Tampere University

JAANIKA KINGUMETS

From Paradise to the Town of no Hope

Home-making among
the Soviet-era Russian-speakers
in Narva, Estonia

JAANIKA KINGUMETS

From Paradise to the Town of no Hope

Home-making among the Soviet-era Russian-speakers in Narva, Estonia

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
To be presented, with the permission of
the Faculty of Social Sciences
of Tampere University,
for public discussion in the auditorium K 103
of the Linna building, Kalevantie 5, Tampere,
on 25 March 2022, at 12 o'clock.

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
Tampere University, Faculty of Social Sciences
Finland

Responsible supervisor and Custos	Professor Laura Huttunen Tampere University Finland	
Supervisor	Docent Mari Korpela Tampere University Finland	
Pre-examiners	Professor Laura Assmuth University of Eastern Finland Finland	Associate Professor Eeva Kesküla Tallinn University Estonia
Opponent	Professor Stefaan Jansen University of Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina	

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

Cover design: Roihu Inc.

Dedication
To my grandparents, Vaike Lall and Evald Lall

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over this long period of time that have sometimes felt like lasting forever I believe this foreverness has felt even longer for my partner Javier. Thank you for supporting me as much as you could. For two foreigners without a family network to rely on, even occasionally, the situation has felt at times especially frustrating and lonely. The biggest challenges and joys in this time have been related to joining my roles as a writer of a dissertation and a mom to my two rays of sun, Axel and Iris. The future will show what kind of wounds has this choice of mine to pursue a doctoral degree left in the souls of my kids, but I hope that one day I can share with them the most intimate thoughts related to my personal process of growth over this time and they will be proud of me.

I also want to express my gratitude to the three women in my kin, my mom Urve and my sisters Evelin and Kersti for being in my life as the best representation of "ordinary people" who never really understood what are my academic endeavours about, but who nevertheless stood always on my side, never condemning my choices. Such silent support is much needed. And I think with gratitude about the two people who have meanwhile become the angels guarding me from above the sky, my grandma Vaike and my dad Riho – you both gave me invaluable lessons in this life, and I know that you will be proud of my achievement, both in your own way.

Finally, I give a very big hug to my dear friend Merilin who connected me with Crystal Ra Laksmi-Ditton, the power woman from San Diego who became my personal coach in Autumn 2020. She was the one who empathically but firmly guided me through the final stages of this thesis that could have easily remained uncompleted forever. She taught me about my lack of assertiveness, guided me to work with my saboteurs that had counteracted my ability to reach the goals and productivity, and helped me to activate my inner powers to be employed in completing this thesis. My reverence to you, Crystal!

I dedicate this work to my grandparents Vaike and Evald Lall in whose home in the Estonian-speaking "isle" of Narva I always felt unconditionally loved and secure and where I became aware of the existence of the parallel worlds the Estonians and Russian-speakers inhabited as I grew older.

Lempäälä, December 2021

ABSTRACT

After the Soviet dissolution, home and the right to home became highly contested and politicised issues for Estonian Russian-speakers who had resettled in Estonian territory during the Soviet period. They began to be seen by the majority population as strangers who did not rightfully belong in an independent Estonia. The Soviet-era Russian-speaking resettlers were not automatically granted Estonian citizenship, were not entitled to dual citizenship, and were required to acquire Estonian language skills, which most of them did not already have. These policies, which undermined the position of Russian-speakers in comparison with the Soviet period, were justified by the post-Soviet Estonian state as being the only way to safeguard the sovereignty of an Estonian nation-state built on the idea of Estonian ethnicity and language. However, Russian-speakers have felt their home in post-Soviet Estonia to be under threat. They have also experienced the dramatic transformation of economic and social relations that came with the fall of socialism, including the integration of Estonia into the structures of neoliberal capitalism and its distancing from the socioeconomic structures of the former Soviet space. These changes have been accompanied by many struggles and a great deal of emotional suffering, especially for the older generations.

This thesis examines past and present home-making practices among Narva's Russian-speaking population, the dominant inhabitants of a relatively small industrial town in the North-Eastern region of Estonia that became a border-town with the formation of the Russian Federation in 1991. I explore the everyday practices of Russian-speaking Narvans by engaging with the scholarship of anthropology of home, especially its political aspects, drawing from and contributing to discussions that emphasise the specificities of migrants' home and home as a space of possibilities. I use analytical lenses that scrutinise home-making as a material, emotional, social and political practice, with reference to relationships to both state and hope, and to postsocialist transformation.

This thesis builds on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Narva both in 2010-2011 and during a short follow-up period in 2018 when I investigated the home-

making practices of Russian-speaking Narvans who were born elsewhere and had moved to the town. By inquiring into their mobile life trajectories, processes of homing in Narva upon arrival and ongoing practices of dwelling in and relating to the place, the people and the ruling state, my research sheds light on why and how my interlocutors' sense of home in Narva, a particular kind of "Russian town" in the Soviet West, has changed since the Soviet era. The protagonists of this study are the Soviet-era resettlers, especially the Russian-speaking older generations with established Soviet subjectivities, and the town itself.

I analyse the ways in which people turn places into homes by investing time, energy and labour. However, instead of arguing for home as a personal matter, I emphasize the role of wider societal structures, intersubjective matters, and external forces, including state politics and neoliberal capitalism, that affect how homes can be practised and perceived. In my exploration, home radiates out from tiny private capsules, such as apartments and dachas. Home is produced in relation to the rhythms and routines of the town at large, and as part of the local and national political projects. I discuss how Narva became a homely place through specific practices of sociality and ideologically shaped moral worlds. This study sheds light on the process by which Narva turned from a place of hope and development into a place of uncertainty and injustice in the experiences of the Soviet generation. At the same time, the study reflects the social and political processes of home and home-making more broadly, and disentangles the problematics of postsocialist transformation.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Neuvostoliiton hajottua venäjänkielisen väestön asema Virossa joutui kiivaan poliittisen kamppailun kohteeksi. Viron venäjänkielinen väestö, joka oli asettunut Viron alueelle neuvostovallan aikana, alettiin nähdä muukalaisina, joiden oikeus kotiin ja kansalaisuuteen Virossa tulivat monin tavoin kyseenalaistetuiksi. Tälle Neuvostoliiton sisäisen siirtolaisuuden kautta syntyneelle venäjänkieliselle väestölle ei annettu automaattisesti Viron kansalaisuutta, heillä ei ollut oikeutta kaksoiskansalaisuuteen ja heiltä edellytettiin viron kielen taitoa, mitä suurimmalla osalla heistä ei ennestään ollut. Tätä politiikkaa perusteltiin sillä, että se oli ainoa tapa suojella Viron kansallista itsenäisyyttä, ja uuden valtion perustana täytyi olla ajatus etnisestä virolaisuudesta ja viron kielestä. Tämän seurauksena venäjänkielinen väestö, joka oli kotiutunut Viroon vuosikymmenten kuluessa, on kokenut, että heidän kotinsa neuvostoajan jälkeisessä Virossa on uhattuna. He ovat myös kokeneet sosialismin kaatumista seuranneet, dramaattiset taloudelliset ja sosiaaliset muutokset, mukaan lukien Viron integrointi uusliberaalin kapitalismin rakenteisiin ja neuvostoaikaisten sosioekonomisten rakenteiden rapautuminen. Näihin muutoksiin on liittynyt monenlaista kamppailua, ja erityisesti iäkkäämmät sukupolvet ovat kärsineet myös tunnetasolla paljon.

Tämä väitöskirja analysoi näitä kotiin ja kuulumiseen liittyviä kamppailuja Viron Narvassa. Narva on Viron koillisosassa sijaitseva suhteellisen pieni teollisuuskaupunki, jossa venäjänkieliset muodostavat asukkaiden enemmistön. Narvasta tuli rajakaupunki Viron itsenäistymisen yhteydessä, ja myöhemmin EU:n itäisin kaupunki. Keskityn erityisesti venäjänkielisen väestön kodin 'tekemisen' käytäntöihin, joita tarkastelen sekä neuvostoaikana että Neuvostoliiton hajoamisen jälkeisenä aikana. Tarkastelen venäjänkielisten narvalaisten arjen käytäntöjä kotia koskevan antropologisen tutkimuksen valossa, ja keskityn erityisesti kodin poliittisiin ulottuvuuksiin. Ammennan erityisesti niistä teoreettisista keskusteluista, joissa käsitteellistetään siirtolaisten kodin rakentamisen käytäntöjä ja kotia mahdollisuuksien tilana. Tarkastelen kodin 'tekemistä' materiaalisena, emotionaalisena, sosiaalisena ja poliittisena toimintana, ja ymmärrän sen prosessina,

joka muokkautuu suhteessa valtioon, tulevaisuuden toiveisiin sekä jälkisosialistiseen transformaatioon.

Tutkimus perustuu laajaan etnografiseen kenttätyöhön Narvassa vuosina 2010–2011 sekä lyhyen seurantajakson aikana vuonna 2018. Informanttini ovat syntyneet Viron ulkopuolella entisen Neuvostoliiton alueella, mutta muuttaneet neuvostoaikana Narvaan. Tutkimuksen päähenkilöitä ovat siis neuvostoajan siirtolaiset, erityisesti venäjänkieliset iäkkäät sukupolvet, sekä kaupunki itsessään. Selvittämällä venäjänkielisen väestön muuttoliikkeen historiaa neuvostoaikana, kodin 'tekemisen' käytäntöjä Narvassa sinne muutettaessa sekä vuosikymmenten aikana muokkautuvaa asumisen ja kodin 'tekemisen' prosessia suhteessa paikkaan, paikallisyhteisöön ja valtioon, tutkimukseni valottaa sitä, miten keskustelukumppaneideni käsitys kodista Narvassa on muuttunut neuvostoajan jälkeen.

Analysoin tapoja, joilla ihmiset muuntavat paikan kodiksi investoimalla siihen aikaa, energiaa ja työtä. En kuitenkaan tarkastele koteja ensisijaisesti henkilökohtaisena projektina, vaan korostan sosiaalisten ja taloudellisten rakenteiden, intersubjektiivisten neuvottelujen sekä poliittisten ja taloudellisten prosessien merkitystä. Tarkastelussani koti siis ulottuu rajattujen yksityisten tilojen, kuten asuntojen ja datšojen, ulkopuolelle. Koti luodaan suhteessa kaupungin rytmeihin ja rutiineihin, ja osana paikallisia ja valtiollisia poliittisia projekteja. Osoitan, että Narvasta tuli 'koti' erityisten sosiaalisten käytäntöjen ja ideologisesti muovautuneiden moraalimaailmojen kautta. Tämä tutkimus valottaa sitä prosessia, jossa Narva muuttui toivon ja kehityksen paikasta epävarmuuden ja epäoikeudenmukaisuuden tyyssijaksi neuvostosukupolven kokemuksissa. Samalla tutkimus valottaa kodin ja kotiutumisen sosiaalisia ja poliittisia prosesseja laajemminkin, kuten myös jälkisosialistisen transformaation ongelmakohtia.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS CONCEPTUALIZING A HOME FOR SOVIET-ERA RUSSIAN-SPEAKING NARVANS

1.1 What are the tensions around belonging and home-making in Narva about?

This thesis sets out to explore the practices of home-making under different political regimes and in dramatically changing social and economic circumstances among the Russian-speaking migrant-background population of Narva between 1944 and 2011. Narva is a relatively small Russian-speaking town of 56,000 inhabitants in North-East Estonia that shares a border with Russia (figure 1). Some 96 per cent of Narvans speak Russian as their primary language and most of their predecessors relocated to Narva as late as 1944 onwards, after the earlier multilingual Estonian town was completely destroyed in World War II (WWII) and rebuilt as a Soviet place, where people of a great variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds – the majority ethnic Russians though – resettled and learnt to live together. Today, the majority of Narvans were born in Narva, making the protagonists of this thesis – the Soviet resettlers – a minority in the town; however, the latter's resettlement histories and experiences of home-making have greatly affected these subsequent generations. Life in post-war Narva, as in the Estonian territory in general, has generally been, and continues to be, divided into the Soviet (1944-1991) and post-Soviet eras (1991-), these two long periods marking the crucial differences in how the place has been organized politically and economically and, principally, how the power relations between people of Estonian and non-Estonian origin have been established, and how people see this as having had an impact on their lives at different times. While the Soviet era entails distinct periods each with their own set of policies and implications which have inevitably affected Soviet generations differently as put forward by Yurchak's landmark study *Everything was forever until it was no more* (2005), people who lived through Soviet times tend to refer to the post-
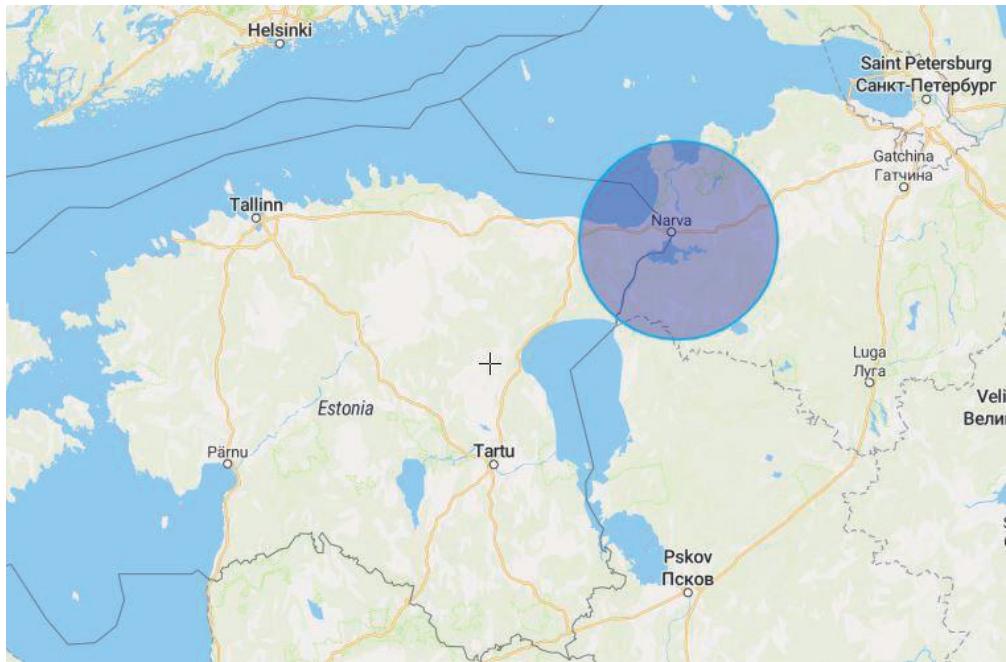
Figure 1. The geographical location of Narva at the Eastern border of Estonia sharing a border with the Russian Federation. Source: Created by the author via https://www.scribblemaps.com/create, December 2021

WWII Soviet experience retrospectively in rather generalised terms, using the past as a contrastive experience to present. There is thus a need for historically informed deep engagements with people's contemporary life-worlds to make sense of that.

Narva is by no means just another place in the post-Soviet context; it has been a place of extreme ambiguity and contestedness through different historical periods, depending on whose perspective is in question. Neither in Narva nor elsewhere in Estonia are Russian-speakers treated as a neutral category of people in relation to the Estonian territory and its political community. While from the Estonian perspective they are essentially associated with the Soviet occupation, negative historical contingencies are nearly always involved and these affect their unprejudiced treatment at both the group and the individual level. Despite the controversial relations between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers, post-Soviet Estonian society has not experienced any violent conflict apart from an instance of small-scale social unrest that was initiated by a group of Russian-speakers to express their anger with the Estonian authorities' decision to replace a Soviet monument called the Bronze Soldier in central Tallinn in the spring of 2007 (cf. Petersoo &

Tamm 2008; Melchior 2015). What happened can be regarded as a reminder of the unresolved social disparities in an Estonian society in which many Russian-speakers see themselves in a relatively weak position.

This account that puts forward the perspectives of Russian-speakers with Soviet subjectivities are closely tied to Estonian-Russian relations. These relations are highly politically loaded, underpinned by power-struggles which history goes back to the times of the Russian Empire and have been written by many events prior, during and after the Soviet period which the today's Russian Federation and Estonia tend to interpret differently, often in an opposing manner. While the Soviet period for Estonia is demarked as a time of Soviet (Russian) supremacy, and Russification policies that affected negatively the Estonian national language culture, regarded as politizing the language (Assmuth 2007; Smith G. 1996; Verschik 2005), today's Russia holds a different view on that. After the Soviet dissolution, Estonia secured its sovereignty and embarked its nationalising project to revitalise its national culture and strengthen and empower its core ethnonational group – ethnic Estonians. For Estonians, as highlighted by Jašina-Schäfer (2021, 1), "those changes symbolized the (re)birth of their national identities, the return of their cultural symbols, promotion of their language[s], and political hegemony over their new successfully independent state[s]". For other groups like Estonian Russian-speakers, it was the beginning of political and sociocultural struggles which they have experienced as significantly worsening their legal, political and socioeconomic situation in Estonia, but also lowering their chances to maintain their own culture and language as minority group in Estonia. It needs to be thus considered that my informants' experiences and their own understandings of the language, citizenship and belonging as major components of feeling safe and "at home" in places they inhabit are narrated in a politically charged atmosphere, and in political terms.

Although this thesis is not about Estonians' views of Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans, it is essential to understand that Russian-speakers' experiences of home-making in Narva over the past 30 years have been influenced not only by their difficulties in adapting to post-Soviet political, economic and social conditions that are radically different from those of the past, but also by a strong feeling of discontent with the popular ethnonational Estonian standpoint that sees Russian-speakers as not naturally belonging or having the right to feel at home in Estonia. This popular standpoint regarding the place of Russian-speakers in Estonian society is understood here, first, as the generalized view that can be formed from following

Estonian media, political debates and everyday conversations over many years and, second, as the perception of this view put forward by Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans themselves during my fieldwork in Narva in 2010-2011. It can be concluded that for ethnic Estonians home-making in a territory means forming a long-lasting relationship with both the land and the culture, which is demonstrated by knowledge and practice of the Estonian language and ethnic culture on the one hand and showing loyalty solely to a political regime consisting of a single sociopolitical entity, that of the Estonian state, on the other. Russian-speakers, in Estonians' view, often fall outside of these criteria in respect of claiming their home in Estonia.

This thesis addresses the highly sensitive question of political support for certain subjective perceptions of home, in situations where both parties claim a given space as "their home". I sympathize with the idea that people themselves are the best experts in judging where they belong and feel at home; however, in a politicized world where histories and political agreements matter – albeit always being issues for negotiation and remaking – belonging and having the right to home on one's own terms does not seem to be a feasible option. The overtly positive Western popular imaginary of home as a nest of comfort, security, familyhood and protection only further complicates the discussions around the analytical concept of "home", and even more so if we talk about "migrants' home". In our popular imaginaries, home is not supposed to be a site of contestation, discomfort, insecurity, loneliness or unknowingness. These sentiments, however, do portray Russian-speaking Narvans' relationships with their sense and practices of home in certain dimensions and moments of their life, similarly to how ethnic Estonians feel about their own homes at certain points. My aim is to illustrate how home is a negotiated concept at any point in history and a matter of change and reformulation and, moreover, how a variety of perceptions of what home constitutes exist simultaneously.

This thesis begins with the notion that Soviet-era Russian-speakers' views about how they have belonged, and continue to belong, in Narva have remained publicly unuttered and that there is a poignant need to give voice to them so that healing from the post-Soviet hardships, sense of exclusion and intentional marginalization among Russian-speakers can happen. By inquiring ethnographically into the ordinary lives of a number of Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans, by listening to their narrations and observing their lives, I aim to come close enough to understanding the variety and complexity of their experiences of making Narva their home.

1.2   On studying a particular site and having a perspective

This research on the lives of Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans came about because I had a particular kind of relationship with this town and its people. My relationship with Narva was at first that of someone standing close to the Estonian-speaking minority in the town, and to some extent even being part of that minority. My Estonian grandparents moved to Narva in 1957 as a young childless married couple to pursue jobs and housing in order to start a family. Urban life and factory jobs seemed more conducive to reaching these goals compared with the option of continuing to live in the nearby countryside. My grandfather had close relatives who had settled in Narva and they helped them both to find jobs and offered them a room to live in for several years while they built their own private house in the town. They went on to have three children and to live in Narva until the end of their lives. My mother was born into a Russian-speaking town and although she felt comfortable among both Estonians and Russian-speakers while growing up there in the 1960s and early 1970s, she experienced the town as too Russian and decided to take a different path. She left to study agricultural production and ended up living on a collective farm in the North Estonian countryside. I grew up in an Estonian village and remember regularly visiting my grandparents in Narva and spending a great deal of time in their house, garden and neighbourhood. Narva became very dear to me; it was and still is part of my home-space, but mainly through my family relations.

Later, there came a time during my student years when this very personal lasting relationship with the town, which I had developed since my early childhood, combined with my experience of living in and belonging to Estonian communities where the nationalist perspectives of Estonian-speaking people dominated, caused me to feel deeply disturbed. I had come to understand that the ways in which Russian-speakers were discussed in Estonian public discourse and among the people who surrounded me in Estonian-dominant environments were representations of a pure Estonian nationalist discourse. These people generally lacked any kind of personal contact with Russian-speakers, as a result of which they talked about them, to my ears at least, as aliens. And Narva thus appeared as a representation of an exotic alien place with Russianness at its core. Meanwhile, the voice of the Russian-speakers themselves was entirely missing from this public discourse. Even though the Russian-speakers' perspective was occasionally broadcast in the Estonian-

language media, it always seemed to be precisely *a* perspective that mediated an almost standardised image of a dissatisfied, complaining, Soviet-nostalgic, Estonian-language-incapable, Russian-seduced and from-outer-space kind of person. So my research was first and foremost motivated by the strong feeling that Russian-speakers' perspectives needed to be brought out by giving them a voice, along with the realisation that my own contact with Russian-speakers had remained minimal and therefore my understanding of their position of belonging in post-Soviet Estonia was very limited, despite my having spent a considerable amount of time in Narva.

This research would perhaps not have happened if I had not moved abroad in 2004 and built a relationship with Estonia and its people as an outsider, in addition to being the insider I already was. The possibility of looking at the situation in Estonia from this distance not only enabled me to approach the "Russian problem" (*venelaste probleem*)[1] in the country on a not purely sentimental and binary judgemental good–bad level, but it provided me with tools to evaluate the matter from within a different context and therefore in some ways less emotionally. Earlier, bringing the Russian-speakers' perspective to the table or questioning the fairness of Estonians' attitudes towards Russian-speakers or Soviet migrants in the company of other Estonians, including my own family and friends, had always felt overwhelmingly difficult and emotionally straining because it instantly meant positioning myself as the Other against Them, my actions being interpreted as somehow attacking the sovereignty of the Estonian state and calling the Estonian people discriminators.

While my difficulties in supporting the public stance towards the Russian-speaking population led me to some extent into the position of outsider among Estonians, I was not perceived as an insider by my interlocutors either. Rather, I found myself in a situation of in-betweenness and in need of finding a balance in navigating between different simultaneously effective positionalities. Although I was Estonian – i.e. the one who potentially questions Russian-speakers' right to feel at home in Estonia – I held a much more neutral position as a researcher from a Finnish university. Being connected to a Nordic university seemed to be an assurance that my aim truly was to give voice to Russian-speakers' experiences as I claimed, rather than to serve the Estonian state's integration policy plans, something that was regretfully associated with scholars linked to Estonian universities. The shifting

---

[1] The "Russian problem" or the "problem with Russians" was and continues to be the vernacular way of referring to an issue that is defined in academia as "ethnic conflict".

positionalities that I experienced while doing my research and the ways in which I handled them will be discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter of this thesis.

In 2009, I came to read Kate Brown's (2004) historiographic book *A Biography of No Place*, which, in my view, remains one of the most powerful accounts of how different ruling powers, alone and in cooperation, are able to completely transform places, centuries-old cohabitation patterns and related identities in a very short time. Although Brown's book is written from a completely different standpoint empirically, the notion of a "no place" with everything it was filled with mentally and emotionally, highly influenced my own way of coming to terms with Narva as an ahistorical place from the perspective of Soviet-era Russian-speakers. I then realised that for many years I had been hearing the history of 20th-century Narva narrated from the Estonian perspective, as a history of displacement, destruction and loss due to World War II and the Soviets. Even my grandparents, who had not lived in pre-war Narva but had witnessed the war up close, had adopted the Estonians' collective narrative that mediated people's emotional suffering relating to their lost homes and houses and the deeply felt loss and grief that surrounded them at every step as they walked through their war-ravaged town (Melchior 2015; Vseviov 2001; Tarvel 2018).

With this new realisation, I was suddenly able to imagine Narva as a place where history begins for many people while ending for others. Regardless of whether it ends or begins however, both moments are important related experiences and should count equally. Thus, I analytically depart from seeing Narva as a place that was a starting point, a blank page taken at face value, and do not consider it as a place that was lost and destroyed in the eyes of the post-WWII Russian-speaking population. This approach helped me to distance myself from Narva as merely my family's hometown, and to look at it as a field site. This enabled me to fully focus on the place and on people's relationships with that place as they emerged simply through living: through the first encounter, the settling, the getting to know, and the making, step by step, of people's place in the wider social and material structures of the town without forgetting that relationships between people and places are never fully formed but involve continuous navigation and re-creation. In this way, Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans' relationship with Narva can be seen as ongoing craftwork. While my own engagement with Narva as my family's hometown suggests elements of autoethnography, this piece is not an autoethnographic work. The protagonists of this thesis are the Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans and the post-

WWII town itself; the family narratives that I occasionally integrate serve only as a means of pointing to the simultaneous connections and contrasts between Estonian- and Russian-speakers' experiences, and to better grasp how seemingly friendly (neighbourly) relationships can turn into tensions and conflict when a changing political situation so allows (as has been demonstrated by Stef Jansen (1998, 2007, 2009, 2015) and a number of other scholars who have ethnographically studied the former Yugoslavian context).

1.3   Explaining the notions: Soviet-era, Russian-speakers, Narvans

The unofficial notion of "Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvan" that I have decided to use in this thesis to delimit the population under study indicates a temporally and socially bounded group of people in Narva and should therefore be seen as a social rather than a universal category. In this construction, "Soviet-era", "Russian-speaker" and "Narvan" all need some clarification, and I will start with the middle term. Although the notion "Russian-speaker" seems to have developed in global usage into a relatively universal and neutral[2] notion to indicate people who speak Russian as their primary language, without necessarily carrying with them, as new generations replace the older ones, the Soviet legacy, in Estonia the concept is not unproblematic. In the Estonian context, "Russian-speaker" may, and usually does have, traits in common with other categories such as (ethnic) "Russians"[3], "non-Estonians"[4], "(Soviet) (im)migrants" and numerous other official and popular notions that have negatively loaded underpinnings (cf. Vihalemm 1999; Vihalemm

---

[2] I recognise that neutrality regarding Russian-speakers is relative and contextually dependent. Historical Soviet contingencies, a general suspicious reception of people with a postsocialist background who in Western countries initially tend to be associated with Russians, and Russia's current geopolitics that affects Russian and Russian-speaking diasporas everywhere all continue to pose many challenges to Russian-speakers all over the world.

[3] This can refer to many different groups of Russians who may have rather diverse ethnolinguistic origins and various citizenship relationships to and social statuses in Estonian society, depending on their group's historical relationship to the Estonian territory and state.

[4] The term "non-Estonians" (*mitte-eestlased)* is the widest category in scholarly and political use in Estonia for anyone of any ethnic or national background other than Estonian. It has long been regarded as the most neutral term in the sense that it does not specifically highlight or assume anybody's Russianness or Soviet mentality per se. Yet, since the prefix "non" functions as a categorical negation, it makes becoming and belonging someone or something else (the Estonian) impossible. Thus, this notion has received plenty of criticism and has recently been fallen into disuse.

& Masso 2002; Ehrenpreis 2004). Despite the clear semantic differences between these notions, in Estonian popular language they are all frequently and insensitively interchanged with the term "Russians" (*venelased*), which is almost never seen purely as an ethnic or cultural category but as referring to domination, threat, Soviet heritage and the coercive use of power in an exclusively negative tone. The semantic divisions between these terms are drawn, sometimes inconsistently, mainly in academic texts, spoken and written media and political discourses. Russian-speakers in Estonia themselves are aware of both the multiplicity of notions designating them and the attached negative connotations. Recently, however, and probably to some extent as a result of the generational change, "Russian-speaker" seems to be developing into a more neutral and commonly accepted term among both Estonians and those to whom it relates.

"Russian-speakers" in Estonia at large as well as specifically in Narva is a label that potentially brings together people of various historical, cultural and social backgrounds. In its wider usage, it marks people who speak Russian as their primary language. Most of them are of (part) ethnic Russian origin, which means they speak Russian as their mother tongue and identify their culture as Russian. There is a large group of Russian-speakers in Estonia who do not descend from anywhere in Russia or from any of the Russian diaspora in the former Soviet Union, yet they primarily speak Russian. Their tradition of speaking Russian may have developed before they came to Estonia or their switch to the language may have happened while they were living in Estonia, due to social and cultural circumstances – usually because of the need to adapt to the heavily Russian-populated areas where they typically settled. On many occasions, the switch to Russian by such individuals or families can be explained as the result of the Soviet regime's Russification policy, which became more topical during Brezhnev's era in the later Soviet period and left no space for ethnic mother tongues to be actively used (Ehala 2009; Laitin 1998). It was often also the case in mixed marriages in Soviet times that Russian was chosen as the most practical lingua franca (Lember 2014). For example, in a marriage between a Pole and a Jew, Russian likely became the language spoken at home and in public.

In academic discourses, Russian-speakers are sometimes also called "linguistic Russians", a term that emphasises their loose or non-existent identification with the ethnicity and carries a strong reference to their common Soviet political and ideological identity, an identity that implies that solidarity and cohesion among group members should be based on class affiliation and equality rather than on ethnocultural background (Ehrenpreis 2004). Rudensky (1994) and Melvin (1995) mention that in their studies Russian-speakers with a Soviet background did not associate themselves with either Russia or the Soviet states where they had settled.

They were simply Soviet citizens – extraterritorial[5] and cosmopolitan, in a Soviet sense – with no vital bond to a particular territory that would determine their self-identification. Associating the notion "linguistic Russians" with language is slightly misleading though, because the commonality lies not so much in language but in a specific kind of mentality[6]. I therefore avoid using the notion in my research.

Finally, it is important to clarify why I have decided not to talk about my informants and all the Russian-speakers who moved to Narva from other Soviet territories as migrants and have instead utilised the notion "resettler". This has to do with my informants' strong reluctance to use the notion "migrant". "Migrant", similarly to "immigrant", is often a pejorative term in Estonia. The notion is widely used by the Estonian national majority to mark people who moved to Estonian territory during the Soviet period. It is increasingly used when there is evidence that a person who has lived in the country for a long time has no Estonian language skills and is able to communicate only in Russian. Also, those Russian-speakers who were born in Estonia but for some reason do not have what are considered sufficient Estonian language skills may be called migrants or immigrants. Moreover, often the notion "migrant" is used as an alternative to "occupant", which reflects the Estonian majority's view that Soviet Russians populated the Estonian territory during the Soviet period in a forceful and uninvited manner and as a consequence should be treated accordingly or retreat from the country altogether now that the Soviet empire no longer exists. Soviet-era Russian-speakers are usually well aware of the popular meanings of those notions that denote them and they consider them wrong, unfair, pejorative and offensive. Therefore, even though in objective terms all my informants and many other Russian-speakers have a migration history in their background, I understand and respect their sentiments regarding this term and prefer not to use it. At the same time, the literature I engage with theoretically naturally builds on the experiences of migrants and people on the move, and I see that as appropriate too.

---

[5] I do not agree with the existence of the extraterritorial mind; this thesis will provide among other things empirical evidence that those considered extraterritorial are ultimately still physically and mentally bounded by localities and relationships in places that constitute their daily lives.

[6] When "Soviet (im)migrants" are referred to in connection with their mental particularities, the notion is often shortened to "the Soviets" (in Estonian *sovjetid*, in Russian *sovetskiye* [*ljudi*]), but its use is problematic because having lived through the Soviet era does not automatically imply a Soviet mentality. Although Russian-speakers who lived in Soviet times are often inherently deeply nostalgic about the Soviet period and experience difficulties in adapting mentally to contemporary Estonia and Western neoliberal political and economic values in general, such nostalgia and accommodation difficulties are not specific to Russian-speakers only. They similarly apply to the older Estonian majority, only that, as mentioned by Grünberg (2009), acknowledging this is still practically a taboo as it sounds unpatriotic and anti-Estonian and can impair one's reputation and credibility.

I next explain the reasoning behind the use of "Soviet-era" in my construction of "Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvan". As the Russian-speakers who relocated to Narva under the direct influence of Soviet migration policies, either as adults or children, have been the most disputed group in post-Soviet Estonia – due to their places of birth and/or of departure prior to relocation being outside of today's Estonian territory – I decided to focus precisely on the experiences of those who resettled in Narva between 1944 and 1991. The dwelling experiences of these first-generation resettlers in Narva are in many ways specific compared with those of Russian-speakers who were later born in Narva, even if during the Soviet period, and I wanted to give full credit to those experiences. For this reason, I find it important to keep the focus throughout the thesis on the fact of resettling and dwelling during the Soviet era and this is what "Soviet-era" signifies. The "Soviet-era" side of the notion stresses my informants' Soviet subjectivity: their experiences of living through Soviet times and the idea that their present and future lives are and will always be connected to these. This, however, does not mean that their experiences, and especially the ways in which they make use of their past, suggest any uniformity among them as a group. I also hope that "Soviet-era" does not suggest to the reader that the research at hand is a historical study about the Soviet period only. "Soviet-era" is more about a historical contextualisation, a linkage to a specific historical timeframe that holds a particular kind of societal logic; its effect, however, transcends time–space boundaries and produces new formations in the area of belonging, both today and in the future.

Furthermore, by bringing the "Soviet-era" and "Russian-speaker" together, I do not simply refer to two mobile shifts in the lives of these people: settling in Narva during the Soviet period and starting to communicate only or mainly in Russian. Soviet-era Russian-speaker as well as Russian-speaker more broadly is a *social category* that both incorporates a set of complex social and cultural elements – personal and professional self-determination, social status and self-perception of inferiority–superiority dynamics – that are informed by Soviet and later post-Soviet conditions, and is a subject of continuous remaking. It would have been a very feasible option to scrutinise ethnic Russians instead of Russian-speakers in Narva, since the majority of Soviet-era Russian-speakers belong to this group. However, one of the methodological strengths of focusing on the lives of Soviet-era Russian-speakers in Narva as a social category as opposed to working only with Russians as an ethnic group is that it does not limit the researcher to the "ethnic lens" perspective (Glick Schiller 2008; Christensen & Jensen 2011), which may result in a failure to investigate fully the dynamics between migrants and their places of departure and new settlement. Since the notion "Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvan" is long and

heavy, I generally systematically modify it to "Russian-speaking", but I want to stress that the full context of the notion is always kept in mind unless otherwise specified.

As the third central notion, it is not self-evident either who the *narvskiye* (Narvans) are. One would think that the notion naturally addressed all the inhabitants of Narva, but not all Narvans saw themselves in these terms. Upon inquiring into the understanding of the Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans themselves, it appears that there are different levels of experience in and commitment to Narva that indicate someone's relationship with the town, an important component of which is having not Narvan origins but local grounding and orientation. Importantly, if someone's local experience and commitment to Narva were not serious enough – something that only the locals could decide and which obviously could not be objectively measured – they were not considered Narvan. All my informants, irrespective exactly how long they had dwelled in Narva, were Narvans by their own and the townspeople's emic categorisation. My informants were generally aware that there existed an even deeper relationship with the town that was represented by those who could be called *narvitianie* (Old Narvitianie), the people who had lived in the territory of Narva during the pre-World War II era (cf. Pfoser 2014; Smirnova 2001). *Narvitianie* was not an ethnically bound category since it could include not only Estonian but also Russian and many other ethnic backgrounds, and it was a widely approved and respected category among Narvans. Some of my informants, in particular those who had moved to Narva during the early post-war period and participated in the physical reconstruction of the town, also extended the *narvitianie* category to themselves while others drew clear boundaries between the pre- and post-war experience that needed to be involved. People of all ethnic backgrounds could be called Narvans, but those who were known to have their permanent home somewhere else and were connected to Narva only through their work, even if over many years, were excluded. These people were regarded as not belonging in the town. Usually this clear exclusion was applied to the Estonian professionals who were in Narva on duty; moreover, they were pejoratively called "Estonians by profession", meaning that they had taken jobs from the locals while giving nothing back to the town. Even if someone moved to Narva, it took time until they could be called Narvan. And even though it was impossible to empirically measure how long someone needed to reside in Narva to be counted as Narvan, i.e. local, the feeling was that this could be a very long time, since some of the Russian-speakers I met were hesitant to call themselves Narvans even after decades of living there.

1.4   Research questions

This thesis seeks to inquire into and make sense of the various ways in which the Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans have practised home-making in Narva over many years, as subjects first of the Soviet state (1944-1991) and later the post-Soviet Estonian state (1991-2011).

The study asks *what the dynamics of place and home-making have been in the politically, economically and socioculturally contested situation among the Soviet-era Russian-speakers in Narva.* Resettling, dwelling and creating a meaningful forward-looking relationship with a place encompasses various activities and ways of relating that together can be called home-making. The making of homes is underpinned by various economic, political, material and symbolic aspects that will all be used in this study as lenses through which to look deeper into and gain a more nuanced understanding of home-making in the everyday lives of Russian-speaking Narvans. I approach homes not as a-spatial and a-temporal but as deeply fluctuating and processual entities that are conditioned by state policies and family histories as well as by individual resources and choices.

