing comments in the commentary field while drinking their morning coffee at work or home. Others said they skip through Lithuanian newspapers published in the U.S., e.g., "American Lithuanian" ("Amerikos lietuvis"), "Worker" ("Darbininkas"). However, as emigrants admit, they do not follow the news systematically or very closely; just take a look *in a hurry*. Others said they learn relevant news by talking to relatives by phone or via Skype. This kind of relationship to Lithuania would be defined as "participatory in cybernetic communities" by S. Vertovec (2009, 48) and R. Cohen (1999).

Immigrants who read Lithuanian newspapers collect plenty of conversation topics for a longer time:

Talking about Lithuania is as if wreaking your anger, I think. You know, it's kind of giving... giving, somewhat, 20 minutes to the subject ... of the entire conversation and, and ... and, and, and all the talks result in "but need to go back, we should go back," and that's all, and no more talks about it, as it is a completely exhausted topic (a man, 25).

When visiting Lithuania, some of the informants feel the distinction from local inhabitants, seek a special attention from them, arrange parties for friends, *make schedules for meetings*, bring gifts. Also, they try to provide support for those who stayed in their homeland – they think such support is essential: *obviously, they are poor, so I bought a*

music CD. I will rather support them than anyone else (a man, 39). The informant, who has been living in America for 12 years now, then adds:

I've brought gifts, don't know, have bought Nikes here (Nike t-shirts), you know what, somewhat around five dollars, twelve Litas here, gifts for everybody; while in Lithuania you come to a store – they cost 200 Litas, so, you know, it's cool for a kid. I don't know, it's just everything simpler here (a man, 39).

The informants, who maintain strong and intense relationships with relatives in Lithuania, have a financial capacity and, most importantly, the legal status, to meet with their relatives every year. Being able to visit one's country of origin and home shows a higher status than being just arrived in a foreign country, and that is an indicator of the quality of life, showing the potential to get emotional benefits of close relationships with family and friends in their home country (O'Flaherty, Skrbis and Tranter 2007, 819). Part-time studies in Lithuanian higher schools, when emigrants fly from America, where they work unskilled jobs, to Lithuania during the sessions or just to pass exams, could be examples of "circular" migration (Vertovec 2009) between Lithuania and the U.S. It also concerns the sales of cars that are shipped to Lithuania and a search for prospect buyers there, annual health checkups and treatments in medical institutions, the use of beauty industry services, and so on. Although emigrants do not feel any threat of deportation, however, the illegal status precludes them from returning to Lithuania for longer years.

Several informants could not return to Lithuania for more than ten years because of the fear of losing the possibility to ever come back to America. Third-wave family from Riverhead mentions desirable options to solve this problem: *the visa-free regime would re-unite many families. At least, they would see their families. But those who live here – would not dare to go to Lithuania.*

Also, as it turned out at the party, one-month long vacations in Lithuania help to recover from America. It is emphasized that, even though it is financially more comfortable to live in America, however, morally better it is in Lithuania: *It is more secure in America, but in Lithuania – better for the soul (a man, 51).*

To recover from America (laughing), well, seriously, well, not kidding, as others have said, yeah, others also ask me, so, why do you go to that Lithua-

nia, you'd better go, well, to some Dominica, Florida, well, Hawaii, somewhere else... (a man, 40).

On the other hand, the vacation in Lithuania puts the informants out of balance, as they say, they begin to feel unstable in both countries: in Lithuania, they experience a strong emotional shock, whereas upon return to the United States it is hard to re-adapt, to get into the flow of activities. Before each vacation in Lithuania migrants are afraid of returning to the U.S., *and this jumping really freaks me out, so, I haven't been to Lithuania for two years now*, says a 25 years-old student.

It is not a secret that vacation in Lithuania for a family with two children would cost about 10 thousand dollars, which is a lot of money, and not every family can afford such luxury. "As everyday cross-border activities are resource-absorbing, not to mention the legal status, only a selected minority of migrants enjoy "living lives across borders" (Waldinger 2010, 23). They also mention a negative attitude toward emigrant status in Lithuania. It is very humiliating experience that remains engraved in one's memory for a long time:

It offends when, upon arrival to Lithuania, officials act up, asking about money, personal stuff. This mocking in customs, it hurts for a long time thereafter (a man).

Some of the informants say that *time takes its toll: you lose your friends, all links disappear*, especially, if you sell a real estate. There is no longer any motivation to come back to Lithuania for celebrating festivities or spending vacation. A 26 years-old woman, living in America for 6 years, is joking by saying, *so, then, I look, the more I come back, the more I somehow think – gosh, what is there to do for me?* Thus, after several years passed in America, when a circle of friends in Lithuania shrinks, emigrants begin spending their vacations in other U.S. states or countries. The only object of attraction in Lithuania remains their families, unless they have not immigrated to America by the time and a "family reunification" has not taken place.