There are three sub-questions within the main research question that guide the empirical chapters, and I elaborate briefly below on which chapters answer these questions:

Q1: What constitutes the significant material, emotional and symbolic structures associated with home and homeliness in the lives of Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans, and what practices, resources and strategies are used to create and maintain them?

In Chapter 5, homes are depicted in terms of physical dwellings or houses, usually apartments or simply rooms, in which private social life unfolds in urban Narva. These physical structures related to the notion of housing are embedded in Soviet mobility policies that set people in motion across the whole country, both coercively to support the Soviet modernisation project and semi-voluntarily in search of a better life. By bringing together people from culturally and geographically distant places, houses can be seen as sites of social and cultural home-making and reproduction, and they can simultaneously appear as symbolic structures with the potential to symbolise migrants' successes or failures. In Chapter 6, homes are extended to rural settings and open spaces around Narva (dachas, gardening plots, forests and waterways) that significantly enrich Narvans' possibilities to relate to their surroundings and to make them their own through extensive physical engagement

with them. Both these chapters explore how the end of the Soviet regime, with its new post-Soviet orderings of economic, social and political space, importantly affects the ways in which homes and houses, despite remaining physically pretty much the same, go through the transformation symbolically. In Chapter 7, the emergence of locally bounded home and homeliness among the Soviet resettler community in Narva is associated with sociality and moral worlds, both of these institutionally mediated to a large extent in Soviet times. The dynamics of post-Soviet transformation related to sociality and moral worlds are analysed as a factor in claims that homeliness dramatically changed and decreased in post-Soviet Narva.

Q2: How do Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans relate to the state both in Soviet and post-Soviet times and see it as enabling/hindering their home-making practices?

This research question is addressed in Chapters 8 and 9. When people experience dramatic changes in everything that constitutes the functional structures of their everyday life, and their sense of security in all areas of life is taken away, as happened to Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans after the Soviet collapse, they feel that someone must be responsible. In post-Soviet Estonia, it was the Estonian state, with its new capitalist economic system and democratic governance on the one hand and its politics of Estonian nationalism on the other, that was blamed for all the suffering that ensued. With this research question, my aim is to understand what areas of life and related home-making practices came under threat when the Russian-speakers became subjects of the Estonian state. In Chapter 8, I delve into a number of issues around the emerging politics of nationalism, citizenship and language, which I conceptualise in terms of politics of belonging – all related to the particular political and cultural orderings of the space – that caused the old ways of practising homes in Narva to fade away. In Chapter 9, I focus on the economic and social challenges brought about by an independent Estonian state that adopted market capitalism, and I explain both how this made Narvans feel that the state did not care about their hometown, and how they perceived it as a direct threat to the continuity of their home-making in Narva. In both chapters, the Soviet state emerges as the antipode to the Estonian state, revealing retrospectively how the state acted on Soviet citizens' home-making and how this was received.

Q3: Why and how is hope connected to Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans' practises of home and what has been the change from Soviet to present-day Narva?

This question is threaded through the contextual Chapter 2 and most of the empirical chapters, but the Chapter 9 is entirely dedicated to disentangling the notion of hope, and particularly through its negative – hopelessness. Following the

evolution of hope through different Soviet periods to the dismantling of the Soviet empire, and the socioeconomic transformations during several post-Soviet decades I seek to understand what has been the function of hope in long-term home-making in Narva. In my analyses, I also investigate who is responsible for the maintenance of hope and what happens when people and a place run out of it. While the state clearly attains a major role in the analyses here, I also highlight gender and aging in this context and observe these dynamics interact with the transformation of hope in relation to home-making in the lives of Soviet-era resettlers in Narva.

1.5   Theoretical and empirical contributions of the study

The foremost purpose of this thesis is to give voice to *a* Russian-speaking population in Estonia. Until recently Russian-speakers were largely studied by Estonian researchers using quantitative studies or methods and research questions that did not significantly deepen the understanding of their everyday lives. I generally feel that there is no such phenomenon as the generalisable experience of Russians or Russian-speakers, or even Russians/Russian-speakers of a particular age group, educational background, gender or anything else – this being the major limitation of much of the quantitively inclined 1990s writing on Russian(-speaking) minority –, and that people's experiences need to be considered as long-term life experiences in relation to particular people, surroundings, ideas and structures. In my case this meant approaching the Russian-speakers with the assumption that they had only a few things in common: they had long-term experience of living in Narva, they had migrated to Narva from another place, usually outside of the territory of Soviet Estonia, and they spoke Russian as their primary language. These touchpoints may or may not manifest in a similar way in the lives of the people studied. Only by engaging with the people ethnographically was it possible to reach an understanding – of how different individuals made sense of their lives and narrated their belonging under different state regimes – that made it possible to paint a more coherent picture of the lives of one Russian-speaking population. However, I wish to stress that what I do here is present the lives of Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans through a limited angle only.

Thankfully more ethnographic research on Estonian Russian-speakers' experiences has been carried out since 2009 when I began this research. From earlier

anthropological studies the extensive work of Laura Assmuth (particularly 2005, 2007) sheds light on the complexity of Estonian-Russian-Latvian borderlanders' life that include also various groups of Russian-speakers, seeking to find ways to manage their own everyday needs under the conditions of often polarised political and economic interests of different states. Thereafter Eeva Kesküla (2012, 2015) has explored the work and private lives of Russian-speaking miners in North-East Estonian mines and contributed importantly on the reconceptualisation of work, class and ethnicity in postsocialist world. Alena Pfoser (2014, 2015, 2017) has utilised the memory studies framework to make sense of the contested histories and multiple temporalities among the people living in the borderland in the twin towns of Narva and Ivangorod. Francisco Martinez (2018) has provided another account that focuses on Narva as a borderland and investigates how the specific borderland practises play out in re-negotiating the past and change. The most recent work of Alina Jašina-Schäfer (2021; also Jašina-Schäfer & Cheskin 2020) tackles the contested issue of Russian-speakers' belonging in Estonia and provides much-needed novel insights of the multiplicity of ways how Russian-speakers in Narva belong. From other disciplines, noteworthy are Elo-Hanna Seljamaa's (2012) study in folkloristics which has disentangled the origins and application of nationalism, ethnicity, and integration in post-Soviet Estonian policies and included also Russian-speakers' perspectives in examining the praxis. Finally, Uku Lember (2014) has provided an oral historian account that reveals through the experience of inter-ethnic family-life how ethnic silencing took place in Soviet Estonia, divided in two linguistically marked cultural worlds.

Regardless the growing number of ethnographic accounts drawing specifically from Narva as well as from other Russian-speaking settings, home-making as a main departure of investigation of everyday experience remains unexplored (some aspects of home have been under scrutiny in the work of Jašina-Schäfer (2021)) despite the centricity of home as a notion in the public discourse surrounding Russian-speakers' belonging in Estonia. Theoretically, my primary aim is to provide a nuanced account of how homes are constituted as a continuous process and a constant negotiation between various political, physical, emotional and symbolic aspects in the lives of "ordinary people"[7] who have experienced both migration and long-term dwelling in

---

[7] While "ordinary people" is a widely used notion in anthropological literature I am aware of the increasing criticism with regards that notion among contemporary anthropologists, pointing to the problem of its rhetorical, essentializing nature that assumes an existence of accurate description of

a place. The emphasis in my study is not so much on home as a place but on home-making as a process that is directed at crafting a place of comfort, security, familiarity and reproduction (cf. Blunt & Dowling 2006) under specific political, economic and sociocultural conditions. In that way, this account enables to reveal the multiple ways the Russian-speaking population in Narva makes and experiences home, but also, by tracing migration histories and carefully analysing the impact of societal changes on individual lives, denotes the areas where home-making appears as a challenge by a variety of reasons. Very much inspired by Stef Jansen's (2015) work that makes sense of people's past, present and future perceptions of home after socialism by integrating the concepts of home, state and hope, I also dwell on projections of hope in explicating what it tells about the (dis)continuation of home in another place subject of postsocialist change. Building on home-making, hope and post-Soviet subjectivities leads me to analyse Narva through the negative of hope – hopelessness – which is a less attended area of anthropological sense-making and thus offers an interesting avenue for adding to the anthropology of hope, especially in dialogue with conceptualisations of emptiness and uncertainty that widely describe the declining postindustrial and postsocialist spaces.

As mentioned, my thesis is also a contribution to the pool of postsocialist studies and I argue for the continuous relevance of postsocialist framework in ethnographic analyses. For one, my research gives credit to the perspectives of Soviet generations whose lived experiences and continuity of socialist values are not possible to understand in their full complexity when ignoring the Soviet and post-Soviet subjectivities. There is still a need for a careful disentangling of the Soviet legacies in specific contemporary contexts, and a closer examination of the features, applications and effects of socialist regimes on "ordinary people's" lives, in order to discuss post-Soviet locations with a vocabulary that address contemporary developments otherwise typically drawing from Anglo-American and Western European contexts. Second, staying sensitive to the specificities of postsocialist framework and carefully considering its role helps to trace situations where Soviet heritage tends to be used as a simplistic shortcut to explain social peculiarities in Eastern Europe (Kojanic 2020).

---

reality (cf, Mepschen 2016). I thus use the notion in quotes to highlight that it is not self-evident that such category exists despite its discursive usage (also among my informants).

Finally, I have a political claim to make with this thesis. Narva and its Russian-speaking people entered onto the world news stage in 2014, pictured as the next hotspot, after Crimea[8], planning to initiate a breakaway of the whole region from the post-Soviet independent states where Russian-speaking populations were plentiful. Even though I had no political agenda in 2010-2011 when I carried out my ethnography in Narva, it has since been necessary for me to formulate my argument against these mainly journalistic takes on the situation in the town, especially since, based on my own findings, the claims have been highly misleading. I feel that it is my responsibility to show through my ethnographic exploration that despite the deep hopelessness and injustice that Russian-speakers have experienced in independent Estonia no collectively shared view that separation should be the aim is circulating. Rather, my thesis affirms that Russian-speakers in Narva are very much attached to their hometown and see their future lives as connected to the Estonian state rather than to the Russian Federation or any other political entity.

1.6   Outline of the thesis

The thesis is divided into two parts:

Part I leads the reader into the topic of this thesis by introducing the theoretical and methodological framework as well as providing the historical and structural context in which the study is situated. I will explain who the subjects of this thesis, the Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans, are and what triggered my motivation to explore their lives. The topic has significant theoretical and political, as well as personal, inspirations all of which deserve exploration.

Chapter 2 introduces the main features of Soviet mobility, linking it to the founding ideas of the Socialist project and its various mobility policies, and explains its application in Narva as an urban place with an industrial past and as a location with growing industrial potential in the Soviet West. It further depicts how the post-WWII population evolved in Narva, and what characterised it in the different Soviet mobility periods.

---

[8] Straight after the "Crimean crisis" began in 2014.

Chapter 3 frames the thesis theoretically by engaging with several areas of anthropological literature. First, I focus on the scholarship that can be broadly located under the umbrella of anthropology of home and more narrowly under that of political anthropology of home, especially those accounts that recognise homes as subjects under continuous making and negotiation and as sites of contestation. Secondly, I have drawn inspiration from, and engaged with, texts of anthropology of state. Another thread of scholarship that is of interest to me relates to postsocialist, post-Soviet and Soviet anthropology, with a special emphasis on mobilities. Finally, I have been inspired by many of the founding transnational anthropological and migration studies, with which I also establish a connection.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodological aspects of the study. I establish the research as an ethnographic exploration, and discuss reflexivity, ethics and various research dilemmas. In this chapter, I also introduce the key interlocutors of the study and explain how each of them helped me to gain deeper insights into the life of Russian-speaking Narvans.

The remaining chapters (**Part II**) present the empirical results in light of the chosen theoretical framework. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of home-making.

Chapter 5, "Houses and housing practices", focuses on the implications of available and promised Soviet housing and how this manifested in the resettling and home-making practices of Russian-speaking Narvans. I explain the variety of roles and modalities housing has had in shaping Narvans' personal mobile trajectories and dwelling practices. The chapter also disentangles how the post-Soviet housing practices are rooted in Soviet ones and what the new home-making experiences in the realm of housing in Narva are.

Chapter 6, "Home-making in dachas", presents how Russian-speaking Narvans have extended their daily urban space and routines to Narva's rural surroundings, especially in the form of dacha-life, and how, through material and emotional engagement and the continuous investment of time and energy there, they have made their sense of home in Narva more complete. In this chapter I also discuss the dynamics of change in dacha-life before and after the Soviet collapse.

Chapter 7, "Becoming at home through sociality", looks at the emergence of sociality and the formation of shared moral worlds among Russian-speakers who have arrived in the town and analyses how these aspects have had a crucial role in shaping how the home was felt and practised during the Soviet period and thereafter.

Chapter 8, "The vexing state", focuses empirically on the change in Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans' legal and political subjectivity from Soviet to post-Soviet times and their related everyday life experiences. The chapter shows how the resettlers in Narva established their homeliness through legal instruments under the Soviet regime and how the foundations of this homeliness were rocked once the governing state changed and Russian-speakers were no longer recognised as equal subjects in Estonian territory compared with the majority ethnic Estonians.

Chapter 9, "From paradise to the town of no hope", establishes the discussion on the intersections of locality, state, uncertainty and hope across the two political regimes that Russian-speaking Narvans lived through. While identifying the grand narrative of societal change after the Soviet collapse with a loss of the good old days and a proliferation of uncertainties that brought with it no future, the chapter seeks to explain this collective narrative about the transformation of Narva through the change in individual life prospects.

2 LOCATING NARVA IN THE MIDST OF SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET MIGRATIONS

2.1 General migration policies in the Tsarist and Soviet periods

From the point of view of human mobility, the resettling of Russian-speaking Narvans and their experiences of making themselves feel at home in Narva unfold in a special setting that was conditioned by the Soviet state's existential need to place its population on the move in order to realise its enormous modernisation project. To govern the large population in its vast territories, the Soviet state implemented resettlement policies that were known for their strict rules on both internal and external mobility. Furthermore, it has been argued that the Soviet state, in its attempt to direct migration in a highly controlled way, was rooted in Tsarist resettlement policies, since both regimes grappled with "the noncorrespondence between demographic density and natural resource location" in vast and largely unsettled lands (Siegelbaum & Moch 2014, 388). Other authors, such as Lohr (2008), have argued that until the end of Stalinist times the Soviet state, just like the Tsarist one, was preoccupied with the continuous growth of the population in Russian and Soviet territories rather than with utilising the land and its resources to the maximum. Population growth was seen as a precondition for modernisation through industrialisation and thus Tsarist Russia was extraordinarily welcoming to immigrants from other countries (ibid.). In contrast, outmigration, especially of ethnic Russians but also of other ethnic groups living in Russian territories, was to be avoided with the help of policy measures that had been effective since 19th-century Tsarist times (ibid.); hence, the careful prevention of outmigration was not a particular invention of the Soviet regime as is commonly thought.

I maintain that although individual Soviet mobile trajectories were diverse, "migration is a historically persistent phenomenon, systematically patterned by historical, social, and political contexts" and therefore the way in which Russian-speaking Narvans navigated in their space and time was conditioned by a wider framework of "how states develop policy agendas, exert control over their borders,

and govern their populations" (Buckley 2008, 1). I will next present a short, condensed overview of the specific characteristics of Soviet migration during Soviet times in order to reveal the structural setting in which all the informants of this thesis operated. Given that Soviet migration patterns were formed two decades prior to Narva's incorporation into the former Soviet Union[9], I will go back in history and briefly explain Soviet mobility and migration policies in general before turning my attention to Narva and its place-specific migration history. Finally, although the major task of this chapter is to contextualise the Russian-speakers' mobile trajectories as they were conditioned by the Soviet mobility system, I will very briefly indicate the major changes in terms of mobility after the Soviet collapse.

To clarify the seemingly unsystematic use of the terms "Soviet mobility (policies)" and "Soviet migration (policies)" in earlier paragraphs, I should state that I understand migration as a narrow concept that describes people's movements from one place to another with the aim of settling temporarily or permanently. Mobility is a wider concept that implies migrations but also movements that do not have the intention of staying in a particular place, including for instance visits and travels to places shorter or longer distances away. A mobility system also includes means of transportation and the development of transport infrastructure, and the Soviet mobility system was certainly of a special kind (Burrell & Hörschelmann 2014). In this chapter, I mostly utilise the term "Soviet migration (policies)", because Soviet people's arrival in and attachment to Narva was most directly conditioned by the economic goals and labour needs addressed by Soviet leaders through migration policies at different times. "Soviet migration (policies)" points to the state-led structural mechanisms that enable and disable Soviet people's mobile trajectories.

2.1.1   The specific features of Soviet migration

In my approach to Soviet migrations, I depart from the ground-breaking work of Siegelbaum and Moch (2014, 2016) in which they propose going beyond the tradition of conceptualising Soviet migration first as overtly coercive and second as internal in Western nation-state terms. Although the extremely forceful ways of managing

---

[9] The Soviet Union was established in 1922, but Estonia was not incorporated until 1940 during World War II.

Soviet populations by means of repression, imprisonment, deportation and persecution (cf. Polian 2004; Pohl 2007; Pohl 2008; Weitz 2003) that not only led to moving people to undesirable places but entailed mass ethnic cleansing practices (Weitz 2003) should not be neglected, Siegelbaum and Moch (2014, 392) suggest that for a fuller understanding of everyday migration experiences it should be taken into account that "less and more coercive forms of migrations occurred simultaneously" and in many cases Soviet people did not necessarily perceive their experiences as coercive. Instead of focusing on the mechanisms of managing migrations by means of passport and *propiska* (residence cards), which has been the more typical way of analysing Soviet migrations, Siegelbaum and Moch (ibid., 394) examine various "types of migrant experience", for which they categorise migrants as: resettlers, seasonal migrants, migrants to the city, career migrants, military migrants, refugees and evacuees, deportees and itinerants. By delving into the experiences of migrants in these different categories, each of which was subject to specific regulations, Siegelbaum and Moch (ibid., 98) recognise that in each case "the history of this migration is not uniform, either by kind of city, period, or region", nevertheless such a focus provides us with the possibility to learn a great deal about a "complex of attractions, repulsions, and coercions" that are intertwined in migration trajectories. Most importantly, the authors highlight that the experience of the different types of Soviet migrant entails "ample evidence of people's resourcefulness in disembarking at the "wrong" station, casting themselves in the most deserving light, bonding with distant kin, evading surveillance, adjusting to new environments, and otherwise taking advantage of opportunities presented by crises" (ibid., 392). Through such histories, Soviet migration experiences become more easily understood.

We may understand the dynamics of forceful migration policies and the agency of the Soviet people who were obedient but at the same time ever alert to noticing state failures and using such moments to their own advantage. Similarly, White (2007, 907) has depicted Soviet migration as bringing about social trends that can be characterised more as "the result of the accumulation of individual household strategies" rather than as a strictly controlled movement of populations, despite the state's efforts. While in the case of Soviet Russia the regime attempted to move populations to the east, and in the countryside from small villages to larger ones, the people ended up moving mostly to urban places in the south and west (ibid.).

We also need to be mindful of the fact that Soviet migrants might have been the subjects of various types of migration and related experiences at different times and

even simultaneously. Taking into account that from a migration policy perspective Soviet people were not viewed as individuals but as family members whose family histories mattered when the state was considering allowing certain migration trajectories, the experiences that unfolded became even more complex. In the case of Narva, the individual and family experiences of evacuees, migrants to the city, career migrants, seasonal migrants and deportees might easily have been combined in an individual's narration of their migration trajectory under the Soviet regime. The following quote, originally characterising Russian migrants, can readily be extended to the migration experiences of all former Soviet subjects:

> Collectively, and for the most part anonymously, migrants changed Russia's landscape. They animated rural areas and left them flat; they built cities and provided the labour power to keep them going; they swelled universities and training schools as teachers and students. They suffered displacement in wartime; they continued to suffer from prison camps, internal exile, and hard labour long after many nations had stopped using distance to punish. Along the continuum from seasonal movement to cityward migration and beyond to colonizing and coerced migration, people in Russia had every kind of migratory experience. (Siegelbaum & Moch 2014, 2)

The point that Siegelbaum and Moch (2014, 388, 393; 2016) have made with regard to Soviet migration resembling more a transnational than an "internal migration" (cf. Light 2012; Kessler 2013; White 2007; Gang & Stuart 1998; Ball & Demko 1978) also deserves closer attention. Considering that transnationalism is very much rooted in Western ideas about world divisions, i.e. national countries and corresponding borders, while internal migration does not address such boundaries, approaching migration from one or another angle makes a crucial difference. Despite the absence of hard borders, and although the state-steered migration policies made migration a similar experience from a structural point of view regardless of which part of the Soviet Union the person originated from, the vast geographical distances and the cultural differences were often much more significant than when moving from one European country to another in today's terms. For people from Central Asia, the social and environmental conditions in Western parts of the Soviet Union rendered them exotic lands in a similar way to how Estonians who were sent to Siberian deportation camps felt. Migrants were often regarded by locals as strangers in the places they resettled in (Siegelbaum & Moch 2014). Even more importantly, the cultural estrangement felt between locals and migrants was underpinned by power relations that often prioritised the interests of the migrants, leaving the locals feeling oppressed and producing experiences of Soviet colonialism (cf. Annus 2018).

Siegelbaum and Moch (2016, 970) have suggested "posit[ing] the maintenance of economic, familial and other affective ties across Soviet national boundaries as the Soviet version of transnationalism – transnationalism in one country". Furthermore, the local, republic and all-state level parallel systems in which migration was managed were often in conflict and as such produced everyday obstacles that pointed to inbuilt inequalities between different Soviet locations, despite the ideological equality and all-Soviet friendship narrative that accompanied the migrations.

From all these angles, transnationalism within a single country rather than large-scale internal migrations can be an appropriate analytical perspective to consider when thinking about the everyday realities and long-term effects of movement in the Soviet space. However, Siegelbaum and Moch's (ibid.) conceptualisation of Soviet transnationalism produces an analytical impasse when Soviet and post-Soviet migration practices need to be comparatively analysed, because the concept of transnationalism underpinned by crucially different ideologies, policies and migration experiences will only cause confusion and inaccuracy. I therefore propose to use the notion of "translocal" migration – in the contrary to transnational migration that well describes the post-Soviet context – to explain the migration policies and experiences that were part of the Soviet era, which according to Tiaynen (2013) enables to convey the specific subjectivities related to different ethnic, linguistic and cultural particularities in different Soviet locations, despite having shared experiences of Soviet life.

2.1.2 The prelude to the Soviet migrations: setting the Russian population on the move in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

What happened in Narva after 1944 in terms of population formation was not a local phenomenon but part of a larger process that began in Tsarist Russia in the late 19th century. Previously, the Russian people had been to a large extent peasants who stayed in one place, but as described by Treadgold (1957, 3), the Great Reforms initiated by Alexander II (1855-1881), "freed the serfs and gave them land, created multiclass local self-government, reformed the judicial system, and made military service an obligation of all classes". In this way, "the formerly legally stratified society was being replaced by one of legal equals, in which economic opportunity was

increasingly accessible to all on equal terms" (ibid.). In parallel, industrial growth, the diversification of economic activity and the opening up of education and cultural production to the wider society took place. Although in the early 20th century the Russian population was still largely agricultural, these new developments moved the peasantry in the direction of economic and legal equality (ibid.). The 1880s have been marked out as the beginning of Russia's mass urbanisation and rapid industrialisation, which also brought an end to its peasant society (Moon 1997). The Russian Revolution and the communism that followed grew out of those earlier ideas of equality and growth.

An important forerunner to Soviet mobilities was the Great Siberian Migration in which several legal, political and economic factors came together and set millions of Russian people on the move eastwards over the Ural Mountains. This movement has a clear link to the building of the Trans-Siberian railway between 1891 and 1916, which, running through the vast landscape and connecting Moscow and Vladivostok, made traversing large territories and connecting distant places finally possible. The importance and usefulness of the railway from the state perspective was that it enabled the population to be distributed to hitherto barely accessible places and provided access to resources. For individuals, it was an opportunity to establish "migratory repertoires" (Siegelbaum & Moch 2014), which had thus far been unthinkable. According to Treadgold (1957, 9), Russian migration to Siberia throughout the 19th century can be largely characterised as an eastwards movement that has many similarities with the American "winning of the West" ideals, Siberia being envisioned as a place to which the oppressed and adventurous fled in the hope of finding a better and less restricted life. It was only after World War I that Siberia gained the real leading role in the communist planners' goal to colonise and industrialise its vast frontiers, when millions of Soviet people were forced to relocate, dwell and produce there (ibid.).

As a prelude to later Soviet policies on immigration and emigration, two events are particularly important: first, the Tsarist state's policy to attract immigrants from other countries; and, second, the need for migration management in the context of a growing population and emerging conflicts over resources, which led the state towards prioritising local Russians over immigrant groups and establishing ethnic privileges by way of policy measures (Lohr 2008).

2.1.3   Soviet migration management in Stalinist times

The management of migration, settlement and full employment figured as central elements of the socialist state's progress plan throughout the whole Soviet period. Strict control over the entire population was exercised to ensure that each member of Soviet society fully contributed to its success. The mechanisms of control, some of which were already familiar from the late Tsarist regime (cf. Rahmonova-Schwarz 2010; Light 2012) were taken to a new level after the 1917 revolution, first in Soviet Russia's territory and gradually in the whole Soviet space.

Although migration controls are in place in all countries, what made Stalin's policies and instruments extraordinarily coercive was the underlying idea that people with certain characteristics and even entire populations could be relocated or forced to stay put if this served the Soviet state's ideological goals. In 1926, in the first all-Union census, the Soviet Union's internal borders were drawn and nationalities were worked out (Rahmonova-Schwarz 2010; Hirsch 2005). The data collected via the census enabled the issuing of internal passports under a decree issued by Stalin in 1932. Internal passports made it possible to track and direct the movements of the Soviet population in an unprecedented manner. According to Matthews (1993, 28), the passports initially functioned above all as an instrument with which to control the quality of the growing urban population, "to secure the deportation from these places of persons who [we]re not connected with industry or with work in offices or schools, and who [we]re not engaged in socially useful labour (with the exception of infirm persons and pensioners), and also in order to cleanse these places of kulak, criminal and other anti-social elements finding refuge there". At first it was only in designated "regime zones"[10], such as border-zones, urban areas and towns, that the passports were implemented. Without a passport, it was impossible to travel from one's place of residence to a more distant location to seek employment and accommodation. Even boarding trains and buses required valid internal passports to be presented. While the passports helped to keep track of people's everyday movements, they also became a legislative tool with which to control and limit populations' mobility – above all that of collective farmers and army members. Strict penalties were issued if passport regulations were not followed (Rahmonova-Schwarz 2010; Light 2012; Garcelon 2001; Gibson 1991).

---

[10] For a more precise description of how the Soviet Union differentiated between different territories in its internal passport system, see Hirsch (2005, 275).

Stalinist politics established a population control mechanism that left the rural population deprived of passports and strongly disabled in their movement. Until the mid-1960s, rural people did not have the right to internal passports and thus had no right to movement or freedom of employment beyond the countryside. Nevertheless, they still needed to register with rural district authorities (Rahmonova-Schwarz 2010). In a way, the migration control mechanism was applied twice to them. Collectivisation in the USSR began in the early 1920s and continued through the 1930s, being later applied in all new Soviet states that were integrated into the Soviet Union during WWII. This meant that the people of mostly rural background who started to relocate to Narva from 1944 onwards had for the most part already been experiencing collectivisation and its related policies and regulations for two decades.

Other known Soviet instruments of controlling migration were the residence cards and "labour books", widely known as *propiska*, and the "worker's book" (*rabochaia knizhka* and later *trudovaya knizhka*) (Matthews 1993, 16-19). These two instruments were first introduced in some segments of the population and later applied, with some modifications, universally. Even today, they are still the cornerstones of the control of Soviet internal movement and labour resources in some ex-Soviet countries.

Through concrete migration control measures, the Soviet state severely reduced the rights of its citizens to leave their country (crossing international borders was banned) and strongly limited even their formal right to move around within it. However, Soviet migration policies and related controls must be understood within the larger framework of both the Soviet modernisation project and Soviet governance. According to Light (2012, 399), "Soviet policies were ultimately motivated by what could be termed "regime adherence": the full integration of the individual into the Soviet order, which it pursued by the bureaucratic regulation of migration, out of, into, and within the USSR". Although violence or the threat of violence was used to establish public order, what proved more effective, especially after Stalin's era, was to plant the threat of violence and punishment in various control mechanisms rather than to exercise brutal violence upon citizens' unauthorised exit from the country (Beissinger 2002; Light 2012): "[t]he everyday functioning of a bureaucratic migration control apparatus comprised of the KGB, police, passport and address bureaus, and other agencies, all working to deter and punish noncompliance" (Light 2012, 413). Soviet citizens' mobility was controlled as part of Soviet surveillance, linked with "citizens' lack of political rights, strict

censorship on what could be written or spoken in public forums, and the extreme powers of police, prosecutors, and state security agencies" (Light 2012, 413-414). As a comparison with other migration systems, for example those of the USA or South Africa, the former Soviet Union's system has been regarded as more universal, as "intended to indoctrinate, mould, and utilize" (Light 2012, 416) every Soviet citizen, as well as being more egalitarian in its attempt to shape the lives of all citizens equally instead of focusing on selected subjects to secure/restrict their rights, resources and welfare.

2.1.4   Soviet migration policies during Khrushchev's "thaw": rehabilitation of the repressed, workers' campaigns and industrial mass housing

Stalin's death in 1953 and Khrushchev's election as first secretary (1953-1964) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union signalled the start of a new Soviet period known as Khrushchev's "thaw", which revised Stalinist politics and brought in some changes to migration policies. Both internal and external politics were to some extent liberalised compared with the Stalinist period. Differently from the principle focus on heavy industry during Stalinist times, the new state priorities were to develop agriculture, housing, light industry and consumption. With regard to migration policies, criticism of the personality cult and repression under Stalin resulted in less repression and the selective rehabilitation of those sentenced and repressed in the previous period, with many returning to places they were deported from or moving to new places altogether. Another direction in migration policies was the mass recruitment of both agricultural and industrial labour in the form of large-scale campaigns rather than through directly coercive methods. Campaigns were targeted primarily at young people, in the form of advertising the new faraway places where they could work and live as a socialist adventure for Soviet youth. The Virgin Lands campaign was related to the agricultural reform which, among other mechanisms intended to secure food provision, was set up to work millions of hectares of uncultivated land in Northern Caucasus, Western Siberia and Northern Kazakhstan (Rahmonova-Schwarz 2010). Through involvement in these campaigns during Khrushchev's period, hundreds of thousands of young people moved to unsettled land where both living and housing conditions were extremely

poor; some of them settled but many moved on to new destinations as soon as better possibilities presented themselves (Taubman 2003; see also Shulman 2007 on Stalinist campaigns targeted at female resettlers in the socialist frontiers of the Soviet Far East in the late 1930s). Other mass campaigns were directed at expanding the Soviet population and its economic activities to the Far North, transforming these frost-belt areas with extremely difficult environmental conditions into "average Soviet space" by way of changes to the infrastructure and living standards. Special "northern" material subsidies, several times higher salaries compared with the Soviet average, and other benefits were attractive enough for millions of Soviet people to head to the Northern settlements and continue their lives there, either for a limited number of years or for a lifetime (Kalemeneva 2019).

While Socialist politics under Khrushchev's "thaw" have generally been considered to be more "people-oriented" compared with those of the Stalinist period, the divide between urban and rural populations in terms of opportunities and living standards deepened even further. Rural people continued to be more disadvantaged since pensions, social security benefits and the right to a passport were still applied only to the urban population until the mid-1960s (Denisova & Mukhina 2010, 3).

2.1.5   Soviet migration policies from 1964 onwards: towards stagnation

After the change of Soviet leader in 1964, socialist growth started to slow down, finally leading to stagnation. Brezhnev once again revised Soviet politics and, in some ways, re-Stalinised it by increasing expenditure on heavy industry and the armed forces. From a migration politics perspective, however, no major change took place. While analysts strongly disagree about exactly when and why the stagnation happened, it is important to understand the popular perception of the Brezhnev era (1964-1982), which has been widely described in terms of stability and as a "period of (comparative) plenty" (Hanson 2003, 99). This is in spite of the fact that the Soviet economy was unable to deliver in certain sectors and regions and in rural places, in contrast to the prioritised regions and urban centres that always witnessed fewer shortages, and also the fact that the emerging shadow economies were at variance with the ideals of socialism and equality.

In the late Soviet period (1964-1991), the primary migration trends in the Soviet Union were as follows: the migrants were mostly drawn to the western and southwestern areas of the former Soviet Union, in the territories of Russia, Ukraine and the Baltics[11]; and the most attractive migration areas were Moscow and its western and southwestern oblasts as well as Leningrad, as the second capital. People who migrated to these areas were mostly from Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Trans-Caucasus. Also, the Northern region of West Siberia with its thriving oil and gas industry was increasingly popular with migrants; meanwhile, migrants from southern Siberia were moving steadily westwards. Migration from villages to cities continued to be the major migration trend (Zaionchkovskaya 1996, 17-18).

In the early (and middle) decades of Soviet migration ethnic Russians moved en mass to other Soviet republics – mainly to republican capitals and large cities – because in many places there was a shortage of educated labour not only in a large variety of industrial jobs but also in health, education and culture, and by the middle and especially the late migration periods the situation had changed considerably. As the native population in these places was gradually becoming more and more educated, employment opportunities for Russians became limited to industry and construction (Zaionchkovskaya 1996, 28), and during the last Soviet decade Russians left, rather than migrated to, the region (Korobkov 2008, 71).

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, migration flows changed direction and character. Millions of Russians and other nationalities returned to their newly established independent states, but millions more found that Russia's capital region and other metropolitan areas presented them with a land of new opportunities. As migration policies in post-Soviet Estonia have been affected by Estonian internal politics and developments in EU migration and mobility policies, migration and related policies in Russia and the republics of the former Soviet Union have had only a minor effect on the mobile lives of Russian-speaking Narvans[12].

---

[11] Net migration – the difference between the numbers of migrants entering and leaving the region – was almost 75% in Russia while in Ukraine it was 15% and in the Baltics, 10% (Zaionchkovskaya 1996, 17).

[12] For a better understanding of issues of mobility and migration in the post-Soviet space the following accounts may be useful: on Russians in their New Abroad see Shlapentokh, Sendich and Payin (1994); on the displacement of ethnic Russians from post-Soviet republics see Pilkington (1998); and on mobilities in socialist and postsocialist states see Burrell & Hörchelmann (2014). Also, the accounts of Light (2016) and Matthews (1993) on the legal practices of migration in post-Soviet Russia can be illuminating, providing an understanding of the complexity of mobility and how it is tied up with Soviet mobility patterns.

2.2 Migration policies in Estonia and Narva

2.2.1 General treatment of Soviet migration in Estonia

When outlining the Soviet migration periods in Estonia, demographers and historians typically agree on three rough periodisations, each having its particularities related to the degree of migration centralisation/decentralisation and the so-called migration hinterlands that primarily contributed to the immigrant population formation at different times (Sakkeus 1991; Katus 1990; Katus & Sakkeus 1993; Kulu 2004; Vseviov 2001, 2002). The first period is influenced by Stalinist politics between 1940 and 1953; the second is affected by Khrushchev's reforms and marks out the time between the mid/late 1950s and the mid/late 1960s; and the third period covers the two decades of the 1970s and 1980s. When it comes to the centralisation/decentralisation principle and alignment with the Soviet economy's five-year plans, this classification of migration periods is applied universally to all of the Soviet Union by different authors (including Siegelbaum & Moch 2014; White 2007; Buckley 1995, 2008; Randolph & Avrutin 2012). In contrast, the focus on migration hinterlands, depending on which places and migratory relations are studied as well as on different authors' subject-positions in studying the topic, can produce many different outcomes with regard to how local migration histories are written. Estonian authors regardless of their disciplinary background exclusively write about Soviet migration history in Estonia as something that was unfortunate and brought with it unwanted societal change. These judgements were naturally not made during the Soviet era itself, but they strongly emerged as part of post-Soviet migration analysis in the early 1990s (cf. Sakkeus 1991; Katus 1990; Katus & Sakkeus 1993; Tammaru 1999). In descriptions of the first two migration periods there is a strong emphasis on the problematic size of the foreign-born population who settled in Estonian territory versus the population of ethnic Estonians (and a tendency to compare these proportions in each town and region), and during the third period the worryingly increasing cultural distinctiveness of migrants is the main focus. Given the small size and tendency to decrease of Estonia's 1.3 million population, along with the nation-state's existence being directly associated with the number of Estonian speakers (cf. Assmuth 2007), the survival of the nation-state is seen as dependent on its ability to maintain the dominance of ethnic Estonians to whom the

culture and language are inherent rather than negotiable. Even when in later studies the rhetoric has become less evident, underneath there is a lasting attitude that Soviet migration, because its entanglement with heavy economic infrastructure is difficult to undo, has been harmful to the optimum development of the Estonian nation-state and population, disrupting social cohesion and creating an extra burden on the economy.

2.2.2   Early Soviet migration to Narva from 1940 to the mid-1950s

The early Soviet migration period that can be located between the summer of 1940, when Soviet troops entered Estonia and the latter was incorporated into the USSR, becoming the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ESSR), and the end of the 1950s, started in Narva nearly two decades later than in Soviet Russia and the other republics that were integrated into the USSR much earlier. In practice, the USSR began to widely implement its migration policies in Estonian territories only from 1944 onwards, when the German troops permanently retreated. During the early Soviet migration period, the economic and social environment in the town was transformed completely and Soviet structures were put in place. Many authors (cf. Mertelsmann 2007; Toode 2018; Vseviov 2001) have stressed that the fact that Narva was repopulated with Soviet resettlers during the early and later Soviet periods can hardly be explained by the Soviet leaders' ideological target to entirely change the population texture of Soviet Estonia, i.e. by implementing a conscious Soviet colonisation and Russification politics in order to avoid local resistance; rather, the extensive migration of populations was, from a state perspective, primarily triggered by all-Soviet economic goals. In addition, it was motivated by an interplay of historical, social and even cultural factors that were not always under the state's full control but rather evolved as individuals reacted to the opening up of opportunities (Mertelsmann 2007).

I will now briefly explain some of the events of war-time Narva so that it becomes easier to understand how the town reached a point at which the pre-war population had nearly disappeared, even though the war-time human casualties were not significant. In early 1944, the population totalled almost 17,000, but it had already dropped by 8,000 during the two and a half years in which Narva had been a war

zone and battlefield while German troops held their positions in the town (Toode 2015, 113). By that time, it had become clear that the Germans were losing ground, and they more or less evacuated the whole population in early 1944 when they expected Soviet troops to arrive in the town (figure 2). However, despite the population loss and the considerable destruction that Narva had already suffered, the town was still operational until 8 March 1944, a date known today as "the March bombardments of Narva", when the town was practically reduced to ruins[13] under heavy bombardment by Soviet troops (figure 3). After that, German soldiers and other non-civilians continued to reside in the town, vandalising and stealing Narvans' property, until the Soviet Army entered on 26 July and the Germans completely withdrew (Toode 2015; Weiss-Wendt 1997). It has been reported that in August 1944 there were only 253 inhabitants in Narva (Tarvel 2018), mostly individuals belonging to the Soviet administration and civilians who had refused to be evacuated.

Figure 2. Postcard of Narva from 1928. Source: Ülle Kutti, https://www.vanadpildid.net/narva-uldvaade-1928-9733

---

[13] Toode (2015, 125-136) explains that none of the data available to historians is sufficient to estimate even an approximate number of destroyed buildings and the extent of the damage, even though many historians at different times have attempted to do so. He also rebuts the common claim made by Soviet historians that only 2% of Narva's buildings remained intact, although most of the buildings were left impossible to use for living or other purposes.

Figure 3. The Northern part of Peetri Square in Narva Old Town in 1944 (Sõjajärgse Narva Peetriplatsi põhjaosa). Source: NLM F 107:15, Narva Muuseum, http://muis.ee/museaalview/2463994

While it is clear that the Germans played a role in destroying Narva, the Soviet authorities placed the whole blame for the eradication of the town on them and, in fact, this became a powerful ideological message to repeat over and over again. Toode (2015, 147-149) mentions that there was no occasion on which the news in the local paper *Narvskii Rabotschii* in early Soviet Narva did not include, alongside the constant reporting on the progress of construction work, the statement that the Nazis had brutally destroyed the ancient town. The Soviets, in contrast, were presented as the liberators of Narva. This has certainly also influenced the reasons why the Soviet-era Russian-speakers – in addition to the fact that they have no personal pre-war history with Narva and did not experience personal loss – do not generally relate to the portrayal of post-war Narva as having been built on a rupture, while this is the main experience of Estonians, and of Old Narvitianie even if they are non-Estonians (ibid., 109). It was only in 1989, encouraged by Gorbachev's *glasnost'*, when alternative perspectives about the Soviets' involvement in tearing apart old Narva started to emerge, but the majority of Narvans still treat this view with great scepticism, strongly believing their learnt historical narrative (ibid., 149).

From August 1944 onwards, the Soviet authorities focused on establishing their power in Narva. Although according to the public narrative the town was quickly and decisively rebuilt by the Soviets, it appears that the progress made transforming the least damaged buildings into habitable and minimally functional ones was rather difficult and slow. The Building Trust no. 2 (Ehitustrust nr 2) was established under the authority of the centrally operated Housing Construction Ministry to be responsible for the construction in Narva, together with the local office of renovation and construction, but the situation regarding materials, tools and work-force was miserable (Toode 2018, 161) and remained so for nearly four years. In practice, serious discrepancies in the interests of the local, national and centralised authorities immediately emerged and this continued to be a common thread throughout the Soviet period, as was the case everywhere in the former Soviet Union (cf. Humphrey 2002; Verdery 1996). The Soviet central government immediately started to regard North Eastern Estonia as a region with a great potential for energy and especially oil shale production on a whole-Soviet scale[14] – it is important to keep in mind that to Moscow Narva was a minor place, and all its policies were typically directed at larger regions. Practically, this meant that investment in the rapid development of energy and heavy industries was top priority for Moscow and everything else was secondary (Mertelsmann 2007). For a couple of post-war years, due to its close location to nuclear raw material[15] depositories discovered in Northern Estonia, Narva was also considered as a possible location for the nuclear industry. In the end, nearby Sillamäe was chosen instead as a location for uranium production[16], which saved Narva from becoming a closed mono-industrial nuclear town (Toode 2018; Vseviov 2001).

Until at least 1948, the local authorities remained totally powerless in their attempts to reconstruct buildings for civilians to return to and to create facilities for basic needs, such as a hospital, a canteen and a public sauna. In 1948, living space per inhabitant in Narva was 1.77 square metres and the town continued to be in a

---

[14] In 1940, oil shale was mentioned in the Soviet authorities' plans as North-East Estonia's greatest industrial potential. The construction material, machinery and metal industries, and even the commonly narrated historical Kreenholm textile industry, were not priorities for central government (Mertelsmann 2007, 53, 56).

[15] The Soviet Union began to strive towards developing its own nuclear weapons in 1946.

[16] The preliminary planning of the industry in Narva came to affect the town through some of its most functional buildings being allocated to the industry – a secret project called Combine no. 7 (Kombinaat nr 7), which directed resources in a way that did not benefit Narva itself.

very poor situation (Toode 2018, 176). Temporary shelters and barracks were used for living, clean drinking water was a scarcity, and washing was possible only in the single public sauna. Medical care was deficient and other basic services were missing entirely. The extremely bad housing situation continued throughout the first post-war decade, and even though the local authorities were later given more means and power with which to lead the urbanisation project in Narva, construction and housing allocation was mostly in the hands of industries. In terms of architecture, the heritage of Narva's medieval old town was forgotten and new Soviet city planning replaced the old. Even though the street layout and the very few more or less preserved old buildings stayed as a reminder of Narva's history, the town's new Soviet centre was planned in a different area, thus also creating a space for new physical structures and related experiences to emerge. (Mertelsmann 2007; Vseviov 2001; Toode 2018)

Given the above background and the fact that the rest of Estonia apart from Tartu and Tallinn had suffered much less from war-time damages, the pre-war inhabitants of Narva did not have many possibilities to return to the town or any interest in doing so; thus the majority continued their lives elsewhere in Estonia, where they saw better options. At first, thousands of German prisoners of war and criminal prisoners, and later political prisoners, were compelled to work in the reconstruction of the town. The last prisoner-of-war camps in Narva were closed in 1955 (Tõnisson 2014). It was, however, impossible to rely on forced labour, and the Soviet authorities soon began to attract other Soviet citizens to Narva. In 1946, the town's executive committee started to operate in Russian, making administrative issues easy for Russian-speakers. Since the regions of the Western part of the Soviet Union, more precisely several Western Russian regions, Ukraine and Belorussia, had suffered much more severe destruction and human casualties than Soviet Estonia, and in addition were faced with a famine in 1946-1947, people there were willing to move for work and survival, taking the first steps to a "normal existence". In this way, Narva became a place of steady immigration. Given that migration to Soviet Estonia from other USSR republics was not allowed until 1946 and immigration quotas were applied to Estonia, besides the fact that rural people without passports were not allowed to leave their homes at all, moving to Narva was not unrestricted (Mertelsmann 2007). A significant barrier to the movement of rural populations was removed when they started to be allowed to acquire internal passports.

It has been estimated that during the following 30 years, 11.5 per cent of Leningrad and 12 per cent of Pskov oblasts' rural populations relocated to Narva, forming the majority of Narva's industrial workers (Mertelsmann 2007). These workers, usually young women and men with no professional qualifications and many still minors, typically signed contracts for several years. Leaving a job voluntarily was considered a criminal act under Soviet law, resulting in imprisonment. Yet it has been noted that in practice the fluctuation in labour in Narva and everywhere in the industrially developing North-East Estonian region was high, indicating that the migration-related policies were often ignored or negotiated under conditions of severe labour scarcity (ibid., 70). The state recruitment agency *orgnabor* was in charge of finding available workers and attracting them to industries that were in need of labour. Also, representatives of large state-owned companies travelled around the country, advertising their enterprises and promising work and housing opportunities in places such as Narva.

Who else constituted the post-war Narvan population apart from the rural populations from the Western areas of the Soviet Union, released prisoners, a small number of pre-war Narvans, and Soviet officials who were appointed from Leningrad and elsewhere to govern the town? Although Narva was not a military town, it had a military commissariat and hosted several small battalion units on its outskirts; therefore, a military population resided in the town too. For young men with a rural background who served in the Soviet Army and were often sent to distant locations[17], the end of this service represented an opportunity for them to free themselves of the obligation to return to their birth places and become collective farmers with no passport or freedom of movement. The option to stay in Soviet Estonia – considered a place of opportunities – was welcomed by many (Tarvel 2018). By 1955, the Narvan population had increased to 22,000[18]. Ten years later, it had doubled to 44,000, making 1955-1965 the biggest growth years. By 1980 Narva's

---

[17] Until 1955, there were national army troops in which young men could serve locally, without being sent out of their respective Soviet republics. After that date these troops were disbanded and men were sent to serve all over the country, often ending up in very distant places. After WWII, service in the army and air force lasted three years and in the navy, five years. In 1968, the service was shortened to two and three years respectively.

[18] Before WWII, the population of Narva was 34,000.

population had reached 73,000 and in 1990 the town had 82,000 inhabitants. This is also the largest number of inhabitants Narva has ever had (Statistics Estonia)[19].

The years 1944-1960 were formative for Narva's new population and structure. The population was overwhelmingly rural, with a relatively low education level, young and predominantly female thanks to the specificity of the textile industry (Vseviov 2001, 53-54). In 1958, the biggest employer in Narva was the Kreenholm textile factory, which provided work for almost 9,500 people. Other small industries included meat, fish, bread and furniture factories, the *Pribaltiyskaya*[20] power plant (Balti SEJ) and both the reinforced concrete and construction and the cast iron industries, neither of which employed more than 400 people at the time. However, the building of these small industries, so that most food and building materials could be produced locally, required temporary labour that was imported. Also in the 1950s, two large-scale industries, the hydropower plant and the *Pribaltiyskaya* power plant, both massive constructions that took years to build, required labour that was not locally available. In counterbalance to the textile sector, the construction sector, along with many of the new industries, was male dominated, which helped to even out the initial gender imbalance in the town. The city planners even kept male-focused industries specifically in mind for their further developments. In spite of this, Narva has remained predominantly female. Vseviov (2001, 54) has reported that, given the extremely poor situation of the town, the greatest influx of Narva's inhabitants during the first Soviet migration period was related to the constantly acute need for workers in the building sector, which was characterised by low professionalism and high mobility. Typically, when a new industrial facility was completed, construction workers were encouraged to move to where the next building project was starting, which could well be in another Soviet state.

Another aspect that acquires importance in local narrations of mobility is the relationship between Narva and Ivangorod, and particularly the extent to which those two urban places, located on opposite sides of the Narva River and representing the influence of different historical rulers and their respective politics on local populations through their powerful fortresses, developed as highly

---

[19] Russian-speaking Narvans themselves often mentioned 89,000 as the town's maximum population at the end of the Soviet period, a number which is not supported by official statistics though.

[20] *Pribaltiyskaya* is the vernacular name of the Baltic SEJ power plant which is the form I use throughout the thesis in line with my interlocutors' usage.

integrated twin-towns rather than as largely different places over the Soviet period and thereafter (cf. Pfoser 2014). Ivangorod was administrated by the Estonian Republic during Estonia's independence in 1918-1940, and then in 1944 Moscow decided that Narva would be administrated by the ESSR while Ivangorod across the river would become part of Leningrad oblast, administrated by Soviet Russia. According to Vseviov (2001, 10-17), soon after the new administrative division took place it became apparent that Ivangorod had been left on the Soviet periphery while Narva developed as the third biggest town in the ESSR and as a place of industrial significance on an all-union level. It was not easy to undo the towns' previous administrative integration, to make both places self-sustainable. The new administrative division meant, for example, that despite the town's geographical closeness food provision in Narva was directed by Estonia while in Ivangorod it was carried out by Russia, resulting in much worse provision there. While in some ways the towns remained complementary to each other with regard to parts of their infrastructure, the main concern of the local authorities was that Ivangorod remained dependent on the social services provided in Narva. In practice, more than two thirds of the Kreenholm workers in 1954 lived in Ivangorod but used Narva's infrastructure because the cultural and medical services and the transportation means there were more developed. Housing possibilities, in contrast, were concentrated more in Ivangorod during the first Soviet period. Vseviov (ibid.) also reveals how the local authorities repeatedly tried to achieve a formal change in the administrative division by joining the two towns officially, but Moscow was not interested.

As noted by Zubkova (1998), the first two to three years after World War II were critical for the development of the whole post-war Soviet period. The political and economic structures of the Soviet Union remained largely the same, but "a complex of hopes and expectations prompted by the sacrifices of the great victory led to major changes in Soviet society" (ibid., 4-5). The Soviet leaders succeeded in creating and maintaining a post-war spirit that generated an expectation that life under the communist leaders would improve, even though survival in peace-time USSR was no less challenging than in war-time (ibid.). From this perspective, it is perhaps understandable how hope was sown and gained momentum in Narva for migrants despite the miserable situation that awaited those who arrived in the first years after the war.

2.2.3   Hopes in Narva in Post-Stalinist times

Due to a lack of detailed analysis of Narva's population formation after the 1960s (Vseviov's 2001 analysis ends with 1970 and focuses primarily on the 1940s and 1950s, as do those of several other authors), I will next try to outline the migratory developments in Narva by combining sources that discuss general migration trends and outcomes in Estonia and those that reveal numerical and contextual data about the town.

Similarly to in the 1950s, the new resettlers who arrived in Narva in the 1960s originated largely from nearby districts of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), especially from Pskov district, and alleviated the need for factory and construction labour (Katus 1990). Due to Khrushchev's extensive housing programmes that were aimed at ending the housing shortage everywhere in the Soviet Union, urban planning and the development of services was taken to a new level in Narva in the 1960s. The town's stable population was mostly employed in industries, and construction was a sector that always brought in new temporary labour.

An expressive overview of the progress achieved in Narva and the wellbeing of its migrant-background population, written in true Soviet ideological spirit, can be found in *Narva ekskursioonijuht* [Narva Guide], written by Krivošejev in 1960 (45-48, author's translation):

> In 1950, the construction of the Narva hydroelectric power station on the right bank of the Narova River was started in line with the directives of the Twenty-First Congress of the Communist Party. Only five years later, the station started to operate. This gave vast possibilities for the further industrialisation of Soviet Estonia. The hydroelectric power station is especially important to the development of Narva and its oil shale pool. The electricity produced in Narva has been widely used by the socialist agricultural enterprises of the Estonian SSR and Leningrad oblast. Narvans can be rightfully proud that the Leningrad metro, named after Lenin, and the industrial enterprises of Leningrad run on the hydro energy produced in Narva. […] Together with restoration and the building of new industrial enterprises, the communal economy of Narva is being developed. The workers and servicers have been allocated thousands of square metres of housing space. Schools, hospitals, canteens, shops, kindergartens, clubs, cinemas and theatres have been opened. Life in the town is throbbing, a reminder of an exhaustible source of energy. […] In the afterwar years, meeting the needs of Narvans has significantly improved that which concerns communal services and transport. Much has been done to improve the town space and landscape architecture. Many streets and squares have been asphalted and trees have been planted. Buses and taxis are driving on the roads, connecting many

districts. […] As the town grows, its population is growing as well. In the town and its surrounding districts, the number of inhabitants is currently around 40,000. Those people are served by the cultural palace for textile workers, a museum, seven libraries, an after-hours technical school, 10 schools, including a school for young workers and a boarding school, a music school, two stadiums, a boat station, a sports hall etc. Narva has changed so much that it can no longer be recognised, but even more spectacular are the future prospects. The implementation of Narva's general reconstruction plan will change its appearance even more. In the near future, Narva will become the second biggest town with the second largest population in the whole of Estonia. […] The general plan sets out the further building of housing and communal enterprises. All communal, cultural and educational buildings that serve the public good will be designed to meet the needs of 100,000 peopl[e].

Not only does this description stress the expected growth, by means of attracting more and more migrant labour to Narva, it also importantly highlights the perceived differences between various kinds of urban place. Leningrad as the second most important town in the Soviet Union, the second capital, located only a short distance from Narva, is pictured as superior to Narva; however, Narva can increase its own importance by supplying Leningrad with valuable resources such as energy. This comparison with Leningrad works even more effectively in pointing to Narva's potential than the more usual juxtaposition with Tallinn as the capital and first town of the Estonian SSR. Such comparisons between places of different scales were highly meaningful to Soviet people; while they may sound humorous in contemporary terms[21] they had a real impact on people's everyday lives because the productivity of industries was constantly being measured and success communicated in these terms. And subsequently, personal allowances and benefits, along with material and immaterial goods, were being distributed in line with the productivity of the respective industries.

Gradually the migration management typical of the Stalinist period moved from the hands of central government to those of industrial enterprises that defined their own specific labour needs. In effect, this was a change towards decentralised migration management (Katus 1990; Kulu 2004). Industrial enterprises were increasingly interested in a specific type of skilled labour rather than in just anyone who wanted to work. Whereas previously the labour force was often trained rapidly and locally in factory schools, in the 1960s recruiters started to focus more on a specialist labour force with a technical or higher technical education. Thus, the most

---

[21] See Kaiser and Nikiforova (2008) for a discussion of the relevance of scale in Narva in contemporary terms.

typical form of settling in Estonia became a work placement in a pre-designated factory position. Hill's (2004) analysis shows that the educational level of migrants born outside Estonia started to increase significantly in the 1960s and more so after the 1970s, and that the later migrants settled in Soviet Estonia the more they relocated to its urban centres, including Narva.

Since the 1970s, migrants have arrived in Estonia from increasingly distant locations, representing also more and more diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Katus & Sakkeus 1993). The "enlargement of Estonia's migration hinterland" (Sakkeus 1991; Katus & Sakkeus 1993; Katus 1990) from nearby Russian-dominated regions where people were considered culturally and habitually, if not linguistically, closer to Estonians to more distant and diverse places of origin is argued to have caused cultural and social incoherence in Estonia, since new migrants were seen as having difficulties adapting to the lifestyle, which, it has been argued, was "strange and hostile" to them (Katus 1990, 59)[22]. While this conclusion could be applied, with some reservation, to Estonia as a whole, Narva was a particular place because of its nascent social and cultural fabric, perhaps not so much influenced by long-established Estonian cultural patterns but brought from the Russian countryside and gradually shaped in the urban environment. This aspect of how the resettlers felt about fitting in culturally in Narva deserves further exploration, and this takes place in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

In general, Estonian narratives and even academic perspectives regarding the Soviet administrators' purpose in organising the resettlement of Russian-speakers in Estonian territory vary greatly from those of Soviet, Russian and even international scholars. Whereas the latter groups tend to stress the economic factors, seeing the resettlement as a necessity in meeting economic goals and generating growth, industrially and otherwise, to the point that they neglect Russification, the Estonian views emphasise more the element of determined Russification for the sake of weakening Estonian national resistance to Soviet ideology (e.g. Tarvel 2018; Vseviov 2001). The general understanding has been that the Russification of Soviet Estonia

---

[22] While the studies by Katus and Sakkeus provide an important demographic analysis of the formation of foreign-born populations in Estonia, some of their conclusions, such as "[t]heir homeland is somewhere in the Soviet Union, not in Estonia" (Katus & Sakkeus 1993, 12) and "[m]igration incentive policy was based upon people's aspiration for material wealth. It was responded to primarily by those with a low sense for their native place, which means that they felt at home anywhere where better consumer conditions were available" (Katus 1990, 59), obviously do not stem from academic analysis but are spontaneous commentaries that should be treated very carefully.

was not an intended part of migration policy at the beginning of the Soviet regime in Estonia, but that later on diluting the ethnic Estonian content became a target of the Soviet authorities (Tarvel 2018). It has also been argued that at first the Stalinist nationality policy did not prioritise the Russian nationality through strategically attempting to subordinate other Soviet nationalities to it. However, conceptualising the Russian nation as more cultured and thus culturally superior and promoting the extensive migration of ethnic Russians into the so-called more backward Soviet places to bring all nationalities up to a higher cultural level – seen as necessary for advancing the Soviet modernisation project – ideologically and practically resembles in many ways colonialist practices worldwide (cf. Annus 2018). At the same time, since Estonia and Narva were already regarded as being at a higher level of modernisation in the Soviet context despite the short post-WWII rupture, something often reflected in everyday perceptions as Narva belonging to the Soviet West, it is understandable that for Russian-speaking Narvans the associations regarding their being participants in Soviet Russification and colonial politics remain foreign to them.

While the divide between scholarly views with regard to interpreting "ordinary" Russian-speakers' role and their impact on Soviet national cultures is huge, this thesis will not take a stand in this respect. Nevertheless, I maintain that it matters greatly how Soviet-era Russian-speakers themselves perceive these different perspectives, of which they are generally aware, and how they see them influencing their sense of home in contemporary Estonia.

2.2.4 Soviet imaginaries of the West, the Soviet West and Narva's location within these and on the core–periphery axis

International migration and even mobility across the borders of the Soviet Union was highly restricted and the Soviet state made constant serious efforts to filter and distort information about Western countries, capitalism and capitalist lifestyles. Yet the West not only figured in Soviet society on an imaginary level but was part of everyday materialities (Annus 2018), having more relevancy, however, in the late Soviet period and for people who had some sort of contact with places and areas of life where Western influences clearly reverberated (music for example). The "West"

was a more relevant everyday category for people living in the Soviet Western borderlands, especially in the Baltic republics, and in Western Ukraine, which bordered Poland and other Soviet bloc countries (Risch 2011; Annus 2018; Rausing 1998). Due to its historical cultural connections and geographical proximity to the European West – and hence its distance from most other places in the Soviet Union – Soviet Estonia in particular was commonly addressed as the Soviet West, the Soviet Abroad (*sovetskaya zagranitsa*) or simply "our abroad" (*nasha zagranitsa*) (Gorsuch 2011).

While we know that in public speech the Soviet regime was presented as superior to capitalism because of its "socially optimal usage of resources based on collective ownership and central planning", Soviet people tended to envision the West and the Soviet West as superior to the rest of the Soviet space on the basis of very mundane criteria (Péteri 2010, 6). Different authors have noted that in everyday imaginaries the West was primarily associated with consumption and with goods that were not available to Soviet people (Yurchak 2005; Gorsuch 2011; Seliverstova 2017). As I will demonstrate later, for many of the informants of this thesis Estonia was conceptualised as a place belonging to the West, which in practice meant better living conditions, the absence of shortages of food and everyday goods, and a higher level of culturedness. It is also noted that the decade after the thaw saw a revival of "national, Western-oriented and modernist aspects of [local] culture" in Soviet Estonia (Misiunas & Taagepera 1993, 179), whereby contact with Estonia became a source of imagination about "Western" ways of life (Gorsuch 2011, 55). Since the material and visual aspects of the pre-Soviet Western-influenced culture and heritage that highlighted Estonia's cultural and architectural exoticism on an all-Soviet scale were impossible to neglect or hide, Estonia was presented to the Soviet people as "a space of safely Sovietized Western difference", a republic that was "nationalist in form, socialist in content" (Gorsuch 2011, 53-55). In Soviet films, tourist brochures and Soviet travel information, Estonia figured as a showpiece of agricultural and industrial development. Soviet visitors from "brother republics", however, were always more amazed by the bourgeois-style Tallinn old town and the seaside resorts, where the cultural exoticism was easiest to grasp. Narva, as a place located geographically and mentally in Soviet Estonia, was also associated with Soviet Western standards and as such was a desirable migration destination. Its being imagined as a Western place in Soviet terms increased the rank of this otherwise relatively small town.

However, I feel that sometimes Narva's association with the Soviet West has been treated as a shortcut to making sense of Russian-speakers' enchantment with resettling in Narva, leading to naïve generalisations that do not always consider the people's aspirations, the possibility of multiple simultaneously appearing contradictory aspirations, and their actual realisation in all their complexity. One of the narratives that frequently echoed in elderly Russian-speaking Narvans' narrations was the "101st kilometre" rule. The colloquial "101st kilometre" rule was a Soviet migration policy measure that systematically deprived criminals and other "undesirables", including rehabilitated political prisoners returning from the Gulags, of the opportunity to settle in larger urban centres such as Moscow and Leningrad. My informants repeatedly mentioned the controversial effect of this rule on Narva's social texture, in relation to Narva's convenient location behind this "101st kilometre" while still in close proximity to Leningrad. On the one hand, it attracted to Narva "criminal elements" who had been released from prison, most of whom, in the view of my informants, were passing through and did not stay in Narva for long but, on the other hand, Leningrad's closeness was often used as a strong argument by many who moved to Narva. Due to its being closer geographically and more abundant culturally, Leningrad figured much more significantly on their map of important places in Soviet times than Tallinn. In fact, for some of my informants, albeit a clear minority, St. Petersburg continued to be attractive for cultural entertainment and medical services even in post-Soviet times. The specific core and periphery relationship that developed during the Soviet period, linking the immediate social space in Narva more strongly with the Russian metropole and disconnecting it from Estonian places, was still somewhat notable in Narva during the time of my fieldwork.

Hence, regardless of whether they planned to stay and eventually settle or were looking only for temporary opportunities, Narva was often a desirable location for Soviet resettlers for a mixture of reasons: belonging to the Soviet West; being above all a rapidly developing urban place with the promise of an urban lifestyle and industrial work; and being located in close proximity to Leningrad, one of the top-ranking Soviet places to live and in which to improve one's life opportunities.

2.2.5 Post-Soviet migrations and the effect of citizenship and migration policy on Narva

After the Soviet collapse in 1991, Russian-speaking Narvans became subjects of the Estonian state. Their migration histories started to be affected by the post-Soviet state's migration politics, most specifically because this politics was part and parcel of Estonia's nation-state project, the main concern of which was to secure Estonian national culture, military defence capability and sovereignty (Lokk 2014, 2015). Russian-speaking populations who settled in Estonia during Soviet times and by 1991 comprised nearly 40 per cent of Estonia's population[23] and had become a clear majority in some towns and regions, were perceived as a threat to all of this.

Immediately after its independence in 1991, Estonia automatically granted citizenship to anyone born in Estonian territory before 1940, i.e. before the Soviet annexation, and their descendants. At the same time, because their Soviet citizenship was no longer valid nearly half a million people living in Estonia were left with no citizenship and this situation needed to be resolved. The Aliens Act was passed in 1993 (amended in 2005) and it established that Estonia did not allow anyone to hold dual citizenship (this is still the case) and framed the legal conditions that needed to be met for non-citizens to acquire Estonian citizenship along with the conditions for living and working in Estonian territory legally without citizenship. The stateless citizenship status offered to non-citizens was seen as a temporary solution in a situation in which Estonia had decided to apply the *ius sanguinis* principle[24] in granting its own citizenship, but the Russian Federation and other post-Soviet states were not automatically granting their citizenship following the same principle. Stateless citizenship passports (grey passports) came into use in 1996 to provide instruments of travel to those people residing in Estonia who did not hold a passport of any country. In 2016, the first modification towards the *ius soli* citizenship principle in

---

[23] More precisely, the share of ethnic Estonians had dropped from 93.7% in 1945 to 61.5% in 1991 (Katus & Puur 2006, 500).

[24] Kristina Kallas (2016) recently analysed this issue from a democratic governance perspective, and found that it is important for the development and social cohesion of any nation-state to ensure that its residents, no matter what their birth citizenship, have equal rights and obligations compared with the native population. In Kallas' view, it is problematic that the Estonian state is not willing to reconsider the composition of its political community. While currently about 10% of Estonian citizens (native Estonians) live on a more or less permanent basis outside of the Estonian territory and have their full citizens' rights and obligations, 20% of the country's permanent residents have limited rights and obligations.

Estonia was made by granting Estonian citizenship to all non-citizens born in Estonian territory after 1991 if their parents so wished.

Today the number of stateless citizens in Estonia is about 69,000 (as of 1 January 2021, Statistics Estonia)[25]. In Narva, the concentration of stateless people is the highest in the whole of Estonia at 14 per cent of its inhabitants (figure 4). As most stateless people in Narva have permanent residency status in Estonia they legally have the same rights and obligations as Estonian citizens, apart from not being eligible to vote in parliamentary elections and to serve in the Estonian Army. Stateless people with permanent residence in Estonia also have the right to unrestricted movement and to work within the EU as guaranteed by the Schengen Agreement.
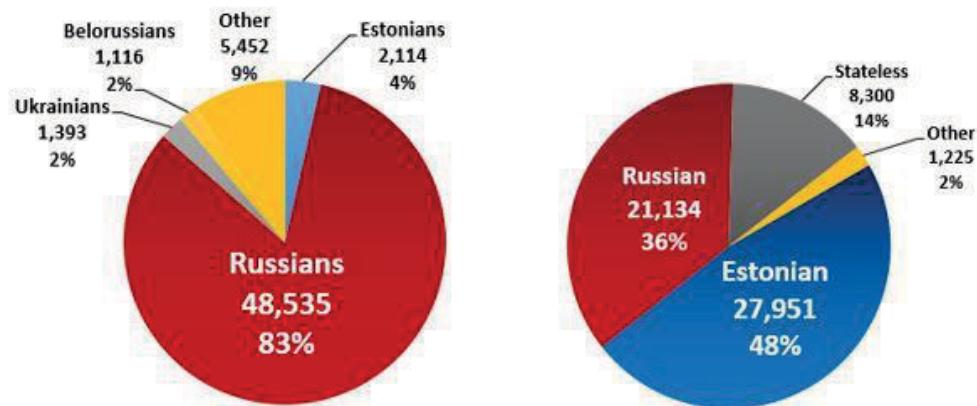
Figure 4. Inhabitants of Narva by ethnic nationality (on the left) – reported by the people themselves in censuses – and by citizenship (on the right), 01.01.2018. Source: Narva arvudes, 2017

Narva's future, with its 96 per cent Russian-speaking population (Statistics Estonia, 2021), was certainly a challenge to Estonian migration policy[26]. At the same time, from a human perspective this was also a dramatic moment for Narva's Russian-speaking population, who either needed to come to terms with the altered political atmosphere and the Estonian state's politics, which changed their legal

---

[25] Rahvaarv (2021)

[26] Reigo Lokk (2014, 207) has analysed post-Soviet Estonia's migration policy as a governing state's commonly used tool for "structuring the permanent population" by homogenising the "national body" of the state.

situation by somewhat restricting their rights and obligations in a territory where they had been legally equal before and, in the view of many, even practically and psychologically advantaged and superior, or else leave, which a number of them did, in these turbulent times. The migration destinations were usually other post-Soviet republics, most often the Russian Federation, but also Finland, Germany and Israel as countries that considered groups of Soviet population as belonging to their nation and offered them repatriation options. Between 1991 and 1994, according to Zaionchkovskaya (1996, 25-27), 48,000 Soviet citizens (out of an Estonian population of 1.5 million) left Estonia, three quarters of them migrating to the Russian Federation and about one fifth to Ukraine.

Some local Russian-speaking political leaders made an attempt to separate Narva from Estonia by organising a referendum[27] on Narva's autonomy in July 1993. It was reported that 54.8 per cent of Narva's inhabitants with voting rights took part and that 97.2 per cent of them were in favour of autonomy. Thus, the proposal was supported by a slight majority. The push for autonomy did not appear suddenly; discussions around it had been going on for several years and had achieved a great deal of local and national media coverage. In fact, the local leaders in Narva had started to ask for economic privileges and a certain degree of independence from the central ESSR authorities and towards the end of the 1980s Narva was already striving to become a "special economic zone". In the claims for autonomy within an independent Estonia, economic arguments dominated, while some of the reasons addressed the changed political atmosphere and the politics of the Estonian republic, which were seen as hindering non-Estonians' possibilities to be involved in doing business. The timing of the referendum has been seen as a reaction to the first version of Estonia's Aliens Act that was passed in parliament in the spring of 1993 and to which Russian-speakers reacted very critically. Soon after the referendum, however, the Estonian Supreme Court decided that the local referendum went against the Estonian constitution, since referendums cannot be organised by a local municipality. No other attempt at separation was ever made. Historians and political analysts seem to be of the opinion that the referendum was not so much a serious attempt at separation but a project organised by some local leaders to gain popularity and succeed in the subsequent municipal elections. Others have seen it as an attempt to draw the attention of various stakeholders (including the Estonian and Russian states, the Narvan population, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation

---

[27] The exact referendum question was: "Do you want the Town of Narva to receive the status of national territorial autonomy within the Republic of Estonia?" (*Kas Te soovite, et Narva Linn saaks rahvuslikterritoriaalse autonoomia staatuse Eesti Vabariigi koosseisus?*) (Laverntjev 2018, 221).

in Europe) to the post-Soviet "Russian problem" in Estonia (Lavrentjev 2018a, 2018b).

Since the 1993 events, there have been no other attempts to contest the political power of the Estonian state in the town or the region. The Central Party, which is known in Estonia as the party that best represents the interests of Russian-speakers in the country, has held political power in Narva since 1995 and the local political leaders have all been Russian-speakers until quite recently.

Narva has remained a predominantly (96%) Russian-speaking town. However, for a combination of social, economic and political reasons, Russian-speakers have fared worse in post-Soviet Estonia than Estonian-speakers. Studies show that Russian-speakers are in a weaker position in the labour market and the older generations and less educated people are especially vulnerable, particularly those living in North-east Estonia where the economic structures are rigid (Saar, Krusell & Helemäe 2017). Russian-speakers are aware of their greater inequality in Estonian society, especially in the labour market, and they are of the strong opinion that it is the state's role and responsibility to do something to improve their situation (Krumm 2019, 48, 51).

The post-Soviet economic reforms were extremely harsh on Narva, where all the industries – energy, textile, metal, military – were bound to the market chains of the Soviet Union. Some of the industries were closed down almost immediately, while others were restructured and market chains to the Western market were slowly built. As technological levels and productivity were low compared with the needs of the Western markets, capital investments were needed, and employment rates subsequently started to grow rapidly. Given the large size of Narva's industries, the whole post-Soviet period has been characterised by plenty of layoffs, labour market precariousness, and a general sense of fear and desperation.

The majority of the Narvan Soviet-era Russian-speakers have stayed in Estonia, but the town has lost one third of its population through a combination of outmigration immediately after the Soviet break-up, low birth rates, and the continuous outmigration of young and working-age people due to shrinking economies and job numbers, low salaries and the lack of possibilities to improve living standard in the town. Future predictions show that Narva will continue to consistently lose its inhabitants (figure 5) and in 20 years will be left with only half of the population it had at the end of the Soviet period. Due to almost no influx of population and low birth rates, the older generations will considerably outnumber the younger age groups for many years to come (figure 6) if developments in the town do not bring about any major changes.
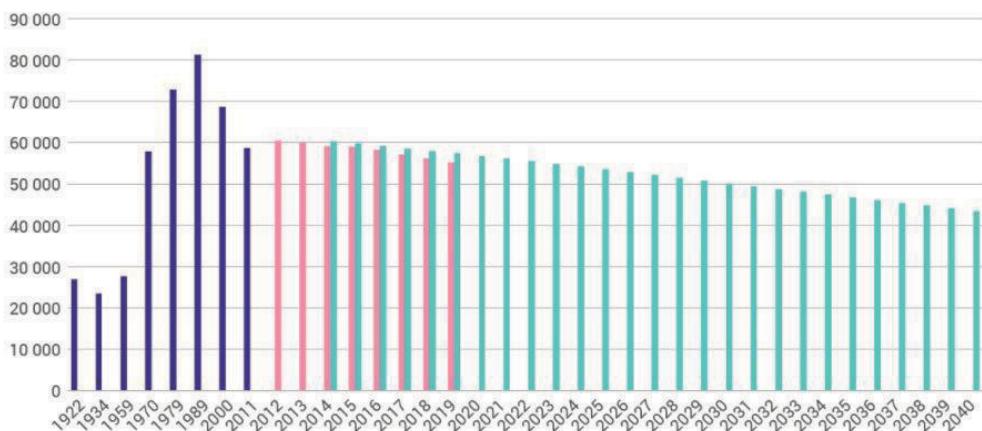
Figure 5. Population of Narva 1920-2044. Violet: Censuses; Pink: Annual population counts; Light blue: Predicted. Source: Narva rahva…, Statistics Estonia 2020
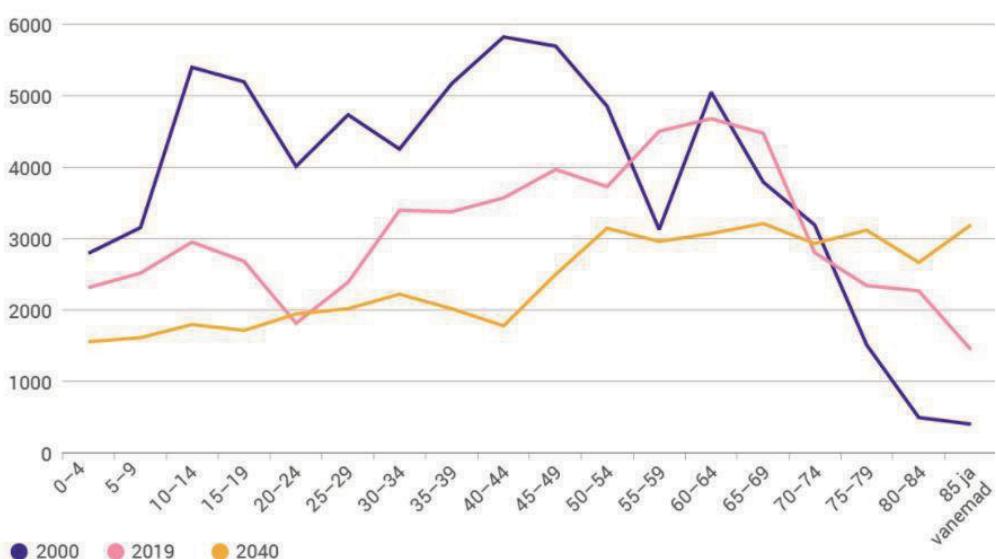
● 2000   ● 2019   ● 2040

Figure 6. Population of Narva by age group (five-year cohorts) and year: 2000, 2019, 2040 (predicted). Source: Narva rahva…, Statistics Estonia 2020

Today, the majority of those living in Narva were born there, making the protagonists of this thesis – the Soviet resettlers – a minority in the town; yet their resettlement histories and their experiences of home-making in Narva have greatly affected all the subsequent generations. After finishing their secondary level studies,

Narvan youth generally head to Tallinn and abroad, mainly to Western European countries. In addition, thousands of working-age Narvans, especially males, look for temporary or permanent employment abroad. Transnational practices are thus increasingly the case in Narva. However, the exact outmigration numbers are difficult to estimate, because many such practices are temporary and unregistered.