If adaptation to the U.S. is successful, this country becomes a home where they feel secure, and relate their future plans only to the U.S. However, the availability of resources for being constantly mobile and the absence of political constraints remain important, together with the realization that the world turns into "transnational social field linking migrants and stay-at-homes" (Waldinger and Soehl 2013, 335).

Just as you live out here, well, then, like they say, you feel at home here, you know. Well, indeed, all the same, as you think, those eight hours and there, so... well, ten hours. Besides, how you'll plan your trip... But, on the other hand, anyway, everybody... you might look globally at all of that whether here is house or there is home, there is home everywhere now, what's the difference. But after reading Lithuanian newspapers – it is suddenly no longer home... (a woman, 33).

Both, virtual communication with Lithuania and visits to the homeland, verify the transnational experience of today's immigrants from Lithuania, therefore, it should be researched by focusing not only on personal ties of migrants, but also on governmental and civic institutions, cultural structures, such as national identity and values (O'Flaherty, Skrbis, and Tranter 2007, 819). Transnationalism is "a social process whereby migrants operate in social fields that transgress geographic, political, and cultural borders" (Brettell 2008), where they are assisted by a variety of transportation services available, opportunities provided by telecommunications, that reduce the distance between the home and receiving countries. Thus, a constant online contact with a family, relatives in Lithuania or visits to Lithuania, without employing DPs' proposed strategies on saving the "Lithuanian" identity, helps immigrants from Lithuania to re-invent identity and "to adapt quickly to their new environment" (Kuzmickaite 2004, 83).

Conclusions and discussion

The goal of this article was to try to answer the questions: What are the forms of attachment to home country of emigrants from Lithuania in the U.S.? What main emotions toward Lithuania prevail in narratives of casual conversations? We have presented empirical data of the anthropological fieldwork conducted in three phases, and have analyzed the research material.

In the era of globalization and intensified migration, "few people in the world today do not have a friend, relative, or co-worker, who is not on the road to somewhere else or already coming back home, bearing stories and possibilities" (Appadurai 1996, 4). Thus, it is particularly important to understand the migration process-induced areas, intensity,

localization, transnationality of moving personal identities. Therefore, anthropological field studies are indeed important not only in a sense of integration, acculturation of immigrants, emergence of their conflicts with surrounding environment and people, but also for the evaluation of potential options of re-immigration to their home country.

Immigrants from Lithuania in the United States do not seek to completely assimilate, but frequently attempt to remain “Lithuanian”, go into a mode of nostalgia, and make their private home spaces cozy by collecting “Lithuanian” symbols. Economic situation in Lithuania, instability of labor market, poor social benefits, and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation would not let them even think about building a permanent home in Lithuania. Despite that, rarely one categorically claims to never come back to live here. In any case, none of them are going to take any real actions and will rather remain content with transnational ties to Lithuania, thus, opposing C.B. Brettell, who states that “in most cases, return to their home country is influenced by maintenance of close family ties, rather than the economic failure, lack of financial success” (Brettell 2008, 116). For that reason some of the transmigrants remit money to the relatives staying in Lithuania and keep coming back there for vacations, public holidays. However, within such a short period, they lack time to experience a real life here, they are caught by ambiguous feelings – uncertainty over where their *real home* is and the feeling of “always and yet never at home” (Rapport and Dawson 1998).

Some other immigrants, particularly those having successfully adapted, and who “even after having lost their own homeland, acquired a new one” (Øverland 2005), have established new strong social relationships in the U.S., no longer have any motivation to keep coming back to Lithuania. Especially, if with time they have lost relatives in Lithuania, have sold real estate, and are no longer keeping in touch with friends.

It is emphasized that the “Lithuanianness does not change”. However, a deeper interpretation of identification can take different forms. During the first year of living in a foreign country, nostalgic moods of overestimating the mother country’s culture usually dominate. Over the years, upon getting familiar with a cultural diversity of a new receiving country of residence, these feelings are

not so much emphasized and become of little importance.

Attachment to Lithuania diminishes with the course of time due to the non-renewal of practical knowledge; however, the *spiritual liaison* remains. It is emphasized that in the public space, where conditions and circumstances allow, Lithuanian emigrants show resemblance to Americans. However, within the ethnic community of compatriots, organizations or private homes, they stay or try to stay *Lithuanians*. Again, this can be explained by transmigrationalism of today’s immigrants from Lithuania in the U.S. Their identity does not undergo assimilation moods into the mainstream of the receiving society or political constraints in engaging with the country of origin (Glick Schiller 2005), therefore they do not have the necessity to develop their ethnic identity, as political migrants did.