2.2.6 Emergence of the Estonian-Russian international border

After the Soviet collapse, the border between Estonia and Russia was marked by a temporary control line until 1993, when the Russian Federation unilaterally imposed a state border that followed the administrative border of the RSFSR. The first border agreement between Estonia and Russia was made in 2005 and the second, with a minor modification, in 2014, but neither text has been made final and irreversible through ratification in the states' parliaments. While Russia wants to ratify the agreement in the form in which the border was drawn in 1991 after Estonia's re-independence, discarding all reference to any previous international agreements, Estonia insists on including a preamble that refers to the Treaty of Tartu (peace agreement). The treaty was signed on 2 February 1920 between Estonia and the RSFSR, ending the Estonian War of Independence and recognising the independence and sovereignty of the State of Estonia, previously governed by Tsarist Russia. The treaty also established the international border between Estonia and the RSFSR, including territories beyond the Narva River and Petseri in South-East Estonia that had been excluded from Estonian territory since 1991. While in 1995 Estonia officially renounced the recovery of territories that had been part of its territory between the Treaty of Tartu and Estonia's incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1941, the country's dominant political forces are not ready to completely decouple the border agreement from the Treaty of Tartu. Russia again wants to avoid, by excluding reference to any earlier pre-Soviet-era agreements, setting a precedent that would likely encourage other former Soviet states to come forward with similar claims.

In formal meetings between the Estonian and Russian foreign ministers, both sides traditionally touch on the topic of border agreement, conclude that they remain rigid in their positions, and move on to other topics. In recent years, one of the nodal

points for Estonia has been expressing concerns about Russia's military escalation in and around Ukraine, while for Russia the disadvantaged situation of Russian-speakers in Estonia always comes up. In the last meeting between Russian foreign minister Lavrov and Estonian foreign minister Liimets in April 2021, the discussion points were exactly these. With regard to Estonian Russian-speakers, Lavrov emphasised that Russia wanted to see Estonia taking concrete steps to improve the situation of its Russian-speaking population, regarding the "large-scale statelessness, discrimination against the Russian-speaking population, plans to eliminate the Russian language from the information and education space in Estonia, politically motivated persecution of people related to Russian-language media outlets and compatriot movement activists, as well as attempts to falsify history" (ERR News 10.04.2021).

The emergence of an Estonian-Russian international border that prevents free movement across the Narva River and introduced a border regime with many restrictions and specific routines has greatly affected the post-Soviet living space and mobilities in Narva (Pfoser 2014, 2015, 2017; Martinez 2018). The international border regime has a clear impact on practical border-crossings, economic activities on both sides, and the continuation of social ties in the former translocally inhabited space that now conforms to the logic of transnational mobility. Yet the unresolved "border question" between Estonia and the Russian state is a reminder every now and then of how political agreements can negatively affect lives that people have built up over many years. And the knowledge of this possibility has a subtle effect on imaginaries of desired and possible futures, necessarily being reflected in the actions people dare to take in the circumstances with regard to modes of dwelling in places they call home.

2.3   Discussion

In this chapter, I outlined how migration and mobility policies rooted in Tsarist Russia and characteristic of different Soviet periods have conditioned how the Soviet-era Russian-speaking population moved to and resettled in Narva. It is also significant that Narva was a war-torn place where material structures had to be built from scratch and migrants could create their own sociocultural fabric without having

to negotiate with an existing population. The Soviet-era Russian-speaking population in Narva has thus been seen not as historically rooted in the place but as evolving as a result of movements subjected to Soviet migration policies.

The change in whose subjects Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans are has in various ways affected how they have been regarded as mobile subjects over time. There has been a curious tendency among Russian-speakers to downplay their agency in choosing Narva as their resettlement destination. As far as I can determine, this reflects the deeply polarised political and popular discussion in post-Soviet Estonia that started immediately after the Soviet fall, in which the legal position of the Soviet-era resettlers, mostly Russian-speaking, began to be worked out. One of the central issues in this heated debate was whether the resettlers should be seen as voluntary migrants, i.e. as having moved to Estonian territory by exercising their own free will, or rather as powerless subjects of the Soviet state who ended up in Estonian territory as a consequence of that state's policies. The interpretation of the situation had no legal consequences, and in fact did not make a difference in practice, but it seemed to be significant morally, and symbolically. It has been notable in post-Soviet Estonia that the discourse around this debate has been adopted, in my view somewhat paradoxically, by Soviet-era migrants themselves to justify their moral position in Estonia.[28]

---

[28] For example, in the collection of Russian-speakers' life stories *Mu kodu on Eestis* (Paklar & Hinrikus 2009), I noted a clear tendency among Russian-speakers to highlight the accidental nature of their ending up in Estonia and in that way to diminish their own agency in the course of their mobility.

3   THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

In this chapter, I will introduce the theoretical underpinnings of this ethnographic study. Anthropology of home is where this research is anchored. First, I focus on the scholarship that can be broadly located under the umbrella of anthropology of home and more narrowly under that of political anthropology of home, especially those accounts that recognise homes as subjects under continuous making and negotiation and as sites of contestation. With a particular interest in theoretical argumentation about what defines the experiences and meanings of migrants' homes, I enter into discussions that see the production of home as historically and politically grounded and as a sensitive field of investigation. I approach homes from a practice rather than narrative perspective. As in contemporary discussions about migrants' homes, existing connections between past and present homes are recognised, and furthermore, the way how past and present homes are practised and envisioned are understood as feeding the imaginations of future homes and belonging.

Secondly, I have drawn inspiration from, and engaged with, texts of anthropology of state and the very recent field of anthropology of hope, two fields that typically go hand in hand. Applying the state and hope prism are a tool for me to examine how home-making, emplacement and mobility are conditioned by specific power structures and how people experience and respond to institutional ordering of their everyday home-making and meaningful dwelling in the world.

Another thread of scholarship that is of interest to me relates to postsocialist and post-Soviet anthropology, with a special emphasis on Soviet and post-Soviet mobilities and transformations. The main task here is to build connections between the notions of uncertainty, emptiness and hopelessness which are all ways to describe the post-Soviet condition.

3.1 Anthropological perspectives of home

3.1.1 Homes and migrants' homes

> Home is an ambiguous and fluid notion. It can be paradoxically approached both as a place-bounded anchor and a spatially open structure that changes over time. It is a meeting place of inhabitants, building, culture, past and present – a multidimensional spatial and temporal intersection. Always stretching beyond the physical borders of home as geographer Doreen Massey writes, home is constructed out of movement, communication and social relations. Moreover, inhabitants constantly leave and return to their homes. In these processes both inhabitants and homes change. (Johansson & Saarikangas 2009, 10)

Home is often a crucial part of people's stories of dwelling, relating and being in the world. Yet as the above depiction of home shows, as a highly complex phenomenon that involves dimensions and relations of many kind, home is challenging to define and examine. In my theorisation of home, I mainly draw from authors that question the idea of rooted home (cf. Malkki 1992; Boccagni, Belloni & Pérez Murcia 2020; Ahmed, Castañeda, Fortier & Sheller 2003; Al-Ali & Koser 2002; Markowitz & Stefansson 2004) and argue for more fluid and flexible perspectives on the production and meaning of home, not only concerning migrants but people in general. To think of homes as being in flux emphasises their processual, transformative nature and encourages a scholar to look beyond the pre-defined formulations of home.

The earlier literature defined home in overtly positive terms with reference to safety, comfort, privacy and continuity (see the comprehensive overviews of the development of the popular conceptualisation of home in Tuedio 2009, 284 and Mallett 2004; also Fox O'Mahony 2012; Lawrence 1995; Rapoport 1995; Blunt & Dowling 2006). In the Western nation-state and middle-class context the idea of home has evolved as an integral part of the ideology and practice of family life, as critically shown by Hareven (1991) and Douglas (1991). "Home as a safe haven" continues to be both a central idea and a proven myth in popular Western discourses of home, which to varying degrees has travelled globally. In contrast, among the critical home scholars, Mary Douglas famously stated that "home starts by bringing some space under control" (1991, 289). The idea of having control in this context

means both agency and a space for personal expression. Reproduction of home, as presented in this critique, is not a private family matter but is inscribed in societal structures – through laws, institutions and everyday life arrangements. Although current anthropological perspectives of home far from idealise homes as "safe abodes", i.e. locations of security, comfort and familiarity, regardless of whether people stay put or move around they still strive for these values, despite often encountering insecurity, struggles and deprivation.

Home is widely understood as a spatial location and as an outcome of practices that exist on multiple scales, including in relation to house and dwelling, sites of sociality, neighbourhood, town, state and translocal/transnational space (Blunt & Dowling 2006). Homes do not exist as separate from social relations and wider societal and power structures. As homes and the making of homes are always tightly intertwined with larger political and economic processes, the practices and meanings surrounding homes can be interpreted only by unlocking what happens in a society and in people's everyday lives at large. This conceptual framework underlines the influence of power relations and political structures, as both historical contingencies and lived realities, on people's experiences of home. My interest in studying home thus lays beyond home as mainly a personal matter, emphasising its intimate, psychological, aesthetic or spiritual aspects. In contrast, I am fascinated by interrogating homes as they are made by "ordinary people" in the constrains of wider societal processes. For example, how politics, social, economic and cultural factors condition where and how homes are made (and not).

Hage (1997) has conceptualised that home is an ideal to which we are socialised, and that most of us try to approximate it in our continuous strive for belonging, to be seen, heard and fulfilled. Although this perspective entails that people inherently and actively work on their individual home-making projects, homes are eventually the outcomes of various negotiations within complex power relations in time and space. According to Hage (1997), the dimensions through which people attempt to create the experience of home – sometimes facilitated by and at other times caught in the obstacles of societal structures – are familiarity, security, sense of community and sense of possibility. To feel at home in a society, no matter how broadly or narrowly defined, we live in is to "have a sense of connection and future there and thus the sense of being emplaced" (Bakewell 2020, 80).

In what respect is studying "migrant's home" different from interrogating the homes of those who stay put? For me, the most important dimension to explore in

this regard is hope – home is where there is hope, as anthropologist Stef Jansen says (2014, 2015). Through the dimension of hope, the notion of home is intrinsically future-oriented. People dwell and engage in practices of making homes with the aspiration that life will continue and, moreover, that things will move forwards and get better. War, invasion, and political and economic disruption give rise to demands for new homes, both through mobility and emplacement. In the hope of better employment and life opportunities, millions of people relocate all over the world. Shifting circumstances routinely demand that people continuously work on engaging with places and building meaningful connections because they have both a natural desire and a practical need to be grounded and feel at home. Migrants come with a set of cultural practices and they work towards making unfamiliar spaces familiar, which involves adapting to challenges and resources that are novel and finding home-making strategies that work. In this way, homes, hopes and mobility become entangled.

If current homes do not appear as locations that can provide security, comfort, familiarity, reproduction and a sense of possibilities (Datta & Brickell 2011), mobility and migration frequently evolve around these very same needs, in the hope of taking control. From another angle, for migrants who resettle, gaining a sense of control in a new space that first appears as unfamiliar and where they might encounter considerable legal, social and cultural barriers, instead of being warmly welcomed, counts as a great achievement that significantly fosters their ability to feel at home in the new destination.

Much of the scholarship on home and migration over the last couple of decades argues against the traditional way of treating home as a place of origin and migration as a process that takes away from home, and suggests that for many migrants home is a destination rather than an origin (Ahmed et al. 2003). In line with this, my interest in home-making tends more towards the processes that take place where migrants settle than towards how they maintain a sense of home in the places they originate from or have previously felt affiliated to. While I recognise the usefulness of translocal perspective in home-making which, according to Stephan-Emmrich & Schröder (2018, 27) helps to "tackle the multiple social realities of mobility, migration, spatial connectedness, and cultural exchange" when people move and seek to maintain their social and cultural ties or capture migrants' "situatedness during mobility" (Brickell & Datta 2011, 3), I do not particularly utilize this analytical lens in my analyses. I do conceptualise migrants' homes in Narva as the product of

practices that may have roots to various places, but multisited ethnography, which enables a deep engagement with and an understanding of processes in two or more places, is not my method of knowledge production. Neither am I interested in what exactly has happened to migrants' sense of home in other places in the network of translocal practice. I am thus disproportionately interested in migrants' "*lived experience of locality*" as Ahmed (1999, 341, italics in original) puts it. After an event of migration and settling into a new place, people need to immerse themselves in a new locality, an already constituted space, and find ways to meaningfully connect with that place. Even though people migrate with their existing sociocultural baggage, an interplay between their habitual ways of being-at-home and the new location will nevertheless come about: "[l]ocality intrudes into the senses: it defines what one smells, hears, touches, feels, remembers" and for a sense of being-at-home in a place of migration to appear, "[t]he subject and space leak into each other, inhabit each other", in an intimate way (ibid.).

Ahmed (1999, 343-345) also opens up a discussion about migrant bodies, the process of estrangement, and the community building aimed at transforming the initial discomfort with the new place into a sense of comfort and familiarity, bringing about "a movement from one register to another". In this, as migrants might share nothing but a desire to belong in a new place, they tend towards "reaching towards other [migrant] bodies" to fill the absence with shared knowledge (ibid.). For Ahmed, migrants' success in creating a community, albeit a contested one, is constituted by the very question: "What can we build from the very fact of our coming together – being thrown together – in this place, having come from other places?" (ibid.). This reconfiguration between being, home and the world, again borrowing from Ahmed (1999, 331), takes place not on an individual level but "through the forming of communities that create multiple identifications through collective acts of remembering in the absence of a shared knowledge or a familiar terrain". These questions regarding homing in Narva are particularly relevant as they force us to ponder whose knowledge and practice the home is built on when migrants move en masse or to places that are supposed to be created anew. This discussion reminds me also to remain mindful of home-making as a longer-term, transitional process in which community-making among those who migrate is likely to come about because of the need to establish a degree of familiarity and a shared space of belonging even if they do not feel fully at home yet.

Many who have explored diasporic formations of home agree that migrants have a need to feel at home in places they have migrated to, irrespective of whether they actually plan to return to the places they came from. Here the concept of "homing desire" originally proposed by Avtar Brah (1996) becomes useful. Fortier (2000, 163), who refers to homing desire in her exploration of belonging among Italians in London, has specified that it is about the desire for home and a universal sense of belonging, being "not so much about the connection with a country as it is about the creation of a sense of place, which is often uttered in terms of 'home'". It is about the desire for home rather than a historical or habitual home. Processes of homing among migrants thus include becoming known and relating to the local, creating habitual and habitable spaces, situating oneself in the midst of social relations, and engaging with and producing collective memory, tradition and ritual. It is from this premise that I observe how Soviet-era Russian-speakers engage with a new place, one that in time comes to signify a hometown to them. What makes this process of homing intriguing is the fact that post-WWII Narva was not a place with an established physical and social structure; rather the old structures had to a large extent been wiped away and it signified a place both of rupture and of endless opportunities.

3.1.2   Migrants, emplacement and social relations

When people migrate, they necessarily change the constellation of their important relationships, both private and institutional, and they need to negotiate their space for, and the quality of, new social relations (Huttunen 2010). These negotiations happen between people, places and power relations. Anthropologists have suggested that the notion of emplacement may be the best fit in seeking to understand how such complex negotiations happen when we prioritise understanding what the process is like for migrants, rather than for the receiving or sending states, for locals who need to learn to live with the migrants, or for other parties who feel affected by migration. Although emplacement as a term resembles belonging in many ways (cf. Huttunen 2010), my understanding is that belonging renders more the process of how individuals enforce connections and create meaning while emplacement captures better the structural lines of power underneath and around the process of

relating to a new place. Jansen and Löfving (2009, 13) have defined emplacement as "the point where subjects' capacities to put themselves and others into place articulate with the power relations that unequally distribute this capacity". By conveying processes that go beyond the capacity of the individual, emplacement points to the need to pay attention to the possible tensions, often politically loaded, that emerge where emplacement happens. In line with Jansen and Löfving (2009), Huttunen (2010, 239) has conceptualised the role of power relations in shaping emplacement as "a process where migrants' own agency intertwines with structuring elements and organizing power relations, i.e. institutional formations". This fits particularly well with analysing people, such as the Russian-speaking Narvans, who have been historically subjugated to Soviet mobility policies that are known for their particularly extensive use of power by the governing state. Furthermore, the earlier process of emplacement in Narva has been later complicated by the politics of post-Soviet Estonia, which does not stand as an independent actor in shaping the realities of Russian-speakers but should be understood as shaping its policies "to respond to changes in the global market place" (ibid., 248).

In the migration context, examining emplacement implies paying attention to social relations and their dynamics of change over time both in places to which people move as well as in those left behind. As individuals rarely engage in mobility independently of their families – even if they move alone – the shifts and changes in family relations and practices brought about by people being physically separated through mobility often have the capacity to reveal in great detail the effects of mobility on people's everyday lives. At the same time, examining the spheres of the intimate and the emotional through family ties and practices reveals much about the strategies and capacities of people in responding to larger social and economic changes. Transnational (Olwig 2007; Bryceson & Vuorela 2002; Matyska 2013) and translocal studies (Assmuth, Hakkarainen, Lulle & Siim 2018; King & Lulle 2016; Lulle 2014) have been illuminating in showing how established family relations embedded in a cultural understanding of "proper families" or "proper family life" (Huttunen 2010, 244) become challenged and negotiated after families' separation, eliciting the need to reinvent social relations. Concomitant with emplacement – and closely tied up with making homes through everyday life practices – gendered, life-course and generational relations are thus set in flux, become more flexible and have to be reinvented as migrants separate from their families and their wider cultural contexts (Telve 2019; Siim 2020). In my argumentation, I do not utilise family as an

analytical tool of meaning-making, but I keep in mind the contemporary conceptualisations of this as increasingly flexible, especially in the lives of those who are exposed to transnational practices.

Soviet specificities are also a reminder that there is a need to consider social relations and their impact on emplacement in experiences of Soviet-era migrants that are broader than the family context. Work collectives and friendships, often closely intertwined and which I will examine in Chapter 7, can be approached as a lens through which to deepen the current understanding of how people moving around in Soviet space experienced emplacement. Similarly, relationships that emerged in ideologically underpinned mainstream enterprises such as the pioneer and komsomol[29] youth activities that were depicted as channels for educating people in "deterritorialized" (Yurchak 2005) Soviet ideas, equality and all-Soviet friendship – and took up a large amount of young Soviet people's time – were played out in the emplacement process on an everyday level.

3.1.3   Home-making as a practice-oriented process

Studying home in its complexity poses a serious challenge to researchers. Jansen (2020, 87), in response to Hage's (1997) portrayal of "home as an ideal" has proposed that ethnographers shall take a consciously practice-based approach to home in order to examine its real applications:

> If we start from the notion that home is an ideal, then we cannot study it empirically because it is not there. We could only study people's representations if it. What we can study, instead, are the things people do, their practises while trying to approximate that ideal. (Jansen 2020, 87)

Home for me is a *lived experience* that emerges from the everyday life of people who inhabit, and actively build social relations in, a place. Homes, whether seen as products of material, affective or imaginative practices, do not emerge but are done. When people move to, settle in and live in places, they do not do "'mere residing', living is an active and creative process" (Saarikangas 2009, 153). And as Jackson (1995, 148) has famously noted, "sense of home is grounded less in a place per se

---

[29] All-Union Communist Party organisations for Soviet young people aged 9 to 14 (pioneers) and 15 to 28 (komsomols).

than in the activity that goes on in a place". My approach to home-making is thus practice-driven and gives plenty of space to agency and creativity irrespective of historical and socioeconomic constraints.

Heidegger (2013 [1971]) has called dwelling the meaning of human being in the world. For him there are two modalities of dwelling: constructing and cultivating. Heidegger's choice to give disproportionate attention to construction activities in dwelling has received much criticism from feminist scholars (see Young 1997) who have underlined that his preference reflects a highly gendered world. In this, "construction is valued as an active and creative establishing of the world, whereas cultivation and preservation are passive aspects of building and dwelling", the former associated with male and the latter with female dwellers (Young 1997, 136-138 cited in Saarikangas 2009, 153). Regardless of this critique, I take both constructing and cultivating as important bodily, mentally and emotionally engaging modes of making homes in both Soviet and post-Soviet Narva, while at the same time consider it particularly telling of the Soviet era, as the time when relating to the new place began and Russian-speakers started to employ various homing practices to create the feeling of home.

Home-makers not only invest a significant amount of time, and emotional and physical energy in processes of home-making, but employ various technologies, techniques and strategies to accommodate to the surrounding realities and to succeed within them (cf. Ponniah 2020). Various techniques of control and discipline and strategies of negotiation and resistance can be involved in working towards local livelihood strategies that bring a sense of home. For instance, food, art, language and rituals can bind people to places and forge affective bonds between them. For migrants, establishing habitual routines and aligning with the rhythms of the spaces in which they dwell constitutes an essential part of practising homes, enabling them to eventually say that they feel culturally at home. According to Ehn and Löfgren (2009, 100), "[t]he word 'routine' is actually the diminutive of route, the making of small paths in everyday lives". Furthermore, mundane routine activities are often meaningfully bound up with the politics and affect of everyday life and when they become ruptured they may have a transformative impact on the sense of home too.

Hage (1997) describes the process of transforming places into homes in terms of home-building, which in essence is a similar process to construction. Given the time, effort and dedication it takes, the making of homes can involve serious physical and emotional labour. Ahmed et al. (2003) again point to the temporal aspects of home-

making. They consider "being at home" and "the work of home-building" as intimately bound up with an idea of home that is temporally linked to the past and the future. When people are in the process of making homes, they are involved in "*creating* both pasts and futures through inhabiting the grounds of the present" (ibid., 9, italics in original). Without engaging deeper with sociotemporal analysis, I see the sociotemporal aspects of making homes as important in so far as recognising that past, present and future are interlinked. And when people hope for certain futures, these always have their underpinnings in how the past and the present have been experienced.

Furthermore, the making of homes is an ongoing process, in which homes are always being made and remade, in other words oriented to production and reproduction, as grounds and conditions change. If homes are in a process of change as the context changes, naturally the practices of home-making together with the meanings given to them change as well. While at a particular point in time certain home-practices, "home work", can be a labour of love, they can transform into a labour of hate in a different moment (Ahmed et al. 2003, 10). While to one part of a population homing desire can mean "conservative nationalist desires or claims to homelands as historical reparation", for other people "it may be haunted by fear of loss or filled with hope for different, more peaceful and equitable futures" (ibid.).

3.1.4   Political and emotional aspects of home-making

For those who move, the process of making homes brings about various negotiations, contestations and conflicts, in relation not only to the cultural space they need to relate to in novel ways but also to the political and economic structures in which their home-making takes place. The more recent scholarly practice is to conceptualise home as a highly contested subject of study. Homes are sites of negotiation, ambiguity, controversy and struggle (Jansen & Löfving 2009; Ahmed et al. 2003; Stepputat 2009; Huttunen 2009). To use Karen Fog Olwig's (1998, 230-231) words, "[h]omes […] demarcate relations of inclusion and exclusion, which reflect structures of power beyond the domain of those searching for identity". When homes comprise relations of power and are understood as collective products that are not pre-given but can be negotiated, they easily become sites of power

struggles over rights and obligations related to valued resources. Including and excluding and enabling and restricting in relation to home-making take place along ethnicity, class and gender lines and at their intersections. Some forms of home-making by certain groups always depart from the "socially desirable forms" of being, dwelling and belonging in the world, whereby certain groups' and individuals' rights to define their own idea of home and practise it as they wish become violated (ibid.; see also Johansson & Saarikangas 2009).

The controversial contexts in which negotiations over home usually occur are always emotionally charged and are linked to a wide range of emotions, whether the home-making is viewed in relation to political and economic processes or through the lens of personal relations. The affective turn in the research on migration and homes has underlined the relational aspect of emotions, one that draws attention to "affective economies" (Ahmed 2003) or "emotional economy" (Svašek 2006; Christie, Smith & Munro 2008). This relational approach reminds us that emotions are not simply irrational randomly emanating sentiments "out there" or "in here", loosely connected to wider political and economic contexts (Ahmed 2014, 7). Rather, emotions are always produced in the encounter with a specific context or actor and are triggered, reinforced and reproduced within similar connections. According to Ahmed (2003, 386) migrants as subjects feel individually but what they feel is a reminder of a bodily experience of "being-in-the-world". Emotions should thus be considered as bodily processes that emerge and develop in relation to time and space, as part of the social, economic and political structures. Although understanding how emotions operate in changing political and economic contexts is important, I choose to focus on the practice of home-making and to describe what people do in their everyday life situations that elicits strong feelings rather than to take emotions as an analytical departure from home-making.

This highlighting of the connections between emotions and home also points to a number of aspects that arise from translocal home-making practices. Migrants' life-worlds and concerns are rarely directed solely towards their places of settlement; rather, "'homes' always involve encounters between those who stay, those who arrive and those who leave… There is movement and dislocation within the very forming of homes as complex and contingent spaces of inhabitance" (Ahmed 1999, 340). And as noted by Olwig (1998, 231), meanings and practices of homes evolve "in dialogue with significant others" and one must somehow "deal with homes that are also credible to others". In this way, what home is to a migrant is an interplay

between various people, relationships and places along migrants' life trajectories. According to Smith (2001, 107), the negotiations that happen may involve "differently situated, and at times antagonistically related social actors, some of whose networks are locally bound, others whose social relations and understandings span entire regions and transcend national boundaries".

In the early 1990s, anthropology underwent a discursive turn, whereby the fixity of place and people's forms of attachment to place started to be questioned; anthropologists began to focus on the constructedness of the field, the places and the human relationships they worked with, and to look for alternative ways of working, methods that would not necessarily root people in places (Malkki 1992; Appadurai 1996; Gupta & Ferguson 1997; Olwig & Hastrup 1997). As a result, places increasingly came to be seen as fluid and unbounded, and the ways in which people engaged with them came to express fluctuation and contestedness.

Despite the theoretical and methodological possibilities that have opened up for discussing people's experiences with places and displacement in much less rigid and more variegated ways, including giving space to arguing for a sense of unrootedness in places, those who experience migration may actually have a strong need to find ways to attach to places, demonstrate their belongingness and claim their rights to do so. Not only is it human nature to pursue being-in-place in the world, in Heidegger's words (2013 [1971]), but the multiplicity of forms in which migrants meaningfully engage with places are needed in order to respond to states and those in power who continue to use claims related to assumptions about migrants' insufficient attachment to places as a political tool with which to exercise power over migrants.

3.2   Everyday encounters with and hopes for the state

3.2.1   State and the everyday

When sense of home and prospects for future homes are discussed in Narva, it quickly becomes evident that there is considerable tension with regard to the state. It appears that how people can practise homes has much to do with the state. In this

thesis, as I prefer a social and intimately engaging approach to home-making, I do not aim to study the state itself. My take on anthropology of state is rather light, with the primary aim of briefly conceptualising the state as socially and culturally constituted (Sharma & Gupta 2006, 6). The cultural constitution of the state appears in "how people perceive the state, how their understandings are shaped by their particular locations and intimate and embodied encounters with state processes and officials, and how the state manifests itself in their lives" (ibid., 11). I am thus interested in the state on the level of everyday life, in how people engage with it in their mundane practices and in their views on how it participates in the process of their home-making, in both enabling and hindering ways. The whole influence and substance of the state is not easy for people to grasp until they encounter state regulations, routines and repetitive procedures through their own daily encounters. Through the sphere of everyday practice, through the "*banal* practices of bureaucracies", people learn something about the state (ibid., italics in original). In post-Soviet Narva the state made itself visible in its newly established requirements for visas and its border control procedures; in its passport policy and its strict citizenship rules; in imposing fines on state officials and teachers who did not speak Estonian, the state language; and on the streets and in shops, where signs and product information needed to be in Estonian despite the population being overwhelmingly Russian-speaking. Through such "micropolitics of everyday state-making" (Hansen & Stepputat 2001) people come to experience what the state is like and how it feels.

Calling a place home often points to structures of belonging that are tied into the contemporary understanding of what a nation-state is. Nation-states often selectively choose agendas – "political projects of belonging" in Yuval-Davis' (2006) terms – that differentiate in profound ways subjects that are differently located in a society. Through specific politics of citizenship, language, nationalism and the like they choose nation-state subjects whose interests they represent, and in that way define the national cores, while leaving other groups out. Such state-steered projects have the capacity to powerfully and strategically enhance the homeliness of some groups while denying homes to others.

As I have mentioned, people in Narva express their relationship with the state in a highly tense manner. This tension is expressed as a never-ending complaint about the doings and omissions of the state, yet it often remains unclear who the state is. The embodiment of the state can shift from very concrete political figures in the

present or from the past to the ruling government, particular state offices, particular policies, local political games, the idea of corruption to the ethnic Estonians as the dominant group in the contemporary state. In addition, as Mitchell (2006, 169) has argued, the state "appears to exist simultaneously as material force and as ideological construct. It seems both real and illusory". To be able to analytically grasp how the state relates to Narvans' ability to make homes in the town, I identify the connection between home, state and hope. This connection, as I anthropologically frame it, is about the ways in which people imagine the state's role in instilling them with hope for an existing future in the locations in which they have decided to dwell.

In this, I approach state through its relation to affect, hope being one example of this, alongside fear, despair, desire, hatred and pride, among others. I consider state as an entity that is able to elicit powerful emotions (Thiranagama & Kelly 2010; Navaro-Yashin 2002). As Laszczkowski and Reeves (2017, 7) have emphasised, the relationship between the state and affect is not consequential in the way that affect is an outcome of state practice, but is "constitutive of the political itself". Jansen (2014, 2015) has conceptualised state as a locus of affective investment. When people affectively engage with the state, they hope *for* the state as well as *against* it (ibid.) This reflects the highly controversial relationship that forms in lasting everyday encounters with the state, accompanied by the consideration that, no matter how antagonistic the state may seem, living without it is not possible – the lack of a way out means that one needs to live with it (Aretxaga 2003). As long as the state is seen as "a locus of redistributive power", there is a sense of anticipation that it could fix experienced injustices if only it wanted to (Laszczkowski & Reeves 2017, 7). In this sense, the role of the state is to instil hope for a better, more just and more stable future, or sometimes just for order and a "normal" life (Greenberg 2011; Jansen 2014). Laszczkowski and Reeves (2017, 7) see "hope as just one of the many affective registers that animate the 'state'", but I consider it to be the most central one in the interplay between the state and a sense of home in Narva.

3.2.2   State and hope

Whereas the relationship between home and hope (and mobility) can be analysed as an intimate ongoing process between an individual, place(s) and personal

endeavours, narratives of hope in relation to homes entail future-oriented aspirations and dreams, which are not free-floating but are always grounded in historically specific social realities. People dream and hope within the constraints of what is socially possible, not the utopian or the supernatural.

My analysis of hope among Soviet-era Russian-speakers in Narva deeply grapples with the state. There are two ways in which the state is intertwined with people's hopes and as such it has an important influence on how people can make homes in the town. One of these is what Arjun Appadurai (2004, 2013) has called individuals' and collectives' "capacities to aspire", which are socially patterned and culturally specific. The other can be understood through Ghassan Hage's (2003) conceptualisation of "societal hope" and in particular the state's role as a distributor of "societal hope" to its subjects.

Hage (2003, 9-18) views hope as a social category and state as a producer and distributor of "societal hope". Importantly, the state produces and distributes hope unevenly to different categories of its subjects, including "a deeply uneven distribution of the ability to give meaning to life and to have one's worth as a human being recognized" (Kleist & Jansen 2016, 382). As social hope is related to states, it is also linked to specific places and groups. "Societal hope" is a specific form of social hope, made up of "collective visions of 'meaningful life and dignified social life' within a given society" (Hage 2003, 15 cited in Kleist & Jansen 2016, 382). Hage (2003, 13, italics in original) has also noted that "in capitalism societal hope works through sustaining an idea of the ability to maintain an *experience* of the *possibility* of upward social mobility", whether such mobility is likely to happen or not. Consequentially, "the production, distribution and differentiation of societal hope is fundamentally a political phenomenon, constituting a way of government, of 'shaping the desires and aspirations of subjects through hope'" (Turner 2015, 177 cited in Kleist & Jansen 2016, 382).

Within this discussion, Hage has also posited the idea of "stuckedness", which appears as the result of states' manipulation of their subjects' hopes. He argues that "dominant notions of hope evolve around the sense that one is 'going somewhere' in life, yet a large section of the population experiences entrapment of 'stuckedness'" (Hage 2009, 97 cited in Kleist & Jansen 2016, 382). Also, as Kleist and Jansen (2016, 383) state, "politicians are 'saving' societal hope" for their subjects, the citizens of nation-states, by instilling in them the belief that possible futures in the specific nation-states are reserved for them and not newcomers.

As already argued, hopes are not solely in individual use as imaginings of one's own and collective futures, but are keenly and strategically employed by states as a tool of control and mass mobilisation. In the Soviet context, the state focused on distributing certain kinds of hope, linked to the ideas of modernisation, growth, solidarity and emancipation. Those hopes would bring about a happy future for the whole of society as opposed to in capitalist countries where happy futures, according to socialists, were reserved only for those who were historically better positioned, having more access to a society's resources. I will analyse in this thesis how these Soviet hopes took on a concrete shape in the lives of Russian-speaking Narvans through processes of mobility and settling. I will look at how the hopes guided "ordinary people's" mobile life trajectories and how other kinds of hope made them look for strategies that would better enable them to dwell in Narva rather than move on to other places. This examination also brings me to the consideration that hopes are temporally dependent on people's life-courses; organising one's life around certain kinds of hope is possible and reasonable at specific times. As people age, hopes change their form. Similarly, even the Soviet state, with its strong hold over its citizens' thoughts and acts, needed to leave some space for their capacity to aspire and to manoeuvre through their lives and changing life circumstances, either dramatic or mundane. When I observe how my interlocutors talk about their home-making in Narva, I am thus interested in their "plans, hopes, goals, targets…, wants, needs, expectations, calculation" on a very mundane level, and I take these narrations as a way to examine the future as a historically grounded "cultural fact" (Appadurai 2004, 60-67; 2013).

Hope has generally been identified as a good thing, something that has the capacity to take life forwards even in the most miserable of situations. It is both future-oriented and activating. Most conceptualisations of hope mention its anticipatory dimension. We hope that something will happen in the future. Sliwinski (2016, 437) has proposed that "when hope signifies anticipation, it is a valuative capacity, because it ascribes worth to something into which one projects one's mental energies; and second, that this capacity can bring values to the world". Other authors have been interested in whether hope is a category of action or not. Giraud has claimed that "hope is a motivational structure, a 'good without substance but that of its inner dynamic'", indicating that hope is a capacity (2007, 25 cited in Sliwinski 2016, 436-437). For Sliwinski (2016, 432) characteristic of hope is its "creative capacity to imagine and actualize desired futures" and that "it reveals active

(rather than passive) attribute[s]". Appadurai (2013, 127) explains hope as a "force that converts the passive condition of 'waiting for' to the active condition of 'waiting to'", in that, if the state does not make promises or raise hopes of tangible actions that will bring a better life, it is nearly impossible for subjects to enter the "waiting to" modality of hoping. Scrutinising these aspects of hoping and of relating to the state in Narva also has the potential to gain deeper insights about how home-making in the town has changed over time and the greater values and meanings that are involved.

Much of the anthropological engagement with the notion of hope stems from the realisation that our times are characterised by an increasing sense of global uncertainty. And yet, even if people know that uncertainty is a general condition, their own precariousness is a very down-to-earth feeling, located sociotemporally in specific events, in *the* moments, that are easy to spot and remember. Kleist and Jansen (2016) have proposed a notion of "temporal reasonings" through which to understand how the evaluation of historical moments is always as a result of navigation between past, present and future. The particular relationship between the state and hope in a specific context becomes fully understandable only when we turn to consider these engagements between hope and state in a way in which the past, the present and the anticipated future are examined together.

3.3   Anthropology of Soviet life-worlds and postsocialist/post-Soviet transformation

3.3.1   Postsocialist, post-Soviet and Soviet subjectivities in home-making

Post-Soviet homes are homes like any others. And yet as homes that are historically conditioned and produced within political contexts, social systems and economic flows of a special kind they are sites of unique experiences that need to be disentangled through a deep engagement with the Soviet, the transitional and the post-Soviet. While postsocialist lives are today deeply interwoven with global, neoliberal structures associated with the Western world, and the postsocialist states are home to many common experiences, the considerable differences in their

historical and cultural legacies, the decisions of their political leaders and, last but not least, their different potential to contribute to global economies, make lived experiences in this space rather diverse, when comparing not only the postsocialist and the post-Soviet world, but individual states, regions and populations. Nevertheless, as Stenning and Hörschelmann (2008) claim, postsocialism continues to be a highly relevant conceptual framework, comparable, for example, with the postcolonial one, because the knowledge that arises from a careful examination of the evolvement, dynamics and effects of various inequalities, disparities and marginalisations in different postsocialist contexts not only provides interesting empirical case studies with which to prove known theories of primarily Anglo-American and British scholarship, but importantly contributes to and challenges those theorisations. If non-Western or postsocialist accounts are not taken seriously, we "continue to construct the south and deindustrialized places in the north as the passive, victimized, or invisible "other" to global spaces and processes" (Nagar, Lawson, McDowell & Hanson 2002).

Fehérváry (2013) has proposed that the inclusion of the postsocialist world in the Western should not be seen simply as an extension of the existing rules and processes of the democratic, the neoliberal and the global; the effect has been a two-way street. What we experience, she says, is part of "a wider shift to neoliberal policies and rising corporate power that were fortified ideologically by the fall of socialism and economically by the opening of formerly socialist consumer and labour markets" (ibid., 21). The opening up of the world, especially after the EU enlargement, has dramatically changed social life in many postsocialist countries, and we see today more and more visible signs in material landscapes and in social relationships of how neoliberal capitalism continues to build marginalities, distinctions and ruptures despite the whole of the Western world being "connected" (Gille 2010; Dzenovska 2018, 2020; King & Lulle 2016; Annist 2017, 2015). Many ethnographic accounts from different postsocialist locations unlock those experiences, both common to postsocialism and yet always specific (Wanner 1998; Berdahl, Bunzl & Lampland 2000; Burawoy & Verdery 1999; Hann, Humphrey & Verdery 2002; Humphrey & Mandel 2002; Humphrey 2002; Dunn 2008; Berdahl & Bunzl 2009; Polese, Morris, Pawlusz & Seliverstova 2017). Mainly through engaging with the everyday lives of "ordinary people", anthropologists have over the years provided deep insights into how people in this large region have managed in rapidly changing and highly precarious political and economic conditions, struggled and found strategies for

survival, resisted and hoped for their unknown futures, mourned and renegotiated their socialist past, ideals and identities, and obtained new identities and ways of belonging.

I utilise both notions, the postsocialist and the post-Soviet. By postsocialism I primarily refer to common discourses that emerge from everyday realities, experiences and sensibilities underpinned by the prolonged conditions of general uncertainty that came with the end of socialism, and are often voiced as complaining, and as yearning and longing for stability and normalcy. The shapes and shades of these experiences vary from one context to another but they are commonly recognisable as the lived experiences of postsocialist subjects, and as such are part of their postsocialist subjectivity. These subjectivities continue to affect social lives in the region three decades later, are indirectly inscribed in the cultural baggage of those born after socialism, and travel to other locations when people move. In contrast, the post-Soviet subjectivity that I also actively apply refers directly to the first-hand experiences that came with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disentanglement from this political, economic and social space. These experiences have a significant overlap with the postsocialist but should not be taken as the same. As a counterpoint to post-Soviet subjectivity, I also utilise the notion of Soviet subjectivity, which relates to the specific experiences under the Soviet regime, evolving from ideological, moral and material aspects of how the state was organised as well as from the immediate effects of various policies on the daily lives of individuals, families and collectives.

In my view, including these postsocialist and post-Soviet perspectives in my analysis continues to be relevant as long as it helps to reveal aspects of the everyday lives of postsocialist/post-Soviet subjects that would be otherwise treated as local struggles or individual misfortunes rather than as part of the local application of global developments and struggles. In addition, Narva and its inhabitants form an interesting borderline case in which a fusion of postsocialist and post-Soviet subjectivities that tend to be associated primarily with Russia and more recently also with Central Asia emerges. Narva's location exactly on the East-West border, territorially in Estonia and as a model Baltic country discursively more and more excluded from the more problematic post-Soviet and included in the more optimistic and progressive postsocialist, suggests that what describes Estonia should also apply to Narva. And yet the easily observable cultural influence of Russia and the Orient in Russian-speaking Narva drags the imaginings of how things are in Narva more

towards the post-Soviet interpretations – that is, to the more unpredictable, pessimistic and troublesome.

Postsocialism has often been seen as a phenomenon that ended the abnormal temporary divide that the socialist countries built between themselves and the democratic world. Lagerspetz (1999 cited in Müller 2019, 10) has argued that "[p]ostsocialism is structured around the narrative of return – a return to normality, modernity and Europ[e]". This view of rupture implies, first, that if socialism had not happened the former socialist countries would now be naturally incorporated into the Western world and, second, that since it did happen the countries are prone to returning to the West where they naturally belong. The Estonian-speaking Estonia defined itself as one of the most, if not *the* most, Western republic in the former Soviet Union; its people saw themselves as intrinsically belonging to Europe, and thus "return to Europe" was quickly identified as normal for them while the Soviet past was marked as "abnormal" (see Rausing 1998; Annist 2011). A return to a temporarily lost "westernness" cannot, however, be the definition of normalcy among Russian-speakers who resettled in Estonia during Soviet times. Instead it poses a serious dilemma among them. Although they had the desire to experience Soviet westernness in Soviet Estonia, this does not mean that they could easily construct their natural belongingness in the European West in the same way as Estonians. Besides, the return to Europe narrative implies condemning and permanently neglecting the Soviet past and its continuities and making no compromise with contemporary Russian influences, thus forcing people to choose sides. This puts Soviet-era Russian-speakers in Estonia in a perplexing situation. It also indicates that the normalcy discourse among Russian-speakers needs more scrutiny than simply extending the findings of postsocialist or Post-Soviet Russia to this population. It deserves some analyses thus how and on what conditions can the Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans adopt the idea of "return to Europe" and how do they reformulate their sense of home and belonging in Estonia, rhetorically and practically. Similarly, it should be considered, what needs to be neglected and to what kind of sense of home do such negotiations lead if some parts of their former belonging need to be rejected. It is from this subject-position that the examination of everyday lives and "ordinary people's" narratives offers interesting and potentially surprising outcomes with regard to how homes are made in these post-Soviet settings.

The much discussed "normalcy" discourse in socialist and postsocialist context implies also other aspects apart from coming to terms with the idea of "return to Europe". Many authors have stressed the desire of postsocialist subjects to live up to Western ideals specifically in relation to consumption and economic wellbeing. Fehérváry (2002, 371) notes that the "realm of the possible" has expanded dramatically in the perceptions of postsocialist subjects and similarly the "internalised expectations of living a 'normal life'". This is clearly observable in material culture: in objects, consumer goods and built environments and in how the practices, values and subjectivities related to material changes. Various postsocialist anthropologists have found that normalcy related to material culture came to represent things that were out of reach for much of the population in postsocialist societies, and was therefore linked to the ideational world and represented frustration with everyday realities (Fehérváry 2002; Galbraith 2003; in the Estonian context, Rausing 1998; Keller 2005).

Finally, and most importantly, normalcy has been associated with the relationship between the citizen and the state. Accounts from former Yugoslavian contexts in particular (Jansen 2007, 2009, 2014, 2015; Greenberg 2011) have delivered a profound understanding of how this relationship has been viewed by "ordinary people". Noting the loss of normalcy that Serbians felt regarding the crisis-ridden Serbian state, Greenberg (2011) points out that this meant "a loss of a particular understanding of agency, in which there is a correspondence between one's desires, the effects one's actions have in the world, and the ability to manage the reception of those actions by others". When there is a loss of normalcy, it is replaced by an abnormalcy discourse that describes a society without rules or value systems. Normal life entails predictability and stability, being able to plan ahead, make commitments and keep promises. Also, normalcy is the ability to translate goals into actions. As Greenberg (2011, 94) notes, "normalcy talk typically began with references to consumption or lifestyle but often shifted to a language of moral decay, corruption, and pathology", thus touching a deeper sense of human dignity and being, of having "a place in the world" (cf. Jansen 2009, 827). When people address the lack of normalcy that surrounds their everyday lives, they express a desire for a state that works. They wish that the state would "put in place social and economic conditions that might help them feel in control of their lives" (Greenberg 2011, 97).

People's experienced disappointment at not being able to live up to Western standards of living in their private life does not reflect an evaluation of the present

situation. Wedel (1986, 151) was the first to propose that the common way in which Poles engaged in the discourse of "the normal life" reflected their understanding of "how things should be" rather than how things were. Thereafter, analysis of "normalcy" and "normal life" in socialist and postsocialist contexts has typically entailed an ideational and highly imaginary perspective that draws from the past, present and future simultaneously. Through this temporal dimension, normalcy discourses become an inextricable part of hoping and of feeling at home, and importantly, the responsibility for the desired homeliness to realise is placed on a state and not an individual. While normality is not the main lens of my analysis, it is an important and meaningful component of the social texture of my research site, and it is especially helpful in understanding the disappointments that accompanied the postsocialist period.

3.3.2 Understanding post-Soviet uncertainties and hopelessness

The prolific scholarship of Stef Jansen, an anthropologist who has studied the interconnections between home, hope and state in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, has been particularly influential in my analysis of the situation in Narva. Although the Bosnian war returnees – Jansen's main area of interest – certainly hold a different positionality to the phenomena of displacement and emplacement compared with Soviet-era Russian-speakers, the common ground related to their life experiences under socialism and postsocialism is vast. By explaining the controversies surrounding the individual and familial paths that were taken and the decision-making that occurred when considering a return to their post-war homes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jansen skilfully demonstrates how it was not only the pain, loss and suffering related to the war itself that left the refugees and returnees confused. Much of Jansen's work (2007, 2015) demonstrates how this confusion was related to the "forced transition from socialism to neo-liberal capitalism" that was marked by extreme uncertainty regarding what was to come and how to survive in this new kind of society. And here the role of the state appears, as mediator of this transition from one societal arrangement to another. In his reasoning about the role and extent of uncertainty in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovinian society, Jansen (2007, 24) makes use of Bauman's (1999, 17) adoption of Freud's term *Unsicherheit*, which identifies

three dimensions of the term: "[i]nsecurity (what one has learned and achieved may not remain valid and valuable), uncertainty (what one knows may not be a sufficient basis to make decisions), and unsafety (one may be subject to physical harm)". Jansen (2007, 24) continues his interpretation of Bauman by stating that "[u]nder neo-liberalism, the state is increasingly reluctant to even pretend that it deals with the first two and effectively privatizes them, thus reducing all anxieties of *Unsicherheit* to safety issues only". Jansen found this tendency of the state to ignore its citizens' need for different modes of certainty to be clearly observable in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and I saw it appearing as one of the core issues in Narva too. As such, locatable in Russian-speaking Narvans' many concerns and yearnings relating to their town's future, it deserves closer examination in this thesis. In the same discussion, Jansen talks about home as a "cool ground" that entails the possibility to deal with everyday life's practicalities in one's home in a way that ensures that the future of those for whom one is responsible is safeguarded. For home to be a "cool ground" it needs to serve as "a base where insecurity and uncertainty can be reduced and confronted" (Bauman 1999, 17 and Hage 1997, 102ff. cited in Jansen 2007, 26). In Bosnia-Herzegovina this was not feasible for many, especially for members of the younger generations. After the war, as Jansen (2007, 26) notes, many people were "worse off than they had been before, and perhaps even more important, worse off than they had ever imagined they would be". This perspective denotes more than a rupture in history; it symbolises the failure of everything one has believed in and worked for during an entire lifetime.

Dace Dzenovska (2014, 2018, 2020) has employed the notion of "emptiness" to explain the sense of increasing hopelessness in post-Soviet rural Latvia. The dramatically emptying Latvian-Russian rural borderland that appears in her 2010-2012 fieldwork has many similarities with the life circumstances and moods in Narva in 2010-2011. Large numbers of people emigrated from this Latvian countryside, leaving their houses empty, kindergartens and schools without children, businesses closed and services non-operational; the demise in both the material world and the social life is easy to grasp. The visible emptiness, however, conveys the huge disappointment that has arrived in place of the expected wellbeing after the dismantling of socialism. The emptiness captures this massive disappointment with global capitalism and with a state that offers it as the only alternative to the failure of socialist economics (Dzenovska 2020, 17). In the early 1990s people yielded relatively quickly to these changes in the countryside because, in spite of the material

and economic demise and the harshness of economic survival (Dzenovska 2014), with the state talking the people into "widespread acceptance of neoliberal economic policies" (Dzenovska 2020, 17), the transformation was seen as a new beginning, filled with hope and the promise of a better, more abundant life. Two decades later, none of this had actually materialised and the initial hopes had been replaced by widespread strategies of leaving the Latvian countryside because of the lack of any perceivable possibility that the situation would get any better. As Dzenovska (2018, 19) concludes, "rather than the expected well-being, post-Soviet capitalism, exacerbated by the global financial crisis, had created a palpable sense of emptiness". Annist (2017) has analysed similar tendencies in the Estonian countryside, where people have massively opted out of the hopelessness by migrating, primarily to Finland but also elsewhere. She has explained this emptying not so much as the result of a lack of economic means but as a deprivation of symbolic capital in the margins of society. When running out of symbolic capital, which in Bourdieusian terms consists of self-esteem and respectability, people need to find strategies of recovering it. Importantly, for Annist this situation of deprivation of symbolic capital is the result of a long-term process in which the state is responsible for degrading the value of certain places/regions by failing to pay attention to them, and letting things go. Although Narva, in contrast to the sites Dzenovska and Annist have analysed, is an urban place with a different infrastructure, socialities and ethnocultural patterns, there are similar processes of marginalisation and a growing realisation of a place transforming into a periphery instilled with a sense of despair. The moods in Narva reverberate in Dzenovska's (2020, 19) conclusion that the local inhabitants talk about how their "state amounted to leading an existence rather than living a life". As with Dzenovska's informants, my interlocutors in Narva had to combine a variety of subsistence strategies in order to stay put, and there was a general projection towards even more miserable futures, reflected in the commonly used phrase "we are slowly dying out". Importantly, in Narva there was another layer that contributed to the sense of hopelessness, which was related to the shared understanding and disappointment that the degradation that was happening in the town was intentionally directed towards Russian-speakers per se. This belief hinted at the notion that, had Narva been inhabited by Estonian-speakers at the time the Soviet Union was dissolved, the town would have received a totally different treatment and kind of attention from the Estonian state. In this way, they saw the politics of the Estonian authorities as directed against their interests, not against Narva as a place.

Dzenovska's (2020, 19-20) conclusion with regard to the forces responsible for emptiness in postsocialist spaces, closely linked with the recurrent question, "Who is guilty?", raised by the Soviet-era Russian-speakers in Narva, highlights the lasting necessity to scrutinise the very specific context of those postsocialist legacies that have not disappeared from anywhere.

There is a systematic overlooking taking place, as we are reminded by Dzenovska (2020, 19-20), when development specialists and policy analysts view the dramatic economic and social transformations in the former socialist bloc as a logical result of what happened in "the systemic endings" of Soviet modernity – a model of modernity that was meant to end up in failure – something that inevitably had to happen in order for something new to start. There is a gap in the understanding of these specialists, however, because people who lived through socialism do not necessarily see Soviet modernity in these same terms. Some former Soviet citizens, of course, idealise things in retrospect, believing that socialism could have survived and that it was the fault of capitalism that it ended. Most ethnographic accounts, however, reveal that Soviet modernity enriched people's lived lives considerably and thus there is no point in evaluating whether lives could have been better under another kind of regime. A second, much more serious and influential, gap relates to the continuous scrutiny of how postsocialist spaces, filled with poverty and the flexibility to adopt new practices, have shaped the neoliberal world order. I see these discussions as very important, and I engage with postsocialist accounts in this respect when working through my field site. Thanks to its very specific historical legacies, population pattern and sociocultural fabric, a single town like Narva can hold a different orientation towards European integration, and the meaning given to contemporary modernity, growth and futures there may entail different views compared with other, even nearby, places where the contexts and historical undercurrents are different.

4   METHODOLOGY: "ETHNOGRAPHY THROUGH THICK AND THIN"

4.1   Defining the field and entering it through life-story interviews

When, in the autumn of 2009, I set out to do research on Russian-speakers' home-making in Narva, I could only imagine understanding their experiences and viewpoints thoroughly enough if I moved temporarily to the town. I planned to move there for about a year and my first lengthy presence in the field lasted for about 10 months, between August 2010 and June 2011. This first field trip was followed by several short visits, both social visits for catching up with friends and relatives and academic visits with the aim of attending conferences and seminars. I kept up with life in Narva and with what was changing in its political and economic life but I did not interact with my interlocutors during the years that followed. In November 2018, however, I spent a week in the town doing dedicated fieldwork that included contacting several of my interlocutors from the first fieldwork period and catching up with their lives and their views on how things had changed or remained the same between 2011 and 2018. I have not visited Narva since 2018, but I keep myself up to date with recent developments in the town's political and economic life by following Estonian media broadcasts and the social media highlights of my Narvan social network while staying physically abroad.

Given that my existing personal relationship with and my family connections to Narva mainly entailed the Estonian minority, it was crucial to me at the start of my research to try to look at the town anew and enter it on my own, as if I were a stranger – as far as possible, of course, in the circumstances. I decided not to stay with my relatives and generally not to spend much time with them. Instead, I rented an apartment on my own, and kept away from my kin. At the beginning, I even decided to avoid the Estonian minority in Narva in general and refused to ask them to pave the way for me to the town's social structures. Likewise, I did not at first contact Tartu University Narva College or any other educational institution or NGO to get my foot in the door and seek help in building networks for my research, even

though this seems to be the usual way of doing things nowadays when anthropologists enter their fieldwork sites. My previous observation was that people in these minority Estonian networks, regarded by me as the Estonian elite in the Narvan context, tend to talk and act from a "knower" position with regard to Russian-speakers in Narva, a position that entails a degree of blindness and superiority by default (I will shed more light on this premise and its validity in Chapter 8). Therefore, I was hesitant to let such people in my existing or easy-to-establish networks mediate my research, as this could have sent my research agenda off in directions I did not necessarily want it to go. I needed to maintain the right to direct my research myself and the space in which to do this. Since ethnography is embodied (Cerwonka & Malkki 2007), I simply trusted my gut feeling that it was likely that the Estonian elite minority I have just described would be surrounded by Russian-speakers who agreed with their own worldview, therefore naturally giving me access to limited perspectives only. I eventually established connections with members of the Estonian minority and also utilised their contacts, but only during a later stage of my study when I felt that I already stood strongly on my own two feet in the town and was able to see where my research was leading me and what was important. So, in short, there could have been faster and easier access to potential informants but my choice was to do things differently. This practice reflects both some of the challenges faced by an ethnographer who enters the field as an "insider" in some respects and my own ways of overcoming this limitation.

The majority of Russian-speakers in Narva are no longer resettlers but people who were born in the town. Since I had limited my definition of the people whose experiences I was interested in to those who had been born outside Soviet Estonian territory and had migrated to Narva, it would have been difficult to pinpoint the correct people without they themselves identifying whether they qualified or not. To achieve this, I needed a platform from which to talk about some of the details of my research and to invite Russian-speaking Narvans to voluntarily participate in it. I chose the life-story interview as the entrance method to gather in-depth data about Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans. The life-story interview is an easily intelligible low-threshold method that enables a wide audience to independently grasp what participation entails, and it allows participants a great deal of agency to choose the life details they want to share (Atkinson 1998, 25-26) while leaving enough flexibility for the researcher to direct the interview towards themes they intuitively find more insightful during the interview itself. In the process of conducting life-story

interviews, I also found practical value in the chronological narrative that people naturally tend to choose to structure their stories. Since I was doing most of the interviews in Russian, which is not my native language[30], this format gave me tools with which to better structure and contextualise my informants' life-journeys, their mobile trajectories, and the historical development of both the Soviet space and Narva as a particular place within it.

With the life-story interview in mind as a method, I began to look for an opportunity to gain the attention of a wider audience. With the help of my well-networked Narvan cousin, I quickly managed to publish an article in Russian in a local newspaper, in which I talked about myself as a researcher and about my research interest in Narva and Narvans. In the article, I shared my contact details and invited Narvans to contact me to share their stories of migration and homing in the town. I reached my first informants thanks to this article. Later I was told several times an almost anecdotal story that the picture of me that was published along with the article gave the impression of a benevolent young person – a detail that encouraged people to reach out to me and tell their stories. After this, again thanks to my cousin's contacts, I was invited to a local radio station to talk about my ongoing research on a daily programme. Despite my difficulty in speaking Russian in public, I managed to talk about my study, in Russian, and this eventually produced a significant number of contacts, mostly elderly people. The very fact that people reached out to me on their own initiative told me two things: first, that they felt they had a story to share and, second, that I had managed to establish enough trust with them for them to have the courage to talk to me.

I met everyone who reached out to me after either the article or the radio interview and conducted life-story interviews with them. Typically interviews took place at my informants' homes, in a cosy homely atmosphere, and lasted between 1.5 and 4.5 hours. It was somewhat surprising to me that nearly everyone felt confident enough to invite me immediately into their homes. I was truly grateful for their trust, because visiting homes and talking to Narvans in their own environments

---

[30] I had learnt Russian as my second foreign language at school and felt generally comfortable in a Russian-language environment, especially since I had been surrounded by Russian-speakers when visiting my grandparents and my uncles' families in Narva. However, I had never felt completely at ease speaking Russian – I was far from fluent – and since moving to Finland in 2004 I had not practised the language at all. Upon arriving in my field in Narva my Russian was rusty, but through intensive speaking practice, and being regularly exposed to many different situations that I had to solve in Russian, my fluency and confidence gradually improved.

both made my informants much more comfortable during the interviews and gave me access to material and aesthetic resources in their homes, which provided me with important clues and facilitated the flow of our conversations. The life-story interviews usually unfolded as rather informal and unstructured conversations in which, from time to time, I tried to direct and deepen our conversations when I found a topic and/or an informant's experience significant. Later on, I utilised the snowballing method among these existing contacts to find more informants. I stopped conducting the interviews when I reached the point of saturation, realising that new interviews no longer elicited information that would significantly enrich or deepen my data.

After a couple of life-story interviews I realised that the mobile life trajectories and family networks of my informants tended to involve many different locations, many of which were unfamiliar to me because of my limited knowledge of the geography of former Soviet space. This led me to implement a routine of presenting a map of Eurasia in each interview situation and asking my informants to mark on it the (most significant) places that came up as they told their stories. These "social maps" considerably helped me to grasp the scale of my informants' sociocultural worlds and to notice connections, and the technique frequently also assisted my informants in recalling events and connections that would have otherwise probably remained hidden. When analysing the data, the maps came in very handy in depicting post-Soviet connections and in pointing to the drastically shrinking homely spaces for most of my informants.

Altogether I conducted 42 life-story interviews with different people, 38 of those were in Russian and four mostly in Estonian. I recorded all but two of the interviews. Three quarters (32) of the interviewees were female and the rest (10) were male. Only six of my informants were under 40 years old, nine were 40-49 years old, six were aged 50-59, eight were 60-69 and 13 were 70-89 years old. Hence, half of the people I interviewed were retired or had only a few years to go before they retired. In the empirical chapters, where I talk about elderly informants, I mean those Russian-speaking Narvans who were at least 60 years old. While the experiences of the "elderly" were not identical and some people in this category stood out as particularly different from the average, I found that such a distinction generally made sense in Narva, in particular given the length of these individuals' Soviet experiences and the stage of their life-course, which placed the focus on different domains of life and future aspirations compared with the younger Narvans. My informants had either

Russian, Ukrainian, Estonian, Belorussian, Kazakh, German, Ingrian, Polish, Udmurt or Mordovian ethnic background, or a mix of some of these, and through marriage and extended family ties had been exposed to people from many more ethnic and national backgrounds. Nearly half had experienced divorce and two thirds were divorced or widowed at the time we met, which had significant implications for their material conditions and everyday life arrangements. In my analysis, I refer to all those I interviewed as "informants" – or "interlocutors", where I considered particularly noteworthy the ethnographic depth of the data related to an individual with whom the collaboration extended far beyond the life-story interview situation – rather than as interviewees, because I want to give credit to their role as co-producers of this research. I recognise that people with whom we work in the field are not just the tellers of narratives that fit with a researcher's predefined research agenda, but active shapers of the framework in which their experiences will be analysed.

To protect the privacy of my informants, I use pseudonyms. I have also anonymised any data that may reveal who the person in question is. For the reader to better navigate the data I provide in my analysis, I generally use the birth year and an indication of the ethnic background of the informant in question or, alternatively, the Soviet republic in which they were born. This is mainly for contextual clarity, because the social and cultural differences in the different republics were remarkable. Places of origin (names of villages or towns) are usually anonymised unless they are metropoles or other large places from which many people who have resettled in Narva came. I mention the actual names of former workplaces if they were large industries, because it is unlikely that someone could be identified on this basis, but smaller industries and professions are also anonymised.

4.2 Moving towards deeper ethnographic fieldwork

I met with some (12) of the Russian-speakers I interviewed, typically the ones with whom I felt more comfortable talking and who had very rich stories to share, on a second, or multiple other, occasions. Some of these follow-up meetings were also recorded, but generally I treated them much more informally, trying to memorise the details and writing field notes only later, while attempting to be fully

present in our conversations and giving space for observations during the interaction. If the life-story interview was not conducted in my informant's home but in their workplace, as sometimes happened, the follow-up meeting was a perfect opportunity to get to know the person in a more relaxed atmosphere and learn about their homing experiences in an ethnographic way.

Being invited to informants' homes opened up many possibilities to sharpen the ethnographic lens, both by simply observing the environments and paying attention to objects, and by finding support from objects in asking inquisitive questions about an individual's personality and family that might have at first felt unrelated to the research topic yet often led to interesting information that opened up new avenues of research. At home, photo albums and *trudovye knizhki* (employment record books) could be shown, which helped in recalling memories related to both kin and colleagues, stories of resettlement and accommodation, and joys, achievements and challenges encountered in life. These homes also contained many other objects related to family and work histories, both locally and translocally, and hobbies, along with photographs of close ones, living and deceased, and items that reflected the self and its connection with the wider world. The homes and the way in which they were organised also revealed important information about an informant's family life and economic situation and how they felt about them. For instance, when Katerina (b. 1964, Russian, a divorced mother of one) presented her tastefully renovated apartment to me, she proudly showed me around and told me about her design choices but resolutely refused to take me into her kitchen, stating that it was ugly and still in need of renovation. When I congratulated her on her excellent interior design taste, she was flattered, and she opened up to explain more about her personality and lifestyle, which eventually led her to tell me in detail about the routines, changes, insecurities and worries related to border-crossing that she encountered when visiting her elderly parents in cross-border Ivangorod every Sunday. This kind of detail and connection was unlikely to occur in an interview situation in a cafeteria or in the workplace without the support of a material environment full of meaningful objects for my informants.

With a number of my informants, I developed even more personal relationships. Our meet-ups continued in the form of coffee-dates, visiting their homes repeatedly, participating together in events such as the Russian New Year celebration at the Pensioners' Society or the Easter service in the Russian Orthodox Church. Three of the informants I befriended – Julia (b. 1973), Polina (b. 1975) and Lera (b. 1973) –

were highly educated women in their mid or late 30s, only six to eight years older than me at the time of my fieldwork. All of them became adults around the time of the Soviet fall. The major difference between me and my closest interlocutors was that at that time I was a childless woman and primarily a student while they already had children, with their related responsibilities, and professional careers. Another close relationship developed with the Kuznetsov family, 67-year-old Viktor and his wife Irma (about the same age). Among the older generation of Narvans, Zinaida (b. 1934), Julia's mother-in-law Galina (b. 1946) and Larissa (b. 1934) were interlocutors with whom I interacted in various situations. My main interlocutors were thus all female with one exception – Viktor. I met Lera, Polina and the Kuznetsov family also during my follow-up fieldwork in late 2018.

I call all the people mentioned above "my key interlocutors" and treat them as such; they greatly helped me to dig into the complex social and cultural layers of the town and its inhabitants. Although the research focus is on the experiences of resettlers with Soviet subjectivities who have dwelled in Narva for many years, I allowed myself some flexibility in drawing the border between whose experience counted and whose did not. For instance, ethnic Russian background Evgeny (b. 1942) was born during WWII in Narva, but this fact only came out during our interview. Had I known earlier, I would not have interviewed him, but during the interview I found his narrative extremely helpful in understanding how the experiences of ethnic Russians in Narva may differ irrespective of whether they consider themselves resettlers or natives of Narva. I faced another such consideration when I befriended Lera (b. 1973), with whom I started to meet regularly as a language learning exchange, she wanting to develop her Estonian skills while my aim was to improve my Russian. Each time we met, we had a long conversation, taking turns in Estonian and Russian, about topics related to our everyday lives, and in this way we got to know each other personally and as professionals and also became acquainted with each other's families and worldview. Lera, however, was what is generally viewed as a second-generation migrant in migration studies, and I did not initially treat her as an interlocutor. Later I reconsidered this, because through sharing her life I also learnt a lot about the lives of her parents, resettlers in Narva, whom I never met but whose mobile trajectories and challenges became familiar to me. Finally, conducting an interview with 23-year-old Daria, born in Ukraine and recently resettled in Narva, helped me to define the limits of my field site. I realised that the experiences of people who migrate to Narva,

an act that is constrained by the EU's mobility policies, differ from those of resettlers to such an extent that they should be discussed in a different study. I will next introduce in more detail three of my key interlocutors, to give an idea of how the interaction with different interlocutors enriched my ethnographic investigation in diverse ways and how I remained attentive to my informants' different positionalities.

I first met with Julia, who belonged to the group of younger informants, for a life-story interview after she had heard me speaking about my project on the radio. As she put it, she loved getting to know new people and wanted to help me in my research. Julia owned a large apartment in a nine-storey building on the outskirts of Narva, which in fact consisted of a four-room apartment[31] and a one-room apartment, connected by a shared hallway but each with a considerable degree of privacy. There was only one kitchen in the whole residence though, as the one-room apartment had been designed and was used by Julia's 19-year-old son who ate his meals with the family. At the time of my stay in Narva, he was living abroad as a volunteer for an international organisation, so in practice his side of the apartment was unused. Hearing that I was in search of a place to live in Narva for what remained of my stay there, Julia offered me her son's apartment to rent. This arrangement suited me very well, because I both had some privacy in my own studio area and bathroom and, as I had to use the shared kitchen and was welcomed in the larger apartment, I could be in frequent contact with the family. I moved in in January 2011 and stayed until I left Narva in June 2011. From January onwards, I became to some extent part of Julia's family, which included Julia, her four-year-old daughter, her husband who worked in Tallinn and visited Narva irregularly, her mother Vera who lived in Ivangorod, her mother-in-law Galina who lived in Narva, and her grown-up son who was living temporarily abroad. In addition, the two dogs, three cats and various fish were also of great importance in the arrangement of Julia's mobile extended family practices, as I soon realised.

During our first encounters, Julia hinted that major changes would probably happen sooner or later in her family's living arrangement. She and her daughter were about to relocate to Tallinn to join her husband, to bring the family together under

---

[31] Differently from in many Western countries, in the Soviet context and also in post-Soviet Estonia a dwelling with three bedrooms and a separate living room is referred to as a four-room apartment and a studio as a one-room apartment. Throughout this thesis, I use this local way of categorising apartments.

the same roof as she told me. This meant that they needed to put their apartment in Narva up for sale to finance the purchase of a house in Tallinn. During the whole of the spring that I lived in their apartment, Julia, sometimes alone and sometimes with her daughter, travelled intensively between Tallinn and Narva to arrange the practicalities of this sale and purchase. When her daughter remained in Narva, one or other of the grandmothers stayed with her in Julia's apartment. During Julia's stays in Tallinn, the dogs typically accompanied her, but someone needed to take care of the other pets. On a couple of occasions, I was asked to feed the cats and the fish, but usually Julia's mother-in-law visited regularly to do this. By the end of the spring, Julia's family had managed to sell their apartment, and their moving permanently to Tallinn more or less coincided with when I left Narva.

The opportunity to live under the same roof as Julia's family was valuable to my research in several ways. I not only learnt about Julia's own professional and everyday life challenges in Narva during 20 years as a non-citizen who had moved to and settled in the town through marriage as a young adult, just around the time of Estonia's independence; I also learnt a great deal about the homing experiences of her extended family, mostly through talking to her mother and mother-in-law when we occasionally met in her apartment. With time, they, but especially Julia's mother-in-law, who came more often to the apartment, became confident in speaking to me.

Polina also contacted me after reading my article in a local newspaper. Similarly to Julia, she represented the younger generation of resettlers who had grown up in Soviet times but whose adult life and relationship to Narva had unfolded entirely in the post-Soviet period. She moved to Narva alone in 1992 just after the Soviet break-up. Polina strongly defined herself as an immigrant[32] in Narva, but she was certainly the kind of Narvan who admired the place and appreciated having the opportunity to dwell there, unlike many others who focused only on complaining about life in the town, as she herself had observed. While the encounters with Polina were always ethnographically rich, and her ability and willingness to share different stories and perspectives as well as to analyse in depth the social aspects of Narva greatly supported me in my research, I remained attentive to the possibility that Polina's

---

[32] While the rest of my interlocutors avoided the notion "immigrant", she used it without irony, causing me to ponder why she was not sensitive to the term. I think this points to her ability to view the migratory trajectories of Narvans as part of a worldwide phenomenon rather than emphasising the local post-Soviet negative connotations. Also, her relatively young age, which allows for less attachment to Soviet subjectivities, might have helped her to approach immigration more neutrally as a global fact.

experiences and orientation in life were rather distinct from those of the majority of my informants, who had dwelled in Soviet Narva often for decades. Also, the people surrounding Polina were very likely to have similar backgrounds, being in their 30s or 40s and having higher education, intellectual interests, and an orientation towards life-long learning and improvement, which suggested a specific positionality. For instance, when Polina expressed the strong opinion that those who had resettled in Narva, in contrast to those who were born there, irrespective of their generation, saw the town in a more positive light, I considered that because of her positionality she remained somewhat blind to the life-worlds of my elderly informants. I myself saw them rather as seriously disoriented by and disillusioned with the post-Soviet transformation, many viewing themselves as victims of their present circumstances rather than grateful and hopeful for the future, which affected their relationship with the town and meant that it was not-so-positive.

Polina had one of the most multi-ethnic backgrounds of my informants and a complicated history of accepting her different and often colliding identities and belonging. She was certainly the one who had delved the most into the question of identity and had eventually learnt to celebrate the different parts of her identities that took on dominant roles in different areas and at different moments of her life. She also had one of the most extended families, divided between a number of countries: Estonia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Germany and Greece. In each of those countries, the ties were of a different kind and developed in a different way. Polina invested a lot of time and effort in maintaining these ties but she was firmly grounded in Narva. Her openness to presenting her family ties and even introducing me to her various family members without reservation gave me access to some insightful situations. I was sometimes present when she Skyped with her family in Kazakhstan and I was also there in the very situation when her cousin, whom she had not met for a whole decade, suddenly arrived in Narva in the hope that she could help him to find a job in Estonia in the wake of the financial crisis in Greece. In 2018, when we met again, Polina took the initiative to discuss, among other things, the topic of her cousin and her best friend, who had got married soon after meeting in Narva. With the same ease, she shared with me the stories of her new romantic relationship in Russia and her future plans, which I think demonstrates the trust we had developed during my fieldwork.

My relationship with the Kuznetsov family was somewhat different from that with the younger female key interlocutors. They – in fact it was always Viktor –

invited me repeatedly to their home in Narva, their dacha and their new home in Narva-Jõesuu (*Ust' Narva*), which was introduced to me in 2018. Viktor also showed me around in Narva so that I could get an overview of the important places – obviously through his perspective though. Both Viktor, who was Russian and held Russian citizenship, and his wife Irma who was ethnic Estonian[33] but had become a Russian-speaker by dint of being married to Viktor and surrounded by Russian-speakers her whole life, were very friendly to me. They showed me great hospitality, and tremendously expanded my understanding of Russian-speakers' lives in Narva, during both Soviet and contemporary times. Viktor was very interested in political and economic issues and it almost felt that he had made it his task to educate me on them, so that I could properly grasp Narva's position and the post-Soviet change. I figured that Viktor certainly had his own agenda regarding his decision to dedicate so much time to helping me with my research. In the next section of this chapter I will explain in more detail how I deal with my interlocutors' agendas in this research.

My field was urban Narva and its rural surroundings, but my few trips to the Russian territory on the other side of the Narva River, to Ivangorod and Kingisepp, also contributed to a fuller understanding of my research topic. Similarly, visits to Narva-Jõesuu, located by the sea only 15 kilometres away and known as a famous Soviet health resort, where I interviewed some former Narvans who had moved there, helped me to broaden the perspective of livelihoods in Narva. In some ways, even my arrival in and my departure from Narva by public transport were sites of ethnographic work, enabling me to grasp by observation which places in Estonia Narvans were more connected to, for example. The ethnographic insights did not solely emerge as tied to particular people and my interactions with them. Every day and every moment in Narva while moving around and living my own daily life, which I had temporarily located in the town, could provide situations that elicited thoughts that I was able to relate to my research and which I recorded in my field notes. Through long-term engagement with my field and utilising a highly "improvising" (Cerwonka & Malkki 2007) approach to obtaining diverse experiences and viewpoints, I believe that I gained access to "taken-for-granted social routines,

---

[33] Differently from Viktor, she was born and raised in Narva in an Estonian family. In the presence of Viktor she spoke Russian to me, but when we were alone she switched to Estonian. I noticed that she had difficulties in finding the right words in Estonian and she apologised for this saying that her Estonian contacts had more or less disappeared and she had no one to practise her native language with anymore. Their two adult daughters, as far as I understood, were brought up as Russian-speakers.

informal knowledge, and embodied practices" (Gupta & Ferguson 1997, 36), which enabled me to reach a deep and nuanced understanding of the social worlds and daily lives of Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans. In addition, I was able to understand Narvans' lives as being tied to broader socioeconomic and cultural contexts, noticing how the practices of home-making and the meanings of home played out sometimes similarly and sometimes differently on local, regional, national and translocal/transnational scales.