Contemporary immigrants from Lithuania in the U.S. often judge their home country and Lithuanians in Lithuania quite negatively, thus, the frequency of *third-wavers’* trips to Lithuania to visit the relatives decreases, affecting the prospects of return to re-settle in the country. Summing up the climate prevailing among immigrants from Lithuania in the U.S. in terms of possibilities to return to live in the country of origin, we can conclude by these two quotes: *all of us would come back to Lithuania, but let’s be realistic* (a man, 25). *The last who leaves Lithuania, please, turn off the lights at the airport* (popular phrase in online forums).

References

- Al-Ali, Nadjé & Koser, Khalid (2002): Transnationalism, international migration and home. In: Al-Ali, N., & Koser, K., (eds.): *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of home*. London and New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Appadurai, Arjun (1996): *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Barnard, Alan & Spencer, Jonathan (eds.) (2006): *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London, Routledge.
- Baškauskas, Liucija (1981): The Lithuanian Refugee Experience and Grief, *International Migration Review*. 15(1), pp. 276–291.

- Baumann, Gerd (1997): Dominant and Demotic Discourses of Culture: their Relevance to Multi – ethnic Alliances. In: Werbner, Pnina; Modood, Tariq (eds.): *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism (Postcolonial Encounters)*. London, Zed Books.
- Brettell, B. Caroline (2008): *Theorizing Migration in Anthropology. The Social Construction of Networks, Identities, Communities, and Globalscapes*. In: Brettell, B. C.; Hollifield, F. J. (eds.): *Migration Theory: talking across disciplines*. London and New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Cohen, Anthony Paul (2003): *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London, Routledge.
- Dapkutė, Daiva (2006): Tarp dviejų pasaulių: tapatumo kaita emigracijoje. In: Andrijauskas, Antanas (red.): *Lietuviškojo europietiško raida: dabarties ir ateities iššūkiai*. Vilnius, Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas.
- Fainhauz, David (1991): *Lithuanians in the USA: Aspects of Ethnic Identity*. Chicago, Lithuanian Library Press.
- Glick Schiller, Nina (2005): Blood and Belonging: Long – Distance Nationalism and the World Beyond. In: McKinnon, Susan & Silverman, Sydel (eds.): *Complexities: Beyond Nature and Nurture*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Kockel, Ullrich (2002): *Regional Culture and Economic Development. Explorations in European Technology*. Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Kuzmickaitė, D. Kristina (2004): *Tarp dviejų pasaulių: naujieji imigrantai lietuviai Čikagoje (1988–2000)*. Kaunas, VDU leidykla.
- O’Flaherty, Martin & Skrbis, Zlatko & Tranter, Bruce (2007): Home visits: Transnationalism among Australian migrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 30(5), pp. 817–844.
- Øverland, Orm (2005): *Identities of Exile, Emigration and Immigration, Beginnings and Ends of Emigration. Life without Borders in the Contemporary World*. Vilnius, Versus Aureus.
- Parutis, Violetta (2006): *Construction of Home by Polish and Lithuanian Migrants in the UK*. Centre for the Study of Economic and Social Change in Europe: Working Papers, <http://www.ssees.ucl.ac.uk>. Accessed on July 1, 2014.
- Rapport, Nigel & Dawson, Andrew, (eds.) (1998): *Migrants of Identity. Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement*. New York, Oxford.
- Svašek, Maruška (2002): Narratives of “Home” and “Homeland”: the Symbolic Construction and Appropriation of the Sudeten German Heimat. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. 9, pp. 495–518.
- Van Reenan, J. Antanas (1990): *Lithuanian Diaspora, Königsberg to Chicago*. Lanham MD, University Press of America.
- Vertovec, Steven (2009): *Transnationalism*. London, Routledge.
- Waldinger, Roger & Soehl, Thomas (2013): *The Political Sociology on International Migration: Borders, Boundaries, Rights, and Politics*. In: Gold, J. Steven & Nawyn, J. Stephanie (eds.): *The Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies*. London and New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Waldinger, Roger (2010): Rethinking Transnationalism. *EMPIRIA. Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales*. 19, pp. 21–38.

Siirtolaisuusinstituutin apurahat 2015 nyt haettavissa

Siirtolaisuusinstituutin vuoden 2015 apurahat siirtolaisuustutkimuksen edistämiseen ja tukemiseen ovat haettavissa 22.4.2015 mennessä.

Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtisen rahastosta on jaossa yhteensä 2 000 euroa.
Niilo ja Helen M. Alhon rahastosta on jaossa yhteensä 2 000 euroa.

Lisätietoja ja hakuohjeet:

<http://www.migrationinstitute.fi/fi/rahastot-apurahat/hakuohjeet>