4.3 Research ethics and dilemmas during the fieldwork

When doing any kind of social research in Narva, researchers are likely to come up against local scepticism and a considerable unwillingness to cooperate. In 2010, local people were straightforwardly telling me that over the two previous decades they had seen plenty of researchers and journalists visiting their town and that nothing had changed. They were well aware of their town's negative portrayal in the media, and it was already part of local knowledge, expressed either angrily or ironically, that if a problematic issue occurred in which regional or ethnic differences needed to be highlighted, the media found their way to Narva. Journalists were thus seen by Narvans as "using" the town to create stereotypical illustrations for news items that were often produced simply to fill up newsfeeds, with no real understanding of or sensibility towards their town or the people who dwelled there. Researchers were seen as coming and going, doing yet more research that would not bring any change to their suffering. Although the motives and results of journalists and researchers were seen as different, their temporal appropriation of the local environment and their use of local people as data sources were considered problematically similar. After the Crimean crisis, the negativity towards both journalists and researchers only escalated. To begin a research study in Narva that unavoidably required gaining credibility and building trust among the locals was thus not an easy task in 2010, when I entered my field.

Before our first personal encounters, preceded by my media performances, my informants already knew about my position as an Estonian-born and Estonian-speaking young researcher from a Finnish university. They had the chance to shape their opinions about how my person and my position fitted with what they had to,

and wanted to, say about their life-story, both in general and in relation to Narva. They also knew that what was expected from them as participants in the research was the telling of their life-story with a focus on how Narva became their home. I had intentionally left the idea of home in relation to Narva as loose as possible, without suggesting any definition beforehand. Nevertheless, when presenting my research in the newspaper article and the radio interview, some indications of the idea of home were given because otherwise it would have been impossible to talk about the focus of my research. In my presentation, I had also tried to make it clear that, albeit ethnic Estonian, I was familiar with Narva through my kin relations there, and did not consider myself to be on the other side of the frontline with regard to the popular narrative about Russian-speakers' place in Estonia. I had clearly expressed that, in my view, their experiences and opinions should be considered equally as valuable as those of Estonian-speakers in Estonian society.

After appearing in the media, I was approached by Russian-speaking Narvans, on their own initiative, who were willing to share their experiences with me. I offered no gifts or other kinds of material benefit in exchange for their participation in my study, so their contribution must have been motivated by other reasons. My informants typically explained their participation by saying that they wanted to help me in my research by sharing their interesting life-stories and settlement stories. It was rare for them to reveal at the start of our interview that they wanted to make Russian-speakers' voices heard but, as the conversation unfolded, and especially when we reached the end of our meeting, it became clear that many of them wanted to get their message across to me as a researcher so that I could then direct it to someone else through the results of my work. These messages were typically politically loaded, concerning the Estonian state's language policy or other laws and regulations that negatively affected the Russian-speakers' lives in their town and in Estonia. I concluded that I was seen as a mediator who they hoped had the power to gather the Russian-speaking Narvans' views and suggestions and insert them into the real decision-makers' heads so that something would change in the future. However, who exactly these decision-makers were usually remained entirely obscure. We never discussed how exactly I should act in order for my research to have a genuine effect in Narva or what kinds of decision should be made, and how exactly and by whom, so that positive changes would happen. I later learnt that the position of an ally or a messenger that I sometimes experienced was applied to me because of my assumed neutrality as a researcher doing research under the auspices of a

Finnish university rather than an Estonian institution. Although these political messages were part of my research results, I remained sensitive to the possibility – a risk that any qualitative research with a small sample runs, especially when the topic is highly political – that my informants may have represented extraordinarily exclusive perspectives. Several different strategies could be used to balance this risk, the most important being the employment of the ethnographic methods of observation and participant observation in various daily situations, events and meetings, during my extended stay in Narva. These situations provided both a context and ethnographic data that helped me in learning how to assess the weight of particular perspectives and make decisions regarding their importance.

While in some ways I was seen as a messenger or an ally by at least some of my informants, I was simultaneously seen as an "other". For one, I was not Narvan and, most importantly, I was an ethnic Estonian with all the baggage that came with that. In her thesis on memory and belonging in the Estonian-Russian borderland, which encompasses the experiences of both Russian-speakers living in either Narva or Ivangorod and Narva's old population (generally Estonian speakers), Pfoser (2014, 98-99) recalls her mixed feelings and her unease regarding a situation in which as a researcher she simultaneously had to work with people who supposedly belonged to one of two opposing camps, based on their generalised experiences of belonging and victimhood. Similar issues are reported also by Ballinger (2003, 6) in the Slovenian-Croatian context, and she describes feeling that she was "betraying one or the other group by consorting with the 'enemy'". So while working in my field, I was in the constant process of sorting out how my "otherness", resulting from my ethnic background and mother tongue, played out in my daily encounters with my informants and ultimately affected my research. For instance, as the research progressed I made some Estonian friends in Narva and started to occasionally hang out with them, but I deliberately avoided presenting this fact in front of my informants. Even though I admitted to myself that some features of my "otherness" were impossible to undo, and my "consorting" between the two camps was often unavoidable and unproblematic as long as I remained aware of it, I also experienced a strong need to build togetherness with my informants, not only to excel technically as an ethnographer but to dismantle my "otherness" as another human. For instance, I recognised my tendency to sometimes take a humanitarian stance towards Russian-speakers, wanting to defend or justify their situation or views, especially in

conversations with Estonians outside Narva[34]. Excessive sympathising was something I constantly needed to remind myself to stay mindful of in order not to romanticise Russian-speakers' homely affiliation to Narva while at the same time naturalising their victimised position.

Finally, although the above negotiations existed, I wish to emphasise the importance of my own migrant experience and transnational subjectivity in being able to understand the experiences of Russian-speakers who had migrated to and were dwelling in a new place. No matter the historical circumstances, the act of migration is rather universal in the way in which it produces experiences of dwelling in an unfamiliar place, estrangement, building strategies to become an "ordinary" citizen, socialising, longing for places left behind, and aspiring to a better future. Having been through such processes myself, it was easier for me to imagine my informants' aspirations, challenges and achievements related to resettling and homing in Narva, and some of my informants themselves pointed out touchpoints on the basis of migration that existed between them and me.

4.4   Reflexivity and other practices in data collection and interpretation

In my ethnographic practice, I have aimed to follow the principles of Marcus (1998), a methodology that has been called "ethnography through thick and thin" and has been widely accepted and leant on by most anthropologists and ethnographers thereafter. For Marcus, the point of departure in ethnographic investigation remains that local struggles, the micro-worlds of "ordinary people", cannot be studied without understanding them as part and parcel of larger systems, i.e. the state, capitalism and the like, and, moreover, without linking them to the macro-processes caused and mediated by global forces. From this perspective, even though I have studied Russian-speakers in Narva, i.e. a rather narrowly defined people and place, the main value in bringing forth their experience is in providing a

---

[34] Some of my Estonian friends who worked in Narva while permanently living elsewhere also noted a similar tendency in themselves to protect Narvan Russians when they were attacked by Estonians outside Narva, whereas when they were in Narva they often found themselves in situations where they needed to defend the views and behaviours of Estonians that were called nationalistic by Russian-speakers.

more nuanced understanding of the effect of Soviet and post-Soviet ideologies and state systems on "ordinary people" and their home-making practices rather than mapping in historiographic detail what happened to the people and the place in this corner of the world. Ethnographic work builds on dedicated practice, is characterised by a high degree of uncertainty, and implies the continuous weighing up of choices and making decisions along the way. My understanding of the ethnographic research process from beginning to end is greatly influenced by Cerwonka and Malkki's *Improvising Theory* (2007), which emphasises the role of improvisation in providing a solid ethnographic account of any problem. Improvisation should not be mistaken for spontaneity; rather, it denotes a continuous striving for a dialogue between the fieldwork practice and "the search for better theoretical framing" (Tiaynen 2013, 37). *Improvising Theory* guided me in trusting my own ethnographic intuition, which after all is nothing more than a gut feeling backed up by growing experience and an ability to maintain an openness and curiosity about people, situations and initial explanations.

The analysis of my data did not emerge only after I had started to work with the interview files. As typical of any ethnographic research, the analysis starts at the very beginning of the fieldwork, proceeding concurrently with the data collection. In practice, my data analysis and collection were tightly connected in a continuous process in which observations and careful listening first produced descriptions and then, after being contextualised and linked to other empirical findings, generated (preliminary) explanations and meanings, which were usually still rough ideas or even wrong compared with the final statements. Yet this cyclical process helped, step-by-step, to restrain or tune the research focus in order to collect more data and produce more and more finely tuned descriptions, to obtain deeper and better-quality insights in the course of the fieldwork. Some of this process was reflected in my field notes, for example in the form of Eureka-like comments and the next big questions to be answered, but much of it was never recorded and just naturally leaked into the design of the next steps in the research.

The ethnographic research I conducted in Narva has been guided by a reflexive approach, from the early planning stages to the presenting of the findings and the publishing of the dissertation. As social scientist Annette Markham (2017) has accentuated, reflexivity is more an ideological approach to how to interpret data in the most sensitive way than a series of concrete actions leading to this. To be reflexive is "not just an attitude but a sensibility we learn over time, as we reinforce

certain habits and discard others", and through dedicated practice we learn to notice what was previously not noticeable (ibid.).

Some authors have characterised ethnographic research as having a "naturalistic design" resulting from the assumption that the researcher is not the knower but that the knowledge emerges from the field as they engage with it (DePoy & Gitlin 2015). From a deeply reflexive point of view, this is only partly true though, because the whole long process of the research is affected to a large extent by the researcher's persona and unique positionality in the field, which cannot be objectively seen or acted consciously upon by the researcher. My own persona has thus already affected the selection of the problem I study and its formulation through the choice of concepts I use, as Wright Mills would argue (2000 [1959]). This research, in the words of Lumsden, Bradford and Goode (2019, 79) can even be seen as "a political exercise – what we choose to investigate is determined by the way we perceive the world". Consequently, how Russian-speaking Narvans practise home-making as reflected in their own narratives, objects and specific acts enters into theoretical meaning-making only through the prism of my researcher persona (Lumsden, Bradford & Goode 2019; Davies 2002). The blind spots and highlights of ethnographic research resulting from the researcher's persona and positionality are unavoidable, but positionalities can also be useful in opening up possibilities for understanding.

The main repository of knowledge in this research remains the texts – the transcribed narratives of recorded life-story interviews and follow-up conversations along with ethnographic notes. I rely on the narratives of people as they emerged during conversations as well as on my own readings and interpretations of their body language, and of their being and behaving, in our face-to-face communication, all recorded in the form of text in my field notes. Observations of places, people, objects and events that I made in the field, often outside of direct interactions with my informants, are also narrated in my own words. In addition, I leant in this study on secondary sources such as books, newspaper articles, pamphlets and other texts and on images, exhibitions, statistics and various artefacts in both my informants' homes and other places in the town. The insights and connections brought out by the secondary data are sometimes described in my field notes, but most of this has probably only unconsciously affected my thoughts and analysis patterns.

In this thesis, I use photos as a means of visualisation, but I do not apply a visual analysis. During my fieldwork in Narva, I often took pictures of places, buildings,

scenery and groups of people at public events while walking around with my large camera bag. Sometimes I asked my interlocutors if I could take pictures of the interiors of their homes, but there was nothing systematic in my approach. I was usually hesitant to photograph my informants in face-to-face situations. Undeniably, the technological and digital era has moved on rapidly since 2010 and people's attitudes to photography have changed too. Now nearly everyone has a camera on their mobile phone and pictures are taken at every step, but then it was not yet the case. I did not have a phone with a camera either.

These were the materials I started to work with once the fieldwork was over. I hired an external native Russian-speaker to transcribe all my recorded interview material in Russian (38 interviews). I later proceeded with all my transcribed interviews and my fieldwork diary by using the Atlas.ti qualitative data software to organise and code the data but I did not use it to analyse the data further. Instead, I repeatedly read through all my data and identified large topics and topic blocks that seemed relevant in answering the research questions. Because the narratives form a large part of my empirical data, I familiarised myself with the principles and practice of narrative analysis, paying particular attention to its social constructionist nature and the temporal aspects of narrative construction (Hammersley & Atkinson 2019; Cortazzi 2001). Most importantly, I remained aware of the mutually constituted meanings related to experiences of the past, present and future, despite the fact that life-story narratives in principle reflect experiences of the past. I did not use any concrete techniques to structurally analyse the data narratively; rather, I intuitively combined the narrative and interpretive approaches, using as my point of departure the themes and topics I identified and carefully considering that meanings arise from "the cultural conventions and the contexts within which they occur; together with the speaker's motive and intention" (Cortazzi 2001, 385). By reading through the data repeatedly, I inductively created new connections within the data and rejected that which appeared less relevant as my focus sharpened. In this way, I finally reduced my interest to material that addressed issues of home-making, which I organised into the five empirical chapters of this thesis: houses and urban dwelling; dachas and digging the land; sociality and morality; nationalism, citizenship and language; and hopes and hopelessness.

Post-Soviet recollections of the Soviet past are known for their appearance of extensive nostalgia (Boym 2001; Todorova & Gille 2010). Keightley and Pickering (2012, 137) have conceptualised the role of nostalgic recollection of the past as "a

means of taking one's bearings for the road ahead among the manifold uncertainties of the present". Using nostalgia helps people to define meaning in current situations and come to terms with past experiences, especially if they were, or are, painful or troubling. In this way, nostalgic presentation of the past is an element of therapeutic processes, both individual and collective, as well as a means of critical self-analysis (ibid.). The narrations gathered in 2010-2011 are based on the experience of 20 years of living in the post-Soviet Estonian state, which means that everything that was said about life in the past was already unavoidably viewed through the prism of intersubjective relations in contemporary Estonia. And as I will show in my empirical chapters, these years mark an extensive socioeconomic transformation that captures a wide range of feelings, predominantly negatively loaded, which my interlocutors have needed to process. In my analysis, I do not study home-making as part of mnemonic processes, and do not thus analytically focus on nostalgic presentations of narratives of home, which may at times make the narratives appear as idealised depictions of both Soviet society and personal experience. Importantly, I want the reader to know that although I never take my interlocutors' past narrations at face value, and carefully consider them as part of nostalgic memory-making, I prioritise other analytical lenses.

4.5   On emotions in the field and afterwards

If research starts "from where we are", presuming that "we bring to the setting disciplinary knowledge and theoretical frameworks" as well as our "self which is, among other things, gendered, sexual, occupational, generational – located in time and space", it also implies a self-conscious approach to fieldwork, including recognising one's emotions as related to the field and the research process (Coffey 1999, 158). "Emotional connectedness to the processes and practices of fieldwork, to analysis and writing, is normal and appropriate. It should not be denied, nor stifled. It should be acknowledged, reflected upon, and seen as a fundamental feature of well-executed research" (ibid., 158-159). Recently also Lumsden, Bradford and Goode (2019) and Suopajärvi et al. (2019) have emphasised the role of the researcher's emotions in the ethnographic research process, addressing various moments and angles in research that bring emotions to the fore and suggesting that

there is a serious need to openly take on board the fact that emotions are an unavoidable part of this process. Fieldwork in Narva and also the continuation of the research away from the site can be characterised by an emotional overload that deserves some reflection.

At different points in research, the character and orientation of the researcher's emotions may differ. Some of this may be triggered by the status of a "novice" researcher and the challenge of managing the self professionally, which requires a great deal of emotional labour and is draining and exhausting (McQueeney & Lavelle 2017; Ramsay 1996; Lumsden, Bradford & Goode 2019). I remember both my preparation for going into the field and my time in the field site as being full of emotional ups and downs. The ups were mostly triggered by a sense of accomplishment in the field, when my interviews or other contacts with informants turned out to be successful, filling me with ideas about what to do next and producing good energy. The downs were related to a sense of failure, conflict or unease resulting, for example, from interviews that did not flow, and situations that were hard to handle because some of the things being said were in conflict with my own beliefs and required me to bite my tongue rather than to make my disagreement or discomfort explicit (cf. Lumsden, Bradford & Goode 2019, 78). Short interactions that triggered negative emotions might have led to longer periods when I was struggling with various uncertainties that were piling up. This all boils down to the fact that a PhD student who does individual research without yet being a recognised member of a research group or a community – which was the case – is alone in the field without much support, and experiences a shaky understanding, wondering whether they are doing the right thing investing a lot of time in this endeavour. There are lots of almost daily incidents that pose problems and questions to be solved or decided upon, let alone the interactions with informants, the outcomes of which can never be known beforehand.

When a research topic has strong political underpinnings, it is *a priori* emotionally loaded, forcing the researcher constantly to ponder and to find solutions to how to pose the questions and facilitate the fieldwork so that the interaction with informants does not freeze or immediately explode. Given that the question of Russian-speakers' home is a politicised subject in Estonia, the life-story interview, as already mentioned, was a good choice for entering the field softly, patiently fishing for information within the flow of personal narratives that eventually revealed details about the different dimensions of home-making. In interactions with my informants

I often noticed that it was not only me who naturally wanted to establish and maintain a cooperative atmosphere. Normally both sides, me as the researcher and my informants, avoided "emotionally hot topics" (Ramsay 1996, 142). As the phenomenon of Estonian nationalism unavoidably lay between me as an ethnic Estonian and the Russian-speakers, I sensed that most of my informants – but not all of them and not all the time – tried to be sensitive to my feelings and avoided bringing up certain themes in particular ways so as not to offend me. Very similar considerations are presented in research by Šliavaite (2005), an ethnic Lithuanian studying the lives of Russian-speaking inhabitants of the Visaginas nuclear power plant in Lithuania. While she recognised the efforts that needed to be made on her part to remain constantly aware of the stereotypes and wariness regarding Russian-speakers in which she had been socialised, her informants also generally showed a sensibility to her positionality as a Lithuanian.

Some of my emotions in the field, both positive and negative, were related to conducting research in a foreign language that I had not mastered perfectly. For me, Russian was and still remains my third foreign language after English and Finnish. After being immersed daily in a Russian-language environment, my Russian slowly moved from being passive to active, my vocabulary enlarged, and the topics I felt confident talking about widened day after day. Yet, as everyone who often speaks in several foreign languages knows, there are simply bad language days when one feels incapable of speaking any of the languages. Speaking Russian in everyday circumstances and particularly in interview situations thus required my full attention and a serious effort, because the fieldwork was extremely energy consuming and tiring at times. My interviewees were usually pleasantly surprised by my relatively good Russian skills, considering my generation and the unpopularity of the Russian language among Estonian-speakers since the Soviet collapse. Yet some of them also made it known that both my language and my knowledge of Russian literature and history, and of the unquestionable glory of Russian cultural space as they put it, were poor and that I should educate myself so as not to miss out on something very big in world culture. Such criticism made me feel uncomfortable, and in my notes I have formulated these situations as my informants' blind spots resulting from *their* generational particularities and lack of foreign language skills, the absence of encounters with people other than Russian-speakers and so on. As a researcher I sometimes needed time and space to process these situations in order to continue keenly and self-confidently with my fieldwork and my encounters with other

Russian-speakers. In revealing these emotions, I give credit to the perspective that Katja Uusihakala (2016) and several others (see also Lumsden, Bradford & Goode 2019) have discussed: interviews and other encounters in the field are not always pleasant or harmonious and do not always entail the possibility of increasing mutual understanding and building bridges between people of different backgrounds. Rather, they can be full of tensions due to (occasionally) conflicting positionalities between the researcher and those being researched. My way of dealing with this reality was to remain honest with myself and reflect on how these issues may have influenced my research results.

Sometimes there are encounters in fieldwork that have the potential to powerfully affect its continuation in truly unpredictable ways, both negative and positive. I particularly remember an encounter I had with an elderly Russian woman from Moscow called Yaroslava (b. 1930). She had called me after my radio interview and told me that she had an interesting life-story to share. On the phone we agreed a date for me to interview her and a few days later I visited her in a very small one-room apartment in Kreenholm district. She insisted that I wash my hands with soap, giving clear instructions about how exactly to do it properly[35], before steering me into her tiny kitchen, seating me in a designated chair, and decisively leading our meeting firmly in her desired direction. She talked very fast, energetically and incessantly, guiding me through a lot of information, papers and photos she had prepared beforehand, and ignored all my attempts to pause her, slow her down or clarify something. It was the only interview situation in which I felt completely incapable of taking the conversation in any of my desired directions; Yaroslava clearly had her own agenda. She presented herself as a smart, powerful and extraordinarily capable woman who had achieved everything she had ever wanted to achieve while other people on her path had been miserable and worthless. As she continued talking without a break, giving me no space to respond or interact, the energy I felt in the little kitchen was so intense and negatively loaded that I very soon felt that I needed air and asked whether I could open the window. This did not help, however. I felt dizzy and became afraid that I would faint at any moment. While panicking about how I could safely interrupt the interview and leave, different thoughts came into my mind. I imagined that Yaroslava was literally trying to hypnotise me and perhaps had bad intentions, to rob me or something similar. At

---

[35] This felt truly awkward in pre-Covid times and I perceived it as an act of control.

the same time, I remember that I felt powerless and tried at any cost to remain appropriate and friendly because I worried that leaving would seriously upset her and she would perhaps have the power to spread rumours about me and affect my research in a negative way, jeopardising it (cf. Lumsden, Bradford & Goode 2019, 77-78). At some point I felt that I would certainly faint if I did not react, so I apologetically said that I felt sick, lied that I would contact her again another day, and stood up and left. While I was making my way out of the kitchen and through the narrow entrance, Yaroslava placed a rubbish bag in my hand, demanding that I take it out as I left. I took the rubbish and left, thankful that I had made it out of there, still feeling dizzy and confused and trying to understand what I had just experienced. (Field notes, January 2011) Even now, years after the interview, I clearly remember the physical and psychological unease I felt in this space and in the presence of this woman during my, at the most, one hour stay. This strange encounter made me realise that a researcher – in my case also young and female – takes many risks when meeting people she does not know and particularly when she enters into spaces that are the territory of such unknown people. It made me rethink carefully the risks that were involved and what I could do to avoid them. I had realised earlier that my informants also took risks, when welcoming a researcher into their homes, but this was the first time I had needed to worry about myself.

5   HOUSES AND HOUSING PRACTICES: DWELLING IN SOVIET AND CONTEMPORARY TIMES

At first sight, today's Narva is striking in its widely recognisable Soviet-style urbanity. When entering along the main transit roads, either from the West along the Tallinn-Narva highway, or from the East by crossing the Narva River and the Russian-Estonian border-zone, and ending up in the heart of the town, one most definitely experiences it as an urban place. On approaching from the West, first the massive chimneys of the Balti SEJ power plant, symbols of Narva for many, are encountered, and soon after the skyline of a truly late-Soviet microdistrict unfolds (figure 7). On closer inspection, the Soviet urban structures are seen to be covered with a layer of material symbols that signals the presence of international brands and the integration of the town into global capitalism: petrol stations, shopping malls, and house facades here and there that have been renovated in contemporary style.

Figure 7.   Entrance to Narva from the West. Source: Google Maps

In this chapter, by focusing on houses and the institutional settings surrounding housing and housing practices, I will examine how post-World War II Narva emerged as an urban place where people could, and wanted to, dwell. I identify housing, and primarily its chronic shortage, as a central element of the formation of Soviet mobilities and show how such socioeconomic conditions played out in the material side of home-making in the town. Dwelling practices in Soviet-era Narva can be roughly divided into three periods, each being shaped by different institutional settings: the early post-war period that was characterised by hoping for shelter (from 1944 to the mid-1950s); the mid-period in which the *khrushchyovka*-type (see p. 130-131) of private family housing aspirations were central (from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s); and the late-Soviet period (from the mid-1960s to 1991) that brought with it a shift to increased expectations that housing conditions would be improved through the deployment of various strategies. In order to gain deep insights into what an urban house meant for resettlers in Narva, what practices were involved and how these things changed over the course of the nearly 50 years of the Soviet period, I focus on Russian-speaking Narvans' recollections of their mobile trajectories, their memories related to their stories of arrival in Narva, and the standards, expectations, hopes and aspirations related to improving housing conditions and the strategies used in achieving this. I then switch to examining the continuities and discontinuities of practices around house in post-Soviet times. Within this scope, I inquire into a number of aspects of Soviet and post-Soviet dwelling. How did the Soviet housing opportunities and expectations shape personal life-trajectories? What was the role of personal connections, resourcefulness and luck in making housing attainable? What were the personal and family strategies related to housing and how were they worked out? And, finally, how has all this changed in post-Soviet times and what new practices and prospects have emerged?

5.1   First resettlers after World War II

People need places to live. There are two things that the Soviet system is known and often admired for: first, everyone was obliged to work and was guaranteed a job and, second, the system provided free housing for its workers. Against the

background of this common knowledge, housing, especially the lack of it and the cramped living conditions, is often the grand narrative of Soviet life-stories, regardless of place, decade or social status (Attwood 2010; Boym 1994; Reid 2006a, 2006b, 2010). A place where someone could legally reside and call home was not a taken-for-granted matter that could be resolved. Soviet logic legally linked places of work and residence, but in everyday life the two aspects often did not easily come together, at least not in a way that satisfied the needs of the "ordinary people" living in this reality. In practice, the whole Soviet era was characterised by a scarcity of housing, the problem being at its worst in the post-World War II Soviet period and affecting more severely some regions and towns than others. Moscow and Leningrad, for example, were commonly known as places where private housing for families was next to impossible to arrange.

The data from my ethnographic research reveals, similarly to other research on Soviet materialities (Burrell & Hörschelmann 2014; Attwood 2010; Boym 1994), that housing as a deeply mundane matter was a driving force of Soviet mobility, especially after the Stalinist era when the number of forced relocations decreased and mass housing projects started to proliferate, typically in industrial places where there was a burning need for labour. I start, however, with the first resettlers after World War II, who typically arrived in Narva from war-torn rural places in the hope of survival, not on the back of promises of liveable housing. These people can be called the first wave of migrants, and they were typically young single people of rural background who needed a job and shelter of any kind in order to start their adult life after the sufferings of the war. Among my informants, Valentina (b. 1938, Belorussia), Varvara (b. 1937, Russia), Maria (b. 1935, Russia) and Lidia (b. 1933, Russia), are representative of this group. As my informants repeatedly recalled, many Soviet places and family relations had been left in a miserable, desperate condition: male family members had fought in the war and many were badly injured, killed or imprisoned; homes were bombed and destroyed; women, children and the elderly had been evacuated, and were forced to move around, leaving their homes unattended; and all this followed by the Stalinist-era repression and fear. The responsibility for many households ended up on the shoulders of women and the elderly, and people were starving and had no prospects of improving their situation, especially in the countryside where nearly everyone worked on collective farms. In fact, each household had to do its "workdays" (*zarabativat' troododni*) on a collective farm for many years without a salary; they were paid in kind or could use some of

the collective services to cultivate their own tiny plots of land. Meanwhile, their farmlands were collectivised and there were no supplementary incomes. People in villages located closer to towns could trade some of their home produce on the market. For some regions, the war-time and post-war years were even harsher, because they experienced severe drought on top of everything else. I present Valentina's (b. 1938, Belorussian) story to illuminate the conditions the post-war resettlers came from:

> Life was so difficult [during the war], oh God, how we starved. We received one piece of bread once a day. Grandma distributed the bread, but we wanted to eat so badly. We went to collect some goose-feed from the fields and sorrel to bake bread with. We ate absolutely everything that was possible to eat… Towards the end of the war, I remember that we were so hungry that we even went with my brother to ask the Germans for some food. Some gave us food but others just laughed at us. […] Later [after the war ended], I went to sell [some dairy products] in the town. My mum milked the cow… When I was a bit older, we bought a cow. I don't even know where the money came from to buy the cow, we exchanged it for something… I guess it was the grain in the barrels that was left by the Germans. So, we exchanged this for a cow. We had an old churn. We collected the cream [from milk] and beat it. I went on foot and took butter, cream and sour cream to trade in V. town. There were no buses or cars. First, I walked to the school, 5 kilometres on foot, and then continued on the bus that took me to V. town. I went to my aunt's place, she then went around asking the neighbours and so we sold the butter. And sometimes they gave me some presents… And I remember… I don't remember which class exactly I was in, third or second, but I had appendicitis and they sent me to V. town, and my auntie brought me two buns. And I kept these buns like… You can't imagine. [Crying.] This is so painful even to remember. (Interview 14.09.2010)

Valentina was the fourth and last child in the family. Her father was drafted into the army immediately after the war started. She was only two years old and did not remember him. He died in the war. Among the male adult family members only the grandfather remained with the family during the war years. A few houses away lived a cousin whose husband stayed as well, because his leg had been amputated. In the whole village of 28 households only two other men remained, probably because they were ill, supposed Valentina. The family worked hard and grew more or less all their own food in their vegetable garden. Valentina's siblings grew up and one by one left the village. Valentina was the youngest child, so she stayed with the family the longest.

> First my brother went into the army and he did not return to the village. He went to Donbass, worked in the mine and studied in the institute. He first finished technical school and later graduated from the institute. But my sister came earlier to Narva,

straight after she had finished fifth grade. Our cousin from the village had come to Narva even earlier. There was some kind of announcement… We did not receive newspapers, so I guess someone had heard on the radio that [labour was needed in the Kreenholm textile factory]. So, she came to Narva to study here. Then we had the FZO[36]. You first needed to study in the factory and later they took you to work in Kreenholm. When she had been studying for some time, she came to visit us in the village and said, "Vera, let's go! You can study in the FZO". And my sister went as well, finished the FZO and stayed working there. When I finished seventh grade, mum said to me, "My daughter, go with them". But to leave the village, you needed a passport. In the village we did not have passports, they did not allow us to leave. These were the times when they made it difficult for people to leave the collective farms. But we happened to know people. […] They helped me to get a passport. In that way, I received a passport and joined my sister here. (Interview 14.09.2010)

Valentina arrived in Narva in 1956. She had not yet turned 18. She first began work in the Kreenholm textile factory and at the same time studied in the evening school for adults in order to complete eighth grade and have more opportunities. This done, she went through an eight-month-long nursing course and soon after began work in a kindergarten. During her first two years in Narva, she lived with her sister's family in a dormitory, where four people shared one room (Interview 14.09.2010).

Similarly to Valentina, many other early resettlers in post-war Narva were young rural women, often still minors (cf. Mertelsmann 2007; Vseviov 2001). Usually they had just finished seventh grade, which was the end of compulsory education in the Soviet Union at that time. They had no professional training and started work in the Kreenholm factory almost immediately, being obliged only to complete the FZO. Kreenholm did not even guarantee accommodation during the initial post-war years, but the young women typically lived with family members and acquaintances who had already managed to find somewhere to live. The large factory dormitories came later. The living conditions for the first wave of resettlers were extremely poor. Sharing a single room with no modern conveniences with four or five others was more the norm rather than the exception.

Rumours about Narva badly needing labour in order to restart the Kreenholm textile factory spread fast and this was a message that offered an escape from the hopeless situation in the countryside in the nearby areas of what is today the

---

[36] The acronym for the Russian *Shkola fabrichno-zavodskogo oboochyeniya* (factory training school). The FZO was Kreenholm's own unit for training young women to do specific monotonous tasks in the factory.

Northwest region of Russia: Leningrad, Kaluga, Tver (previously Kalinin), Smolensk, Novgorod and Pskov oblasts. There were not many alternative options because other large towns in the region were equally damaged or simply too competitive and difficult to settle in. The young women, and less often men, arriving from the Soviet Russian countryside to work in Kreenholm often came from the same or neighbouring villages, causing a massive outmigration from some regions. One of my informants, Vera (b. 1956), who was very active in the field of cultural and ethnic associations in Narva and clearly considered herself as belonging to the Russian-speaking intelligentsia (*intyelligyentsiya*), described the social relations of some, especially the earlier, layers of Narvans as having the characteristics of a village environment. In Vera's words, the formation pattern of this particular population was that of siblings, cousins, neighbours and friends moving to the urban environment and continuing life in their earlier social circles, often also marrying men or women from their own or neighbouring villages. As most of the early resettlers were single women, the pool of partners in Narva was limited, but finding a partner quickly, establishing a family life and having children was a decision that usually helped to foster people's material situation. Only couples had the prospect of being given living space – usually only a private room – that they did not need to share with other people. And later on, only families could hope for private apartments.

However, not everyone who moved to Narva was a single adult. Some of my informants moved to post-war Narva as children of families who had nowhere else to go. These people either already had family ties to Narva (Pavel, b. 1940, Russia; Larissa, b. 1934, Russia) or, in the case of two Ingrians (Zinaida, b. 1934, Russia; Sofia b. 1934, Russia) who were labelled as "dangerous elements" by the Soviet state, were forbidden to return to their homelands and were thus in desperate search of a place where they could dwell and continue their lives.

Galina (b. 1946, Russian), who initially moved to Ivangorod with her family but whose school-, work- and family life later continued in Narva, vividly described the conditions the family lived in between 1954 and 1974.

> At the beginning we lived in Ivangorod. There stood an old wooden house with many rooms and we had a combined kitchen and a room, all together seven square metres. All the facilities [were] in the street. We did not even have water. We needed to carry the water in. […] We had the smallest room in the whole building. We slept everywhere we could: on the floor, on top of the wood stove. Dad changed the office desk. In general, we slept on the table as well, because there was no other place to lie

down. But there were seven of us at the beginning. Mum and dad, and five siblings left out of seven by that time. […] In general, it was terribly cold, we had below zero temperatures on the floor. We lived there for a long time. For 20 years. […] We lived worse than poorly. Mum and dad worked as watchpersons and earned very little. […] But we came from Central Russia. A God-forsaken place, simply! Because when we left in 1954 there was not even electricity. It was a collective forestry enterprise, that is, where the forest was harvested. It was like a working village, and then, when it all ended, people stayed. Generally, live as you wish! […] My mum's sisters were already living in Ivangorod. Actually, first my elder sister came here, then dad came to have a look and later we all came. Because there was a dead end [in the place I was born]. (Interview 03.05.2011)

Galina continued to live with her parents and later, after her father died, with just her mother. At some point they were able to extend their home by seven square metres, but this did not do much to alleviate the space shortage or improve the facilities. In 1964 Galina finished technical school as an electrician and started at *Pribaltiyskaya*, where she then worked for 44 years. After getting married, she and her husband continued to live with her mother until 1974 when they finally received a three-room apartment.

Everyone arriving in war-ravaged Narva started from zero, having no property or other material means with which to settle comfortably, and they could only hope that the state's promise of industrial jobs and investment in urban infrastructure would provide better conditions in the future. And yet, my informants repeatedly emphasised that, despite the harsh housing conditions, everyone knew that they were exactly the same as everyone else, that nobody's conditions were better or worse than their own.

We all lived in a similar way. Someone lived a little better, someone received an apartment earlier, but we all lived in a similar way. Nevertheless, I do not think that I lived badly. You know, I had already been raised completely differently. Not like contemporary kids who cannot imagine that someone could live differently. It's all about the fact that a person gets used to everything. If you leave him with nothing, after six months he will get used to it if he knows there is no other way. What are you going to do about it? You're not going to lie down and wait to die, are you? (Vladimir, b. 1949, Russia, Siberia. Interview 30.10.2010)

5.2 Realistic housing expectations and the accomplishment of mundane dreams

A lack of shelter, space and privacy was part of life for the early resettlers in post-war Narva. Upon their arrival in the town, the poor housing conditions that they typically encountered were presented and accepted as temporary solutions, which in the experience of my informants lasted from a few months to a decade, and in some cases even longer. Soviet people's life-trajectories were typically aligned with realistic opportunities and with constraints regarding obtainable housing in different places. Whereas in capitalist countries mobility, in people's practice, is driven by the availability of jobs, in the Soviet Union it was the availability of housing that mattered most, generally speaking. Before moving from one place to another, housing possibilities were naturally the first thing to be considered. For young people, the prospect of being able to start a family on their own territory rather than in a communal apartment or dormitory was very appealing.

From around the early to mid-1960s expectations regarding housing in Narva increased considerably: people wanted a new-build family apartment in a multi-storey building with all the modern conveniences (water, electricity, sewerage and central heating), a so-called *khrushchyovka*-type two-room apartment (figure 8) with a living space of about 40 square metres (later 50). *Khrushchyovka*s were low-cost, concrete-panelled or brick-built three- to five-storey apartment buildings introduced by Khrushchev from the late 1950s onwards to finally modernise the Soviet urban environment, solve the housing issue for many families and encourage further urbanisation (Reid 2006a). Extensive housing programmes (Tammaru 2001; Valge 2006) focused on industrial mass housing construction that was organised around the logic of microdistricts[37]. Microdistricts comprised residential dwellings, usually multi-storey apartment blocks, and public service buildings such as schools, kindergartens, shops and entertainment facilities. Each microdistrict was designed to serve 8,000-12,000 inhabitants (Andrusz 1984).

---

[37] For the urban planning of Soviet cities see French & Hamilton (1979), Smith G. (1996) and Hess & Tammaru (2019).
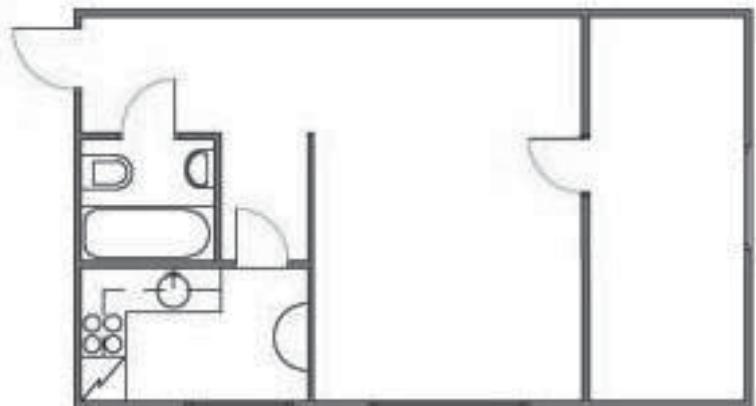
Figure 8. *Khrushchyovka* layout. Source: http://www.inkodu.ee

When I listened to Narvans' arrival and accommodation stories, especially when people had exchanged a rural environment for a *khrushchyovka*-type characterless overcrowded building where they were supposed to live for the rest of their lives, I was often astonished by the ease with which people seemed to have adjusted to their new environments. Of course, time sweeps away memories of hardship and emotional pain, but I expected people to share with me stories of difficulties adapting to the urban environment and overcrowded apartment blocks where exposure to all kinds of sound and noise from the neighbours was an everyday occurrence, given how badly insulated and cramped the buildings were (Hess & Tammaru 2019; Tammaru 2001; Valge 2006). Reid (2006b, 2010), Harris (2006), Boym (1994) and many others who have studied Soviet living in apartments have noted numerous issues that were raised in relation to the realm of private[38] life and the strategies people deployed to cope with the lack of privacy and create a sense of homeliness despite the many disturbances. For many, the strategy was to spend as much time as possible outside the apartment. As noted also by Saarikangas (2009), who examined how rural people in Finland developed their sense of home in microdistricts in

---

[38] It has been widely discussed that the concepts "private" and "privacy" are problematic in the Soviet context. Reid (2006b, 148) has noted, for example, that "privacy is constituted not by concealment or solitude per se, but by discretion over disclosure of information about oneself, the right to make decisions, to promulgate rules of action, to dispose over resources and space, and to choose association with others". I will not, however, dwell on the discussion about "privacy" because it does not further my argument in this chapter.

Helsinki, the closeness of nature and engaging with natural spaces outside the home were of crucial importance. For my informants, complaining about bad layouts and poor building quality or noisy neighbours were truly secondary things; besides, there were no better conditions available.

The point here is not to focus on the specificities and difficulties of Soviet apartment life, which are widely discussed by many authors (see Varga-Harris 2015; Boym 1994; Attwood 2010; Janušauskaitė 2019), but to indicate the symbolic value of having access to private family housing that provided modern conveniences. I heard tens of stories wherein the patience and steadfastness displayed while waiting for a family apartment to be allocated by an employer impressed me greatly. Having lived in inconvenient conditions, often for a long time, it is understandable that once Narvans managed to receive a private apartment the sense of accomplishment was overwhelming. Narvans sincerely recalled their happiness at eventually having their own place on this earth. Getting an apartment was after all not only a material improvement but a sign of recognition and deservingness: if someone received an apartment from their employer, it meant that they had been a good worker.

Before I continue to explain, in the next section, how exactly improved accommodation was related to employers and what strategies were used for advancing in housing, I will first clarify the relationship between housing, place of residence and workplace that formed the main legal frame within which a Soviet person moved and dwelled. Vladimir (b. 1949, Russian) and I had a conversation about this when I asked him whether someone could in principle move to and live anywhere in the Soviet Union, or whether there were mobility restrictions.

> V: You could live where you wanted! When you had a place of residence (*propiska*) you could live anywhere.
> JK: And what if you did not have a place of residence?
> V: Well, if you did not have a place of residence, you were no one. What do you think? You had to be registered somewhere. First of all, the place of residence certainly had to appear in your passport. Certainly.
> JK: Who was checking, and when, whether you had it or not?
> V: The police (*militsiya*).
> JK: Whenever?
> V: No, but for example when you want to establish yourself somewhere to work you'll immediately be asked, "Who are you?" You'll show your passport. Next, you'll be asked, "But where are you registered?" You would say, "In X [a random place name]", and the response would be, "So what are you doing here? Until you have a place of residence here, you will not get any work from us". I could have travelled with this passport wherever I wanted to [in the Soviet Union], even to the Far East, but no one

would have given me a job. First you needed to unregister from one place, then register in another place and only then get a job. Place of residence always had to come first. And how else? You are nobody. Now [in today's Estonia] I can be the owner of five apartments and be registered in one of them. If I liked, I could just move into another and register myself there after unregistering from the previous one. This is my private business, where I live, no one asks. But back then when you wanted to register yourself in a town, you'd be immediately asked, "What are you doing here and where did you come from?" No, in the Soviet Union they kept a very close eye on what your place of residence was. Even in every small town there was a passport office. The system had a complete overview of the location of each citizen. It was possible to find anyone. (Interview 30.10.2010)

Vladimir made it clear in this conversation that place of residence, as recorded in passports, enabled the state to control its subjects, and was the crucial precondition for physical and social mobility. But how did someone get a place of residence in a situation where there was no free housing market, i.e. no living space to walk into and register oneself, even in exchange for lots of money? As I will discuss next, Soviet mobilities, including those evolving in Narva, depended on the strategic importance, development stage and capacities of local industries and was relatively independent of people's needs to dwell in places. However, my informants were able to influence a number of issues that could improve their chances of better housing: their adequate knowledge of the housing situation and of the prospects of industries that owned housing; their ability to negotiate in relation to housing when the situation arose; and their creation and maintenance of social networks that were useful both for gaining access to information and negotiating with the housing distributors.

5.3   Improving housing conditions

While the Soviet housing scarcity was a shared and therefore connecting experience between people of different sociodemographic backgrounds, individual housing narratives perfectly highlight the inequalities and room for manoeuvre in the system.

First, there was a hierarchy of jobs and industries in Narva. Housing was a central element of the benefits connected to certain industries and positions, and was usually more important than salary level, which also varied remarkably between industries. This inscribed hierarchy, meaning that some people waited for decades for an

improvement in their living conditions while others received apartments immediately upon arrival in Narva, the latter being the practice more so from the 1970s onwards, was a widely known and accepted fact in the town. Irina (b. 1950) who worked as a nurse in the hospital explained how housing was distributed by her employer:

> For me, receiving an apartment was unrealistic. Receiving an apartment through the hospital was in general unrealistic. The hospital did not have its own housing stock (*nye bilo svoyego fonda*). The hospital belonged to the town, so it depended on the town [on how many apartments the town was able to allocate]. Apartments were allocated primarily to doctors. And these were family apartments only. Those doctors who came directly from the university and were single also had to live in a dormitory and use a communal kitchen. So, this is how the single doctors lived. So, for most people it was simply unrealistic to get an apartment from the hospital. (Interview 15.09.2010)

At the same time, I heard many stories in Narva about people who had received their apartment straight after their arrival. When I inquired into this discrepancy in housing distribution with Irina, her answer was:

> But this only concerns specialists (*spyetsialisti*)! This is when an enterprise is inviting specialists. A good example – 24 years ago, a new maternity hospital was opened in Narva. I was already working in the old one, but before the opening [of the new one], they were looking for doctors. Yes, [in this case] there was a [special] administrative order, which means that the hospital's principal doctor made an announcement and invited doctors to work with him. He already had a stock of apartments to distribute. This [receiving an apartment] was one of the conditions in the work negotiations. And the same happened with *Pribaltiyskaya* – they invited engineers to work there. They also gave apartments to them without any queue. […] My husband worked as a controller [in *Pribaltiyskaya*] and I as a nurse – so we were not such important specialists as to receive apartments immediately. (Interview 15.09.2010)

Against this background of a chronic housing shortage, year-long queues and the need to have a faultless reputation in the eyes of employers, who in principle had the final say in deciding to which workers apartment would be granted, the following story of Gennady (b. 1950) is telling in respect of how people of a certain status were still able to negotiate their housing conditions. In 1976 Gennady was invited to work in Narva as manager of a municipal institution. Together with the invitation, he was promised a private family apartment in the town. But when he first arrived and went to talk with the director, the following conversation unfolded:

> "We will give you a two-room apartment, in a month", the director announced. I told him, "Konstantin Ivanovich, we did not agree this with you". I told him, "First – you will give me a three-room apartment, second – you will find a job for my wife, third

– you will organise places in daycare for my kids. I have a letter guaranteeing these conditions. So, everything as promised". And he just responded, "Fine, but now get out of here!" But I said, "Wait, I had more requirements. Please be so kind as to not give me an apartment somewhere faraway, but next to my workplace". And they immediately found me a three-room apartment 300 metres from my workplace. (Interview 11.03.2011)

This story indicates that when an individual's professional abilities were acknowledged and there was a burning need to fill a certain position, special arrangements were possible and could even be made urgently. Another informant of mine, Vladimir (b. 1949), happened to be one of the lucky doctors who received their apartments immediately upon their arrival, as mentioned earlier by Irina. To him, coming from Kazakhstan, it was not, however, that self-evident at all that he as a specialist would have the space to negotiate his conditions. First of all, he was already surprised by the fact that he had been *invited* to Narva and, moreover, that he had been offered an apartment. This probably is indicative of some of the existing contrasts between the habitual order of things in different Soviet places.

> The idea that in 1975 someone somewhere, especially in *Pribaltika* (the Baltics) will give you – a total stranger – an apartment, was crazy. Who am I? A visiting professor perhaps? No, indeed. All right then. /.../ I told my wife what had just happened to me and she replied: "Think! Who would give you an apartment in *Pribaltika*? Are you stupid or what?" I told her then, "Those who sent me the [invitation] letter are supposedly serious people". Exactly two weeks passed, and I received a telegram stating, "The apartment is assigned in your name. Please come". I told my wife, "That's all, I'm leaving. I am quitting everything here and leaving now". And she responded, "But I won't go anywhere". Me: "Why won't you go?" My wife: "I won't go. Go alone if you wish. And let's see then what you've been given there". (Interview 30.10.2010)

For Irina's family, it appeared that the only possibility was to receive an apartment from her husband's workplace, the electric power station, through the usual practice: waiting on the list. Waiting one's turn on the list may have had its time-based and local variations, but overall it was an extremely common and totally accepted Soviet practice. In 1970s and 1980s Narva, being on a list for a family apartment meant, according to Irina, the following: "One partner was listed [in his enterprise], only one, and the other had to bring a letter of proof from her employer that she would not stay on the list at the same time". After a place on a list was taken up, waiting could turn out to be a very lengthy process that depended little on the waiters themselves.

We had lived in a [family] dormitory since 1975. And it turned out that they [in *Pribaltiyskaya*] practically were not taking new workers anymore. *Pribaltiyskaya* was working at full power and the building of new housing was basically finished. So, we lived for over 10 years in a dorm, 12.5 long years [to be exact]. […] There were no apartments available. But later, before Estonia became independent, they built another two houses. During almost 20 years *Pribaltiyskaya* built only two houses! This is why we were waiting for such a long time on the list. (Interview 15.09.2010)

From this story we learn two things that were characteristic of mobility in Narva: first, that mobility in the town was very much industry-led, and periodic rather than casual and, second, that housing conditions did not necessarily gradually improve for everyone. The layers of resettler populations were inscribed in the development of separate industries: people were both forced and inclined to see opportunities opening up in the landscape of industrial development and were willing to adjust their life-trajectories accordingly. When new industrial work was available, housing was possibly available, and this attracted resettlers. When the enterprise had carried out its plan (submitted by the Soviet ministry of economy), it stopped ordering new qualified workers, which in turn caused the mobility related to this particular industry to cease in Narva or initiated new trajectories of mobility towards other places. One thing is obvious: the people who were provided with housing and were satisfied with it had a strong motivation to dwell in Narva.

In a similar situation to that of Irina's family, many families would have probably utilised other strategies to improve their housing situation, either trying to change one member of the couple's workplace to another industry (which was not that easy) or moving to another place with a similar industry but more promising housing conditions. Irina's family, however, decided to hold on and hope that the solution would come.

During our conversation, Irina mentioned another type of housing – the cooperative apartment – that was not within her own family's reach. To be able to get on the waiting list of a building cooperative – the third type of housing system after communal apartments and enterprise-distributed apartments – there were also some special conditions: first, the individual had to have lived in Narva for at least five years; second, they had to have enough money to finance the building of their apartment in the cooperative; and, third, they also needed to prove that they were not at the same time on the waiting list of another cooperative. Nor was saving enough money to buy a cooperative apartment for just anybody, as the standard wages were hardly enough even to cover basic living costs. Typically, people worked

for years for increased wages in the Northern mining regions, or for special wages on other special short-term projects as Olga (b. 1921) and her husband did. Olga's story reveals one way in which acquiring a cooperative apartment could proceed:

> And so, we worked for 15 years there across the North Pole. My husband retired earlier but he waited until I retired, too, in 1972. […] Nobody wanted to accept us to join an apartment building cooperative. As we were both Ukrainian, we wanted to return to Ukraine. We travelled to many towns in Ukraine. We were in Kharkov, we were in Zaporozhe, in Nikopol, in many towns. But nobody let us join a cooperative because the waiting lists were just awfully long. […] But here in Narva there was a woman we knew from across the North Pole. She joined the cooperative earlier than us, while still living there in the north. The apartment remained empty and she let us live there while we waited for our own cooperative apartment. Finally, we received the apartment that we had bought by ourselves. […] And we started to live here. (Interview 27.10.2010)

Sometimes the distribution of the apartments was not as clearly connected to people's own efforts as the ideological narrative went. Some people were able to jump up the waiting list and receive an apartment much faster than their colleagues. They were both cursed and admired, and above all envied for their skill in negotiating favourable conditions. The act of "jumping the queue" was associated with social capital, and if someone was not able to improve their situation using these same strategies, it was considered a sign of a "lack of capital" rather than of being more moral, fair or well-mannered. It eventually unfolded from my interview with Irina that despite the objectively rather impossible situation regarding receiving an apartment from *Pribaltiyskaya*, she believed that some available strategies had not been employed because of her husband's personal qualities. She was very displeased with her husband because he never made any effort to ensure that the family's position on the apartment waiting list improved as should have been expected. Instead, they had to witness how some people who had arrived in Narva much later than they had, and naturally must have been on the lower end of the list, received their apartments before they did. Irina was well aware of the conditions of her sister's family, among other cases:

> My sister's husband also worked in *Pribaltiyskaya*, they got married after us and got on a waiting list two and a half years later. […] He was the kind [of man] who went every month to see the director, and they received an apartment before us. But my husband did not even know when the time was for the [apartments'] distribution. Everyone knew, lists were hanging [on the wall in the workplace], and when I asked him, "Yuri,

when will we get the apartment?", he replied, "Eh, the distribution has not come yet". (Interview 15.09.2010)

For Irina, when her husband's co-workers "jumped the queue", this was not an unfair action on the part of the employer or the co-workers. She just felt resentment that her now former husband's character was such that he did not care about or dare to fight for his right as "proper men did". But this also indicates how taken for granted this way of getting an apartment was.

Like many other Soviet structural inequalities, the fact that housing was considerably more easily accessible for some individuals, professions and industries was one of those Soviet "normalities" that people just accepted and learnt to live with. The fact that some industries (e.g. the power plants) had their own housing stock for their workers, i.e. a state-allocated budget for building apartments, and others (e.g. Kreenholm) did not, was not questioned or criticised by my informants. They expressed that they were not angry with the system but were simply trying to find their own way through it. When I inquired of my female informants who had worked in Kreenholm their whole working life whether they perceived themselves as being in a dead-end situation, knowing that they would never be able to improve their housing, they all emphasised that luckily their husbands worked for a different industry and were therefore solving their housing problems. But for many people in Kreenholm the housing issue was ultimately the main reason for their changing their job and industry, even though this might mean a lower salary.

5.4 Constraints on and possibilities of house exchanges and further mobility

For most people, improving their housing conditions or fitting them better to their and their close family's changing needs was complicated and took a great deal of resourcefulness. It was often done with a combination of material resources, social capital, persistence and simple good luck. People in Narva truly amazed me with their inventiveness and the various manoeuvres they tried to resolve their complicated situations. I will next explain how an apartment exchange could take place, in practice.

There was an "official exchange market" (*byuro ob'mena*) through which people traded apartments directly. It was based on a curious mode of ownership inscribed in the Soviet housing system: once an employer had allocated an apartment, it was non-refundable. The individual now had "ownership" of the apartment and was able to exchange it, if they so wished, with another one in an entirely different region of the former Soviet Union. Once the possibility of and need for such an exchange arose, people systematically looked for suitable matches.

Every Soviet person knew exactly how many square metres their apartment was and they usually correctly remembered the sizes of their previous homes too. Living space measured in square metres and divided by the number of persons registered in the dwelling was the key figure that Soviet officials used in the strict distribution of apartments. A decrease in this number was officially the basis on which someone could claim a larger living space in the Soviet system.

Zinaida (b. 1934) recalled how her life-trajectory was defined by a missing half a square metre. When she got divorced from her husband and wanted to move away from Soviet Lithuania to improve her own and her daughter's situation, she first targeted Leningrad.

> When I exchanged [my apartment in Lithuania], I was not thinking in terms of whether to return to my homeland or not. For me it mattered that Narva was close to Jõhvi and Kohtla-Järve where two of my sisters, Nina and Anna, were living. To be correct, until then I had tried to make an exchange for Leningrad. This was because my kids were growing up, and I had to give them an education. I figured that this was better and easier to do in a city where I could live too, so that they could live with me and I could feed my children. I failed. There were three of us and [by law] we needed to find an apartment with a size of at least 27 square metres. But I found only 26.5 square metres. Because of this missing half a square metre I went to talk to Popov, the deputy chairman of the Leningrad City Executive Committee. I begged him, I persuaded him that otherwise I would not be able to educate my children and things like that. This did not help at all. They refused because of this missing half a square metre. And, as a result, I ended up here in Narva. So it was. […] But they [the owners of the tiny Leningrad apartment] were able to exchange their 26.5 square metre apartment for a three-room apartment in Klaipeda. (Interview 31.10.2010)

As can be seen from Zinaida's story, the main reason for her decision to try to find an apartment in Narva after her failed attempt in Leningrad was the proximity of her family. While in Zinaida's case the family did not directly mediate her move to Narva, in many other of my informants' narratives, mobility and dwelling relied heavily on family assistance and networks. Family members who were already settled

in Narva – as in Valentina's story – helped with organising temporary housing solutions and providing information about improving one's housing situation. In this way, dwelling in Soviet Narva was in practice often facilitated by family networks rather than being the result of a collaborative relationship between an individual and the state enterprise. Soviet society's worker-centric organisation thus tacitly relied on the fact that people first and foremost operated as families and, moreover, as extended families, in their practices and decisions. Families needed to cooperate and be inventive in finding solutions to counteract the insufficiency of the Soviet state in areas that enabled family life. In addition to Soviet families' actual need to operate as teams, there was often a strong cultural basis among Russian-speakers for maintaining familyhood (cf. Bryceson & Vuorela 2002) across extended families, even when separated by long distances and for extensive periods.

One third of my informants had got divorced during Soviet times and another five had divorced during the early to mid-1990s. In the Soviet era, divorce was a rather radical step that brought with it a great deal of insecurity at a time when moving out of an apartment might have meant having nowhere to live. For instance, as explained by my informant Zanna (b. 1955), if a couple with two children had a two-room apartment, the only feasible option in the case of divorce was to try to exchange it for two one-room apartments on the public exchange market. Eventually, someone would probably be interested, but the parent who stayed with the children – typically the mother – was squeezed into a one-room apartment with little hope of turning this lack of space into more space. It can only be imagined how many couples preferred to stay in destructive marriages and to continue living under the same roof, discouraged by the rather hopeless possibility of fixing the housing problem that would have accompanied divorce. Zanna herself separated from her husband in 1984. Since their two-room apartment was given to them by her husband's workplace, he considered that he owned it. Zanna took their two children and moved in with her sister, who was living in a two-room *khrushchyovka*-type apartment, consisting of a living room with a bedroom opening off it, that she shared with her husband and son. Zanna lived with her sister's family for almost a year until she sorted out the situation with her ex-husband by exchanging the two-room dwelling for a one-room apartment and a room in a communal apartment into which her ex eventually agreed to move (Interview 12.11.2010).

On arrival in Narva, Russian-speakers were satisfied with the poor living conditions, and their typical dwelling practices included sharing an apartment with

relatives and living in dorms for an unknown length of time, which they considered a "temporary condition". Most of my informants described their struggle to acquire a private apartment and their careful planning and undertaking of a whole set of well-thought-through steps and strategies in compliance with the temporal Soviet housing realities. Housing conditions and the hope of obtaining improved housing were importantly mediated by social relations. Furthermore, for many people the much-desired acquisition of a private apartment was a crucial moment of staying put, i.e. the search for housing was the main trigger of Soviet mobile trajectories and accomplishing this served as a mechanism of dwelling in place. This moment of acquiring a private apartment often not only determined the end of an individual's mobile path in Soviet times but had a direct impact on their remaining life choices. Being rooted in Narva by means of housing made it difficult for them to take up any opportunity for change after the Soviet collapse and this continues to be the case.

5.5   Entering the free housing market and becoming home-owners

The burning housing problem that characterised Soviet times was transformed into new opportunities with the beginning of privatisation in 1993. Hitherto largely state-owned housing started to move into private ownership. In Narva, the big state enterprises such as Balti SEJ (*Pribaltiyskaya*), Eesti SEJ (*Gres'*) and Baltijets – practically still the state – had ownership of most of the apartments as well as the land where Narvans' dachas and gardening plots were located. The municipality also owned the land under and around individually owned detached houses. The state's agenda in Estonia, similarly to in the whole of East-Central Europe, was to quickly privatise the housing stock to minimise public expenditure on housing and shift responsibility for property management onto the people themselves (Verdery 2004). Another trigger for this privatisation was the newly independent Estonian state's desire to "return to the pre-Soviet institutional organization" and "establish social justice by returning the ownership rights to those who had been deprived of them during the Soviet time" (Kährik 2000, 3). The Estonian government passed an ownership law in 1993 in which it decided, among other mechanisms, to distribute vouchers (national capital bonds and compensation securities) – in everyday

language "yellow cards" – to everyone residing in Estonia in relation to their length of employment. Every year equated to 300 kroons, and the vouchers could be exchanged for dwelling space (apartments), land or shares in enterprises, the values of which were fixed depending on the characteristics of each property. Family members could pool their employment years and receive a shared yellow card with a higher value. The top priority was for people to privatise the apartments they were already living in (Purju 1996)[39]. In 1994, the vouchers became freely tradable, which meant that people could sell or buy employment years with a view to future housing purchases.

Kährik (2000, 1) has noted that although the privatisation process was effective and generally served its purposes, it did not give everyone equal starting capital in an independent capitalist Estonia and thus gave rise to inequalities in society. The voucher system favoured those who received a yellow card with a high value, for example two retired adults for whom much of the voucher's value was left after they had privatised their own apartment and who could use the remaining resources to purchase more housing space and trade it. A contrasting example is that one of the most insecure situations was faced by relatively young, divorced parents who needed two separate apartments but their employment years were not sufficient even for one. Age was certainly not the only factor in producing worse outcomes for some. The more structural factors of different forms of occupancy, types of housing available in different places and industries, and housing planning and availability during the different Soviet decades on the one hand, and the individual factors of personal relations, household structure, marital status and so on on the other, together shaped the opportunities and constraints in the area of housing at the moment of privatisation. The result was that although the majority of people were

---

[39] "Two types of privatisation securities are used in Estonia. The basis for calculating the value of national capital bonds (NCB) is given in the "Law on Privatisation of Dwelling Rooms" (adopted in June 1993). Every permanent resident of the Republic of Estonia as of January 1st, 1992 who is at least 18 years old, could apply for the NCBs. The basis for calculating the value of the NCB is the employment period (working years) in Estonia between January 1st, 1945 and January 1st, 1992. Persons employed for less than ten years are given a so-called citizen's NCB with a value of ten years employment. Five years are added to one parent for every child and also to orphans. For unlawfully repressed persons, every year spent in prison or exile is calculated as three years of employment" (Purju 1996, 30). The Estonian state also returned any properties that had been nationalised by the Soviet Union after 1940 to their owners or their heirs, and where it was not possible to return a property it was compensated for by "compensation securities" (CS). Since only very few old Narvans returned to Soviet Narva and almost all of the town's housing was demolished during the war, the CS procedure concerned very few Narvans. Among my informants, it potentially affected only two individuals.

able to become homeowners, this unequal distribution of property across various social groups was already built into what later started to happen in the housing market and in people's social and economic life in general.

In 2008, there were 5,211 dwellings in Narva, with nearly 35,000 living spaces (e.g. apartments and dormitory rooms where people could live). Only 8 per cent of this living space is today owned by the municipality or the state. Every Narvan owns on average more than 1.5 living spaces – in practice, mostly apartments – and this figure is slowly increasing as the population constantly decreases. In addition, on the territory of Narva there are nearly 7,000 seasonal living spaces – dachas (Narva munitsipaalelamufondi… 2008, 6).

I will next look closer at how the privatisation affected my Russian-speaking informants' housing situations and standards, and their home-making process as a whole during the post-Soviet period.

5.6 From lack to abundance of housing: ownership, renting and investments

In 2010-2011, all my informants were private homeowners and about half of them still lived in apartments they had once received from their employer and later privatised. Elizaveta (b. 1967) owned three apartments, all located on the same street in huge multi-storey buildings: one, where she lived and which she owned with her partner; another that she had bought or privatised herself when she was still single and which she successfully rented out; and another that she was left by her mother and which she had tried to rent out but had encountered difficulties in finding a trustworthy tenant. At the time we met, Elizaveta had just managed to release herself from a "parasite tenant", a young lad who turned out to be an unemployed drug addict – a rather common type of person in Narva these days, as my informants frequently mentioned. She told me that the lad was recommended to her by an acquaintance and this was the only reason she had agreed to take him in the first place, even though she had immediately been suspicious of him. At the beginning, there were no issues, but then she started to have difficulties with receiving the rent. She had informed his sister – her acquaintance – who had then paid the rent. After a while, the situation repeated itself until she decided that she would sleep better at

night if there was no one in the apartment, even though she had to pay the service charges herself and these were especially high during the winter season because of the central heating costs. She felt that, apart from the possible material damage that could occur, having a drug addict in the apartment also violated the memory of her beloved mother to whom this apartment once belonged.

Given that the population of Narva has decreased by more than 30 per cent during the post-Soviet period, the number of available apartments is much higher than the actual need for them. Many people, including my informants, owned multiple apartments in the town, and they needed to find tenants that could be trusted. Everyone told me that they rented through personal recommendations. Finding a good tenant was not an easy task, as people who had stable incomes and could be trusted usually had their own properties already. Also, very few people moved to Narva temporarily for work or other reasons. Rather, people left the town and apartments remained empty. Selling a surplus apartment was often not a good option either in a borderland town where the unemployment figures had been among the highest in Estonia for years: there was so much supply that securing a deal meant selling well below the market price; redundant apartments were often also in a bad shape, in need of complete renovation. Some apartments used to be occupied by children or grandchildren who had gone to live abroad for indefinite lengths of time. These apartments were kept on in the hope that the (grand)child(ren) would at some point return. In this situation, many second homeowners kept their apartments empty rather than renting them out – as long as they could afford it, of course. The situation of property ownership in Narva, where family and other homes remained empty and had much more of an emotional than an economic value, becoming financially burdens rather than investments, is similar to the dynamics of periferialisation globally only that in Narva – as in other former Soviet places – the transformation from home ownership scarcity to abundance happened very quickly.

By the time of my fieldwork, some people had realised what the historical and architectural value and potential of the buildings in Kreenholm suburb were and had purchased property there. For the average Narvan, however, including the majority of my informants, this option was simply unaffordable and thinking about the future value of and longer-term investment in property did not belong to their everyday realms. The Kuznetsov family was an exception. They had recently bought a two-room apartment in a late-19th-century building in Kreenholm suburb that had once served as one of the Kreenholm textile factory's barracks. Although the apartment

was located on the fourth floor, the building did not have a lift. The whole apartment, with its high ceilings and windows and extra deep windowsills, had been carefully renovated, and it was cosy and furnished in good taste and with care, but its look and functionality, as I observed them, were certainly rather extraordinary in Narvan terms, not meeting the local expectations that stressed practicality, not luxury, where an apartment for an elderly couple was concerned (Field notes 01.11.2010).

There was almost no new-build contemporary housing available in Narva during my fieldwork. Those who wanted a contemporary property were in serious trouble and needed to wait until the situation hopefully changed in the future. In the autumn of 2018, when I visited Narva again, the lack of contemporary housing had become even more acute, to the extent that in public discussions it was presented as one of the key reasons preventing Narva from attracting a new (young) population and hindering its economic growth. However, property developers considered the risk of building contemporary housing in Narva too big, given the precariousness of the employment situation, the decreasing population and the lack of a broad-based economic infrastructure.

There was no particular desire for private detached housing in Narva in Soviet times – houses were difficult to build because of the lack of materials and apartments provided easy and comfortable living. Dachas, which I discuss in the next chapter, nicely complemented urban living in apartments. The desire to live in private urban houses in Narva, and the opportunities for doing so, had not notably increased in the post-Soviet period either, according to my observation, not to mention the incredibly large houses with turrets and other skitch-like features, surrounded by high fencing, that appeared in the early 1990s in the immediate vicinity of modest traditional houses and were characteristic of nouveau-riche materiality (Humphrey 2002; Fehérváry 2002). The market for private houses seemed to be non-existent; if anything, some older private houses were being fixed up and extended, and dachas, especially those in the territory of the town, were adapted for year-round living. There were no new districts or even new streets filled with modern private houses as was the case elsewhere in Estonia. Some of my informants noted that maintaining a private house and garden meant a lot of work, continuous investment and a big responsibly and this made any desire for a private house vanish. Besides, many if not most Narvans had dachas and were involved in dacha practices, which better suited their lifestyle and provided the possibility of satisfying their need to have the benefits that private houses generally embodied.

As a consequence of the Soviet-era housing policy, most of my elderly informants had lived for decades in the very same apartment they had once received from their employer and later privatised. Generally, my informants were satisfied with the housing they had in Narva and did not wish to move in order to change or improve their housing conditions in any respect. Long-time dwelling in a particular apartment, building and suburb usually manifested itself in a deep knowledge of the neighbourhood and in many routine practices that had developed around the dwelling place. When I inquired about my informants' opinions with regard to the best places in the town to live, they often considered their own neighbourhood to be the best location. While other suburbs might have had better access to nature or were known for their more spacious apartments or higher-quality construction, my elderly informants preferred the familiarity of their close surroundings. I am mindful here of the Soviet-era experience of being "planted" in houses rather than choosing them, which had its effect on how most of my informants viewed their emotional relationship with their dwelling places.

In contrast, I observed among my younger and mostly female informants, whose adult lives under Soviet conditions had been short, that their preferences for different housing types and locations, their specific practices of making homes out of anonymous dwellings, and the meanings they attached to desired houses differed considerably from those of the elderly. The main difference was that they were accustomed to the category of "choice" in the realm of dwelling and needed to actively develop practices to make the best choices in conditions that were constrained not by availability but by material resources. For example, Antonina (b. 1968) turned to new-age practices to find a home with a spiritual energy, and Polina (b. 1975) had spotted a specific Stalinist-style building with a view of Narva's central square and patiently kept her eye on the property market for several years until an apartment in the building became available at an affordable price. Both these highly educated single mothers expressed great satisfaction with the apartments they had purchased and dedicated a large amount of time and effort to later transforming them into their perfect homes.

5.7 Changing houses in Post-Soviet times: negotiations within extended families

Some of my informants had changed their homes during post-Soviet times. When such changes were made after privatisation, they were frequently based on the concrete combined needs of an entire extended family, not of an individual alone: to increase the living space and improve the living conditions of children or grandchildren by swapping apartments or selling and purchasing something more suitable to everyone's needs. Typically, elderly people who had ended up living alone after a partner's death were satisfied with a small one- or at most two-room apartment, and this was also a good way to economise, paying less for services including water, electricity, rubbish collection and central heating[40]. Although Galina (b. 1946), who I introduced at the beginning of this chapter through a description of her extremely cramped housing conditions until 1974, had been living in the same three-room apartment for 38 years by the time we met in 2011, and even though for the last few years she had lived there alone, she had no plans to swap her home for a smaller one. She told me about how she adored all the space that finally belonged only to her and that she would not exchange it for anything.

When people made housing-related decisions – purchases or exchanges – within a family, the new properties were usually located as close as possible to the previous ones, in the same district, a neighbouring house or even the same building. Often this was done so as to make extended family life more convenient, to be close by and able to help when needed. The older people got, the more two-directional help and care became. Although Narva is rather small and the suburbs are not far from each other, the older people get the more their daily life passes in their own suburb. But to move on in life, to advance their careers and their economic conditions significantly, people in post-Soviet Narva saw moving away as the only option. When my host Julia (b. 1973) shared with me the considerations, concerns, plans and hopes that arose at the time of her move to Tallinn in the spring of 2011, she was mindful of the fact that this change would also deeply affect the lives of her daughter's two grandmothers, one located in cross-border Ivangorod and the other in Narva. When

---

[40] According to the Household Budget Survey 2010 (Tikva & Arnik 2012), household members in Estonia spent an average of 272 euros per month each, with expenditure on food and housing accounting for 45 per cent of the total budget. Pensioners living alone received on average 271 euros a month, which meant that their income barely covered their basic food and household costs.

Julia explained to me her and her husband's criteria for choosing a house to buy in Tallinn, she stressed that it was necessary to have at least six bedrooms so that each grandmother could have her own room. From a more long-term perspective, she saw them both staying in the new place more and more as they got older. Her mother-in-law Galina (b. 1946), however, laughed at this prospect when we were discussing it in Julia's house. She told me that there was no way she would move away from Narva or start spending extended amounts of time in Tallinn. She stressed that her own apartment and the possibility of sleeping in her own bed were very important to her, so she would go to Tallinn only when her help was absolutely needed and that it was better for everyone to live in their own place. It was also obvious that Galina did not get on well with Julia's mother Vera (b. 1933), who was a very religious woman and annoyed her greatly. This conversation illustrated the sort of disagreements that decisions related to homes and housing could bring about between members of extended families (Field notes 21.03.2011).

I will now return to the story of Zinaida, who moved to Narva in 1975 after an unsuccessful attempt to swap her apartment in Klaipeda with one in Leningrad. One of her two daughters, who was in her late 40s at the time I met Zinaida, also lived in Narva. When the daughter had got married and had her own children in the mid-1980s, her family had moved in with Zinaida because they had no other place to live. Zinaida moved into her living room and gave her bedroom to her daughter's family. She explained to me that the living room was a walk-in room where she never had any privacy. So, from time to time, for the sake of having her own space and giving her daughter's family more privacy, she spent extended lengths of time in a modest local health spa in Narva-Jõesuu. Later on, she met her second husband and lived in his tiny one-room apartment until his death. She then sold this apartment, left her own apartment permanently to her daughter's family and bought herself a small two-room apartment in Narva. Afterwards she helped to finance the purchase of a small house in a dacha district in central Narva. She had invested a considerable amount of time and money in this property, but she repeatedly told me that it was her daughter's house. The house was bought on credit and had already been going through a renovation for years by the time we met. In the long term, the plan was for it to become a house for year-round living but at that time it was still a rather cold space in the winter and they used it mainly in the summer season, from May to October at most. Nevertheless, the house, equipped with wood stoves only, still needed to be heated twice a week during the winter. Zinaida's son-in-law took care

of this at the weekends and Zinaida herself carried out the task mid-week. During the summer season, Zinaida would move into the house. She stayed there overnight, and took care of the garden and the whole property. The last large purchase in the house was the kitchen furniture, which Zinaida had paid for. She told me that the property required a lot of money and that she contributed as much as she could from her pension (Field notes 08.12.2010, 21.03.2011 and 09.06.2011).

As the previous example illustrates, relying on family help continued in post-Soviet Narva. Housing-related decisions often continued to be made within extended families rather than by an individual or between a (young) couple only. The privatisation conditions of the early 1990s frequently forced families to take communal decisions regarding house purchases. When parents and grandparents allocated their privatisation vouchers to their children and grandchildren to enable them to have their own homes, this also involved people relying on inter-family relationships, taking out loans and risk on the further development of mutual relationships and formed long-lasting dependencies.

Similarly to Zinaida, many (grand)parents in post-Soviet Narva continued to be guarantors for their children's apartments, to exchange their own homes with their children's or grandchildren's to provide them with more space, and to carry out other property manoeuvres in order to make their lives easier and more comfortable. Elderly Narvans frequently and even systematically "lent" their (grand)children money for house instalments. In practice, this tended to mean that the money was not expected to be paid back, but was rather supposed to be "returned" in the form of love and good treatment. My informants helped their (grand)children to pay their bills in hard times as well as contributing money when they needed to buy home appliances, new kitchen equipment, sofas or anything that was considered a large purchase for which they would normally have had to save money over a long period rather than making the purchase spontaneously, as the desire or need appeared.

5.8   New times, new practices: expanding the boundaries of home-spaces

My elderly informants often regretfully mentioned that these days they did not know half of the people they shared their apartment block entrance with. This post-

Soviet change signalled that many people had moved in and out in the meantime, but not only that – the way in which people dwelled and related to others, their neighbours, had also dramatically changed. For the Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans, this new reality was in stark contrast with the past times, when the neighbours knew, greeted, helped and even visited each other. The advent of capitalism had equipped buildings with buzzers and metal front doors that were always closed – a means of fighting crime and keeping down-and-outs and drug addicts out, providing peace and security to the inhabitants of an apartment block. While this change perhaps did provide security, it also marked the beginning of a new era characterised by individualism, indifference and anonymity – values that were not inherent to or appreciated by my informants. In this way, even though the dwelling places of many had remained the same, the social practices around them had changed, and definitely not for the better. What they grieved was the loss of the sociality in dwelling – an essential component of feeling at home – they had become accustomed to. (The aspect of sociality in dwelling will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.)

A counterbalance to this general individualism, indifference and anonymity was provided to apartment dwellers through new forms of cooperation and voluntarism that slowly emerged around housing cooperatives, a post-Soviet phenomenon that was entirely new to Narvans. When apartments went into private ownership, Narvans had to learn the principles of this and become accustomed to myriad new rights and obligations. They had to start paying for the actual costs of heating, water, electricity and a number of other communal services that were previously paid for by the state enterprise owners. They needed to start keeping track of outgoings and thinking about how to economise better when the costs of house maintenance services were constantly increasing. In 2011, every apartment block belonged to a housing cooperative that managed the building, and the cooperative's board was elected by the apartment dwellers. The role of the cooperative was to purchase communal and maintenance services from service providers in the best interest of all the dwellers, ensure that these services were provided, pay for them and invoice the dwellers equally and regularly for their share. The general meetings that housing cooperatives held also provided a space for dwellers to have a say about issues that not only concerned the costs for each apartment owner but affected the building as a whole and its surroundings. These meetings were often filled with heated discussions, tensions and conflicts, but they also represented a new form of sociality

around communal matters. My informants felt proud when their housing cooperative managed to keep the apartment block clean, undertook successful renovation work or bought new benches so that the elderly could spend time outside. However, they regretted that this did not bring back the lost atmosphere of Soviet-era friendly living, because young people minded only their own business.

Over time, as Narvans began to realise that they now had the possibility to influence what their home-space looked like from the outside as well as from inside their own apartment, as in Soviet times, people living in apartments also started to voluntarily care for their building's surroundings. Flowerbeds, benches and various adornments, which emerged usually as a result of the voluntary work of some enthusiastic apartment dwellers, became part of the aesthetics around large Soviet buildings. Alina (b. 1975), who moved to Narva in 1996, vividly explained to me the striking change in the aesthetics of communal space around apartment blocks that had happened in front of her eyes in little more than a decade. With some amusement, she also took delight in having brought about a change in the apartment dwellers' mentality and practice in her own suburb. First, she was merely annoyed by people passing close by her ground-floor apartment, and to prevent people from gaining access to her window she decided to do some digging and plant some bushes there to block their view. At first, all her neighbours looked at her strangely, because it was unheard of in Narva that people would transform public space on their own initiative. Passers-by simply stopped and gazed. Yet the following year she noticed similar planting activities taking place around another apartment building nearby and with each passing year it happened more and more. At times it almost looked, as Alina commented, as though elderly Russian-speakers were competing with each other over whose flowerbeds were the biggest and most decorative.

5.9   Discussion

Throughout this chapter, my aim was to show how specific housing conditions in both Soviet and post-Soviet times brought about certain practices of dwelling, encompassing the material, symbolic and emotional aspects of the lives of Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans. Dwelling in apartments in Narva has been a long-term bodily and emotional practice and investment, an interplay between economic

and political conditions, social relationships, personal resourcefulness and sometimes pure luck. As loci of social life, homes can also be seen as representations of various power relations, household micro-dynamics, and personal struggles and negotiations.

Under conditions of severe housing scarcity, Soviet apartments bound with an urban lifestyle signified hope tied up with aspirations to Soviet modernity and progress both in personal and societal terms, and accordingly achieving an apartment was seen as the fulfilment of these aspirations. From this perspective, urban houses in Narva were certainly invested with a great deal of hope and a feeling of success. Differently from a system of market-based housing in which great value is placed on a home's domestic privacy (Douglas 1991) and security (Saunders 1990), in Soviet Narva the utmost values in relation to housing were associated with space and family privacy. In the Russian context, Attwood (2010) has noted that in relation to the absence of legal home ownership during Soviet times, "owning" an apartment was more associated with its formality, and especially its aspects of agency and control, than with domestic privacy as it is widely understood in the West, and this was also the case in Narva. Agency and control over a house allowed for more stability and predictability in life in general. Dwelling in Narva, given the hoping and waiting for a private apartment that could be turned into a family home (cf. Jansen 2006; Huttunen 2009), took a great deal of patience and emotional work, but above all it required an alignment with local industrial development, effective social relationships and manoeuvring skills. Furthermore, the often-complicated paths to becoming home "owners" and the complex strategies that Narvans employed in pursuit of this can be seen as intrinsic to the wider process of accumulating local knowledge through which Russian-speaking Narvans were converted from strangers into local experts on everyday life in Narva.

Post-Soviet times, beginning with the entrance into the free housing market followed by many other economic and political transformations, further complicated the relationship between Narvans and their urban apartments. The experience of scarcity that was familiar from Soviet times was replaced first by a total unknowingness with regard to what a free housing market meant, and then by a realisation of its competitiveness and its interwovenness with the newly reconfigured power structures of the state. When plenty of choice (Lehmann & Ruble 1997; Salmi 2006) suddenly became available in the housing market, Narvans felt that they could not properly engage with or be in control of things that shaped their housing

conditions in post-Soviet Estonia. Houses were also important structures that, due to the lack of any realistic alternatives, bound Russian-speaking Narvans to the Estonian territory after the Soviet collapse, leaving them in a "take it or leave it" situation, while the conditions of their belonging in independent Estonia remained unpredictable.

In Post-Soviet times, home-making through houses has thus been no less emotional than it was in the past if we consider how a wide range of feelings circulated and generated effects (Ahmed 2014[2004]) around post-Soviet dwelling practices in urban houses. It is possible to identify a range of strategies and tactics (de Certeau 1984 cited in Salmi 2006, 41, 47) that Narvans employed to come to terms with their changed circumstances. The most prevalent of these strategies was to focus on family-oriented local dwelling. In the midst of life's overwhelming insecurity and sense of hopelessness (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9), Russian-speakers placed locally based family wellbeing at the centre of their home-making activities and decisions, making attempts "at creating or stabilizing the family as a unit" through the housing options at hand (Jørgensen 2016, 98). In a situation where the material insecurity in the town was one of the highest in Estonia, investing materially and emotionally in the future of the family seemed to many Narvans the best thing they could do (cf. Christie, Smith & Munro 2008 through applying the notion of emotional economy of housing). The fact that family homes were held on to and maintained in Narva, even though it was obvious that the youth would never return to dwell in them, is very much in line with the findings of Huttunen (2009), who depicts how the people of the former Yugoslavia who stayed abroad after leaving as refugees invested in physical houses in post-war Bosnia and through them maintained a relationship with the country, pointing to the need for people to keep physical dwellings as place-holders to maintain hope for continuity in places rather than face rupture.

To conclude, it is particularly the long-term investment of time, energy and emotions in urban apartments in Narva that has turned these "material and architectonic structures" into homes, as pointed out by Huttunen (2009, 217), and has established home-making as a complex process in the town:

> Homes are more than houses and houses are more than homes. Houses have to be transformed into homes by specific practices. To be at home in a certain place is an intimate bodily practice of dwelling, through which a specific relationship to that place is created. Houses are also more than homes. They are material and architectonic

structures, in a sociological and anthropological sense they are loci of material and social reproduction.

When elderly Russian-speaking apartment dwellers complained about the disappearing sociality between individuals who belonged to the same apartment block, they possibly meant that in the past they were "engaged in maintaining the house both as a social and as a material entity" (ibid., 217), but in post-Soviet times only the material aspect had remained. It has traditionally been seen that private houses, especially in "house-based societies", function as the "prime agents of socialization" (Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995, 2), as families whose members are "committed to a common wellbeing" (Huttunen 2009, 218), and my elderly informants seemed to replicate this very same understanding in relation to Soviet apartment blocks. Given that the Soviet-era apartment dwellers were often not complete strangers but connected through work collectives, this approach to home-making in apartment blocks perhaps becomes easier to grasp.

6 HOME-MAKING IN DACHAS THEN AND NOW

This chapter is about Russian-speaking Narvans' home-making practices that emerge, proliferate and develop in relation to life in dachas situated either outside or on the outskirts of the Narvan urban setting. Although dacha-life in this part of the world is associated with the warmer period of the year – spring, summer and early autumn – when they are actually used, dachas and their related routines also belong to the dacha dwellers' life outside of the dachas, all year round in fact. The approach in this chapter is that urban and rural practices in Narva are strongly intertwined and commonly lived as such, yet they are not part of everybody's life. I understand home-making in and around dachas mostly as being embedded in various socially and culturally meaningful practices through long-standing and intensive physical and emotional engagement with specific places. For resettlers and their practices of emplacement, these dacha practices convey the wider meaning of "making a place one's own". The chapter more precisely focuses on answering the following questions: what are the material, emotional and symbolic aspects of dachas and home-making in Narva, and how do they intersect? How is the idea of "making a place one's own" manifested in dacha-life in Narva? How does practising dacha-life bring together different scales of home-making such as the rural–urban, the translocal and the transnational? And, finally, how have dachas as sites of home-making changed since the Soviet collapse? Through ethnographic engagement with dacha-life, I wish to show both that home-making in the realm of dachas is an area of life for Soviet-era Russian-speakers that has its historical contingencies and that the present can only be made complete sense of through an understanding of the past.

6.1   First encounters with dacha practices and preparing for the dacha season

When I arrived in Narva in August 2010 to conduct my fieldwork, I started to move around outside my hitherto regular routes and circles of people. After settling into a rental apartment in one of the nine-storey apartment blocks from the late 1970s and 1980s that one passes when entering Narva from the West along the Tallinn road, I immediately started to run into elderly women who were selling pickles, apples, vegetables and flowers in the shaded alley in front of the Astri shopping mall on my daily walks downtown. It was obvious without asking that these products were from the women's own gardens or dachas and that these independent sellers were not working for wholesalers – they were taken by passers-by as naturally belonging to this space. Sometimes people stopped to chat with them for a while, and sometimes bought a kilo or two of apples, a bunch of onions or something else, but in general this did not look like big business. I guessed that these elderly women were simply able to earn a little extra money from their need to get rid of their surplus garden produce. During the autumn, busy with exploring and getting to know the different suburbs and the outskirts of the town and working on building my networks of interlocutors, I did not pay any further attention to the gardening practices of Narvans.

At some point in the autumn the dachas go into hibernation. Over late autumn and winter Narvans live a visibly urban life, in their apartments, and their tight connection to the rural dacha practices might even go completely unnoticed if they were encountered only during the "sleepy" season. My observation was that during the cold, dark season from November to March, the daily rhythms and routines of the Narvan dacha-owning elderly considerably changed and notably slowed down compared with the active summer season. During that period of the year, the elderly spent most of their day indoors in their apartment blocks, usually located in the so-called Soviet dormitory suburbs, leaving the house only when necessary, for shopping, or visiting the doctor or their close ones.

On my second visit to the Kuznetsovs' home in Kreenholm district, just after the Orthodox New Year celebration in mid-January, I was seated in the kitchen and offered a proper meal, during which I noticed how the deep kitchen windowsills had been transformed into a little plantation (figure 9). In the living room, temporary structures that resembled shelves had been built into two window recesses and then

filled with small boxes and other containers with seedlings that the family had sown from mid-winter onwards to later plant out in their garden in one of the gardening cooperatives in Kudruküla. Viktor proudly told me that germinating seeds and taking care of the seedlings was the long-term hobby and duty of his wife Irma, and that he only helped with building the special stands for the shelves to create the best light conditions for the seedlings. Irma just smiled and noted modestly that this was indeed a long-term habit and took a lot of time (Field notes 14.01.2011).

Figure 9. Growing plants on windowsills. Photo taken by the author

The winter of 2010-2011 was unusually snowy; it seemed to take forever for the snow to melt and spring to break through. It was at the end of February, when the piles of snow were still mountain high but the sun had already reached its peak, when I suddenly noticed on my walks that indoor windowsills had begun to be covered with seedling pots – the first hint that the season of extensive dacha practice was approaching. In early April 2011, when Viktor took me on a ride around the town and showed me the Kulgu gardening suburb, which is one such suburb located in close proximity to urban Narva, near to Kreenholm, the plots in the gardening cooperatives we briefly visited were still partly covered in melting snow. The low

land alongside the huge Narva reservoir was waterlogged and it was impossible even to walk on the road without getting our shoes wet. The dachas were still waiting for their occupants and caretakers.

On my way to and from Kulgu I also got my first glimpse of a life outside the apartments that was connected to access to the waters around Narva. Kulgu is located on the shore of Narva's reservoir, a "sea" in local speech (*mor'ye*), which in its true sense is a vast open space resembling a sea since the far side cannot be seen on the horizon. In Soviet times, as my informants later described, it was possible to take a motorboat and go fishing in the "sea", even reaching places on the other, Soviet Russian, side, something that is now forbidden since the reservoir is a strictly controlled border-zone. During the time of my fieldwork, the border guards needed to be informed if someone entered the "sea" and, even then, they needed to pay close attention not to go too far (Pikner, Metsar & Palang 2014). Despite this limited access to the "sea", water and fishing practices continued to be particularly integral to dacha-life in the Kulgu gardening cooperatives. Some of the dachas, in fact, resembled not so much houses but boat garages located along the canals, some of

Figure 10. Men gathering and fixing items in their boat garages by the Kulgu canals connected to the local "sea". Photo taken by the author

which had been extended upwards to integrate a living space and even a sauna (figure 10). The practices around the "sea", boat garages and fishing were tightly integrated into dacha-life, but they constituted a predominantly male realm. When the kick-off of the gardening season, characterised by the digging of the soil, still needed to wait a while, the men were already very much into their favourite pastime in Kulgu (Field notes 08.04.2011).

A couple of weeks later, after the subsequent heatwave left Narva and I made my second visit to the Kulgu dachas, the area was already bustling. Mostly elderly people were digging in the gardens and greenhouses, cleaning, fixing and arranging everything for the start of the new season (Field notes 21.04.2011).

6.2   History of allotment gardens and dachas in Narva

In 2011, there were around 10,000 allotment gardens (Narva linna üldplaneering 2000) – *dachas* in everyday language[41] – in the territory and on the outskirts of Narva, distributed between 50 gardening cooperatives of various sizes. Most of them were measured 600 square metres, as in Soviet times. Allotment gardens first began to be distributed to factory workers in the mid-1960s in Narva. The idea behind the decision to distribute the land on the outskirts of the urban centre that the town did not need for its industrial tasks was twofold: first, to address the chronic food shortage and diversify the workers' diet; and, second, to organise their free time in a controllable way (cf. Caldwell 2011; Pikner, Metsar & Palang 2014). The popular understanding of the function of dacha allotment gardens is often explained in terms of being "close to nature" (Caldwell 2011) in a variety of forms, which was hardly the Soviet authorities' official motivation for making them accessible to the majority of workers. Yet as Caldwell (2011, xv) has noted, the everyday dacha practices that emerged within the constraints of what the state allowed, have certainly gained a

---

[41] I use both terms, "allotment garden" and "dacha", in this chapter. Conceptually the terms could be differentiated, since allotment garden initially indicated land allocated for gardening, and dacha signifies a unit that has both a garden and a small house for seasonal living. However, the dacha is above all known in Russian-speaking cultural space as a site of a specific kind of dwelling that incorporates gardening, caring and recreational activities. Very few gardening cooperatives or larger gardening suburbs in today's Narva have gardens without houses, therefor the dacha is the more appropriate term in most cases. At the same time, "gardening plot" primarily indicates land that is used for gardening, and it is used in this chapter in its strict meaning when applicable.

vernacular meaning that is first and foremost connected to nature, reflected in "a deep, abiding, even spiritual appreciation of nature" that can be viewed as a "fundamental quality of Russianness itself" in the historical context.

The original idea of an allotment garden has traits in common with both the Soviet-era and the contemporary use of dachas, but the practices and meanings have shifted quite a bit. Dachas are historically a site for a specific form of dwelling, which has a long-established tradition in the Russian cultural context and beyond (Lovell 2003; Caldwell 2011; Baschmakoff & Ristolainen 2009). In the Russian tradition, the history of dachas, the meaning of which is "something given" (*dat'*), dates back to Tsarist Russia. Allotments were initially given in the form of property (estate) that comprised a house, outhouses, farmland and woodland as a gesture of gratitude to loyal vassals of Tsar Peter the Great, and later acquired fame as the summer retreats of the Russian aristocracy. After the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, dachas were nationalised by the Soviet state and used by leading communists. The tradition of the new form of dacha, the small allotment gardens for urban workers that were meant primarily for growing garden produce for personal use, started to flourish in the 1960s. This fundamentally changed the way in which dachas were distributed between the social classes, and workers' access to land brought about a large array of new practices related to dacha-life, many of them fully meaningful in their time (Lovell 2003).

During Soviet times, the lands that were distributed to be used as allotment gardens belonged to local factories in Narva. The users, once they received the right to occupy a plot, did not in principle need to worry about the basic infrastructure for making allotment gardening possible. The first thing the state planned to do was to build access roads and set up electricity lines, so that the dachas were at least equipped with electricity, however, these plans were not always carried out. As Pikner, Metsar and Palang (2014) mention, much of this planned infrastructure remained on paper only, and the gardeners themselves needed to find ways to make their life in the gardens more comfortable. Allotment gardens in Narva were originally meant for growing fresh produce for personal use; they were not meant for living in or even for staying overnight. Small shelters could be built but they had to be a maximum of 40 square metres and heating systems were forbidden. Local people, however, widely ignored the regulations and dachas started to be used extensively for summer living despite their modest conditions. There was no sewage system or running water, not to mention the lack of a toilet and other modern

conveniences. Allotment gardens in the same area constituted a separate gardening cooperative, with all dacha owners automatically belonging to their local cooperative, and all such cooperatives in Narva functioned according to the same logic. Yet every cooperative formed a small community and developed its own community practices and dynamics, which also diversified the local dacha practice (Interview 12.05.2011; see also Pikner, Metsar & Palang 2014).
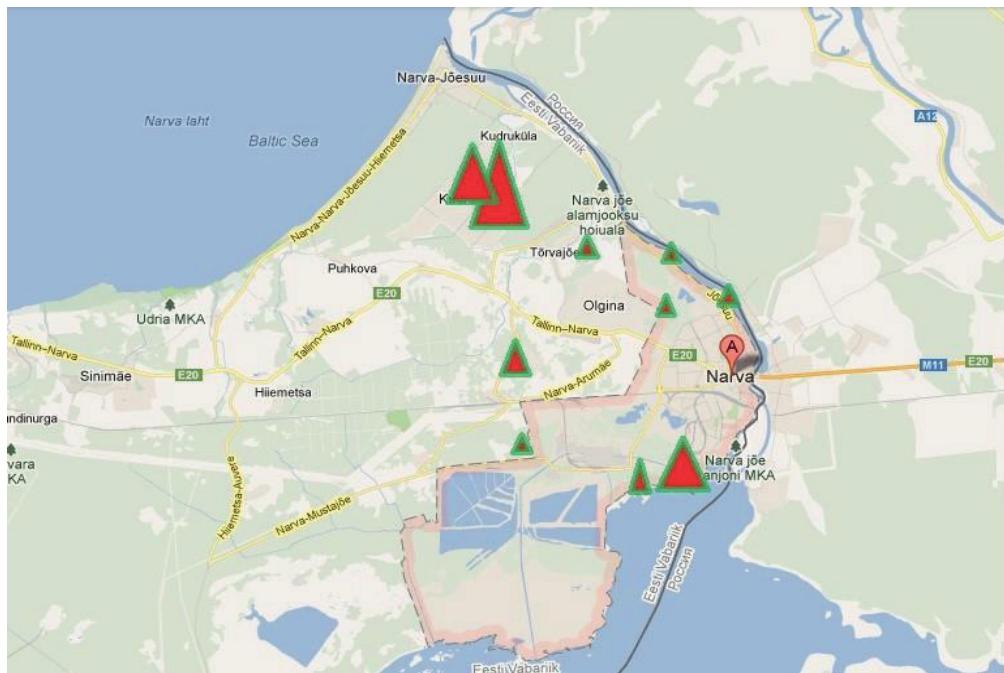
Figure 11. Gardening cooperative areas in and around Narva (marked by triangles). Photo: Google Maps

In the early and mid-1990s when the town of Narva took ownership of the gardening cooperatives away from the business enterprises, the plots started to be privatised by their users. Post-Soviet gardening cooperatives (in Estonian *aiandusühistu*) were established, in general replicating the old administrative divisions. Cooperatives communally took responsibility for the practicalities related to the provision of electricity and water and the transportation of waste. While many dacha practices have remained as they were in Soviet times, much has also changed. Dacha practices are tightly entangled with wider practices of mobility and circles of care,

which have had an effect on dwelling practice and meanings in the post-Soviet context (cf. Pikner, Metsar & Palang 2014).
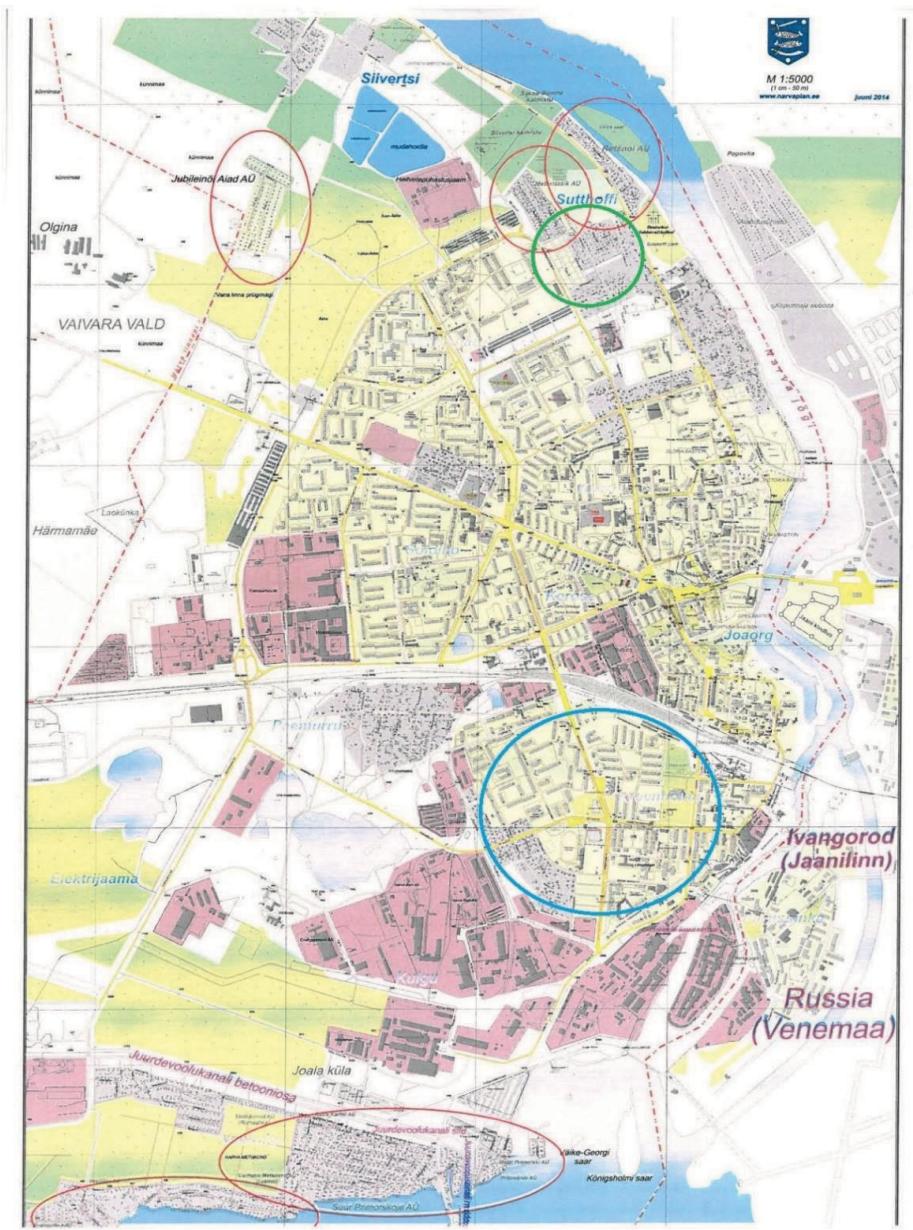
Figure 12. Narva city map as of June 2014. Red circles – dacha/gardening suburbs in the territory of the town; blue circle – Kreenholm suburb; green circle – my grandparents' neighbourhood. Source: Narva City webpage

6.3   Getting to the dachas and their infrastructure

A bird's-eye view of Narva (figures 11 and 12) reveals that the northern and southern outskirts of Narva as well as some other areas outside the municipal area[42], but still in close proximity to it, form tiny densely populated areas, the borders of which are clearly distinguishable. A few parallel or otherwise regularly drawn streets cut these areas into smaller strips of land, which are in turn distributed into exactly 600 square metre plots. The borders of the plots are shared with neighbours on three sides. The dachas are organised around streets, several streets together constituting larger and smaller areas called gardening cooperatives. These cooperatives are usually clearly separated from one another and their entrances marked by gates that are kept wide open, at least during the gardening season, and as such function more like a symbolic than a real boundary (figure 13).

Figure 13. The entrance to the Esimene metsaaed AÜ gardening cooperative. Photo taken by the author

---

[42] Primarily the Kudruküla suburb, about 8 kilometres to the north of Narva, where many gardening cooperatives are located within a stone's throw of the famous Narva-Jõesuu beach and health resort.

All gardening cooperatives have specific names[43], usually but not always referring to the industries they belonged to in the past, and they are known by these names among the dwellers. All the streets also have names, in Estonianised form since the 1990s, that are generally inspired by nature[44]. Within a gardening cooperative, dachas are not usually known by their address but by the faces and lived practices of the dwellers. On one of my visits to the dacha of one informant in June 2011, I was desperately trying to find the place using the street name I had been given by the owner. When I asked other members of the cooperative where the street was, they could not remember.

Each plot has typically one or two, but sometimes more, tiny, modest buildings that are lined up along the streets. Most of the plots have a further small building – a dacha house – which it is possible to use as a house for living and sleeping in during the summer. Deep inside the plots there may be several other tiny auxiliary buildings or constructions: outhouses, sheds for storing wood and/or tools, cellars and wood-heated saunas. Many dachas are equipped with this kind of sauna – apart from being somewhere to enjoy the sauna ritual itself it also serves as a place for washing oneself (and doing the laundry). Few dachas have a proper sewerage system – more often a dry toilet or an outhouse is used – and drinking water does not come from a tap but needs to be brought in in bottles or from a communal water tank.

Several larger and more prestigious gardening cooperatives are at a distance of about 8 kilometres from the border of Narva, close to the Narva-Jõesuu summer resort, with its long sandy beaches. This territory, which belongs to Narva, forms an island within an area of the Narva-Jõesuu municipality. Although today many people drive to their dachas and back by car and do not rely as heavily on public transport as previously, most of the gardening cooperatives are generally accessible by public transport. The buses are not very frequent, however – perhaps once an hour or less. Sometimes there are only a few in the morning and another few in the evening. People organise their day according to the bus timetables and especially at certain hours of the morning (around 8-10 am) and in the evening (around 6-7 pm) it is noticeable how the elderly dacha dwellers in particular go in good time to queue at the bus stops, to move between their apartments and dachas (figure 14).

---

[43] For example, AÜ Mebelštšik and AÜ Energeetik-1, but also AÜ Metsta and AÜ Visnja.
[44] Typically named after natural phenomena, such as landscape forms, birds, trees and plants.

Figure 14. Gardeners waiting for the bus to leave their dachas. Photo taken by the author

It appeared from a collective opinion letter from the pensioner-gardeners that was published in the local newspaper *Viru Prospekt* in February 2013 that good access to the dachas and gardening plots was essential for Narva's elderly. The letter was sent with the aim of expressing their disagreement with the bus fares and schedules that had been brought in by the new local bus operator and approved by the town administration. Besides stating that access to the dachas was important, the letter also highlighted that regardless of whether the gardening cooperatives were located within Narva or outside the town (Kudruküla), they all belonged administratively to Narva and it was its responsibility to guarantee access by public transport on an equal basis. In the letter the gardeners specifically expressed their resentment about two issues. First, the new operator of the town and suburban bus service had not considered the inhabitants' actual need for regular connections in line with both seasonality and dacha practices. In Narva, there had been a long-standing practice of seasonal bus timetables. The inhabitants were accustomed to the summer schedules (*let'niye raspisaniye*) being effective from the beginning of April until the end of October, corresponding to the dacha seasons – the times when the dachas and gardening plots were actively used. In addition, during the summer season some of

the routes would change slightly, so that they regularly reached the more distant dacha neighbourhoods. The pensioner-gardeners further explained that it was generally known that the gardening season began in April and ended in mid-October, and they listed the activities that belonged to the regular practices of gardening in each month. All in all, the pensioners found the newly implemented seasonal schedule unacceptable because of its mismatch with the actual start and end dates of the active work done in dachas.

The second issue the pensioners complained about was the town administration's decision to introduce a fare for pensioners travelling on suburban buses while the ride would continue to be free for those using the bus within the town limits. They saw this distinction as unfair, placing gardeners whose dachas and plots were located within the town in a favourable position even though all pensioners' incomes were the same. The signatories to the letter pointed out that equality and good access had been guaranteed by the town administrators since the 1970s and that this should remain the case. The opinion letter was written by a number of pensioners, all women, whom the decisions obviously directly affected; it was, however, remarkable that they signed the letter not simply as gardeners, pensioners or members of gardening cooperatives but as former builders of the Narva power plants (*Estonskaya Gres'*). This was certainly meaningful in several ways, most of all as a clear reminder of the popular narrative that Narva owes its existence to its Soviet workers, and that the workers, even though by now retired, must be treated with honour and respect. In the heading of the letter they also wittingly related the issue to the forthcoming municipal elections, clearly expressing their hope that the town administrators would display a willingness to solve the problem in a decisive way, making this a gift to the elderly, one that would be certainly later remembered when they came to vote.

The above example accurately demonstrates the importance of the continuity of habitual gardening practices to elderly Russian-speakers in Narva. It appeared that, for Narvans, there existed such a clear division between practices associated with the rural and the urban environment that these practices could not be performed outside of their proper place and time. The gardener-pensioners also demonstrated a detailed knowledge of every aspect of gardening life, which can be taken as a sign of their years-long dedication to the practice and of gardening constituting an inseparable part of their life in Narva.

6.4 Community life in dachas

I observed that on the bus trips to their dachas Narvans always bumped into somebody they knew, usually either former colleagues or people who belonged to the same gardening cooperative. On the bus they exchanged greetings and news, inquired about each other's health, and talked about people they used to work with. Learning that a dacha neighbour or a former workmate had passed away over the winter or some other dramatic change had taken place was not a rare occurrence and, as the dwellers were usually older people, they considered such news as par for the course. At the start of the season these encounters on and/or while waiting for the bus perfectly revealed how the dacha dwellers social lives in winter and summer were strikingly different. In the dachas their social circle could diverge completely from the people they engaged with on a daily basis while living in their apartments. Life in the dacha and in the apartment entailed entirely different routines and rhythms, and certain relationships and practices only unfolded in their proper setting. Since the allotment gardens had been allocated to workers by the factories they worked for, at least one of the partners in a couple was surrounded there by people from the same enterprise. In this way, the gardening cooperatives, at least in the past, largely represented these work communities. Two layers of relationships and practices became interlaced in the communal living environment in the dachas: those rooted in the work environment and those emerging directly from the communal living practice in a small community. People did not necessarily need to be in friendly relationships with everybody in their gardening cooperative, but they usually were, or at least tried to live on friendly and cooperative terms with their close neighbours and many of the other dacha dwellers. A similar educational and social background, a similar age and similar daily problems usually facilitated smooth communication between the original dacha dwellers.

My informants often recalled that during the initial years of the gardening cooperatives a large amount of communal work needed to be done to turn the allocated plots into fertile and functioning allotments. Many of the cooperatives were established on lowlands that had serious problems with rainwater run-off. Drainage systems needed to be built before any gardening could take place. Exchanging seedlings, plants, produce and recipes and giving gardening advice was and continued to be an important established routine between neighbours. Daily meals were usually eaten with the family, but many communal meals, usually related to birthday

celebrations and other important events, were also organised. In the past, on such occasions a table was often simply set up in the dacha and it was expected that neighbours would join in without asking – an act of hospitality and a sign of social bonds inherent to Russian, especially rural, cultural practice. Whenever something in the dacha needed repairing or building, neighbours were typically involved, particularly if it was considered a job for men (figure 15).

Figure 15. Old colleagues and dacha neighbours in one of the Kulgu gardening cooperatives. Photo taken by the author

Repairing, building and any other large undertakings usually ended with one or more bottles of vodka been offered around everyone who participated. In the past, drinking alcohol together was in general a frequent communal routine, especially for the males, and it continued to be so. Drinking alcohol usually required a special reason, such as a celebration or commemoration of something or somebody, but it was always easy to invent a reason to drink and some of my informants saw this as a problem of an otherwise socially fulfilling dacha-life. Of course, during the dacha days conflict also came about, as my interlocutors mentioned, but all in all they considered life in the dacha a close community life.

For children, as my informants often nostalgically noted, dacha-life was associated with summer holidays, freedom, creativity and spending time outdoors from dawn to dusk. Compared with everyday life in an urban setting, life in the dacha constituted an entirely different world for them, with different friends, games, tasks and routines. Also, intergenerational relationships in the dacha unfolded differently (I will come back to this later in the chapter).

When in town, the dacha community was scattered between different apartment blocks and suburbs, and their contact temporarily ceased. The adults continued working together of course, but because of the size of the industries gardeners from the same cooperative may have worked in different departments and on different duties and this did not necessarily give them the chance to meet. While in town, other practices and relationships dominated. Children played with their schoolmates and with friends from their apartment blocks and neighbourhood; parents mingled more with their close workmates, neighbours and other people they encountered through their daily routines in town. The two different worlds – town and dacha – may have occasionally come together in casual encounters, but in terms of their social fabric and practice they generally remained split and switched over regularly each spring and autumn.

6.5   Working in the garden

My visits to the Kuznetsovs' dacha (figure 16) put their calm and comfortable wintertime life in their Kreenholm apartment in a different light. Only then did I realise that if I had not got to know them in their dacha environment I would have been left with a partial understanding of what constituted the practices of home-making in Narva for them. They had obtained the use of the gardening plot in the 1970s as a young couple with two children. First it was just wasteland that needed to be transformed into fertile land. At the very beginning, Viktor and Irma also built a little dacha-house comprising just a tiny kitchen and a bedroom. The dacha had occupied a significant amount of their time each year thereafter.

Figure 16. The Kuznetsovs' large dacha plot in one of the Kudruküla dacha neighbourhoods. Photo taken by the author

As I mentioned earlier, growing plants to be later planted out in dacha gardens, and less often in town gardens, was a lengthy practice that firmly belonged in the annual life-cycle of many Narvans, particularly women and most frequently elderly women. The practices related to gardening began in the middle of the deep winter with putting seedlings in the soil and taking care of them as they grew. Growing plants from seeds until they could be replanted in the garden and greenhouse required approximately two to three months of continuous care and attention. Depending on the plants, the seeds could be sown between the end of January and the beginning of March. As this was in the northern hemisphere, it was not possible to plant anything directly in the garden before the weather was suitable, which was usually not before May, once the ground had completely thawed and the daily temperatures remained above zero. In the rare case that a greenhouse was heated, planting could take place a little earlier. On my visit to the Kulgu dachas in mid-April, I met a gardener who proudly showed me a greenhouse he had fitted with a pipe system that had been successfully heating it since early spring by using solar energy, at no extra cost (figure 17). He explained that the pipes in his greenhouse

were filled with water that warmed up during the day in the sunshine. At night the heat came off the pipes, keeping the greenhouse sufficiently warm.

Figure 17. A greenhouse in preparation in one of the Kulgu gardening cooperatives. Photo taken by the author

Before planting could take place the soil needed to be carefully dug over and weeded, the soil spread over beds of a good shape and size, and decisions taken regarding what to plant where. To ensure the best produce and fight the spread of garden diseases and parasites, plants was not grown in the same soil for more than a few consecutive years. Succeeding in gardening required less book-knowledge and more long-standing experience, which involved patience, full attention, observation, the sharing of experiences with neighbours and sometimes also luck. In early spring when the nights could still be relatively cold and the weather in general capricious, unexpected frosts were frequent. The gardeners needed to constantly check the weather and take the appropriate measures: if there was a danger of frost, they covered the beds with row covers and the more sensitive individual plants (e.g. cucumbers and courgettes) with empty plastic bottles or glass jars at night. At all times, the plants needed to be kept clear of weeds, watered, fertilised, and checked

for and treated against illnesses. Rainwater had to be collected for watering the plants because in the past the dachas did not generally have their own wells.

There was also a sense of competition between the neighbours, which encouraged gardeners to take risks, including planting too early and over-feeding. Close neighbours in a cooperative would usually know such things as who had harvested the first tomatoes and who had grown the biggest pumpkin that year.

Activities around gardening took up the majority of dacha dwellers' time and focus, as well as naturally binding the dacha and apartment environments together, since the preparations for the dacha season were carried out during the winter season in apartments. In fact, there were only a couple of months of the year when dachas did not occupy dacha dwellers' time, and it seemed to me that at no time was it out of the dwellers' minds. In winter, the canned and pickled garden produce was consumed and shared, memories were recalled, and often minds were occupied with worrying and hoping that the dachas would remain untouched by local thieves and vandals while the dwellers were not present, though in recent years theft from dachas – one of the syndromes of the post-Soviet transformation, especially in the early to mid-1990s – had luckily become less frequent. The dacha was certainly an integral part of Russian-speaking Narvans' life, one that significantly extended their practices of home materially, emotionally and symbolically. It could be said that life in the urban setting was just an extension of the rural one, and the other way around.

6.6   The dacha as a site of creative dwelling

Between the Soviet era and today, the physical appearance of dachas has undergone a considerable change. In the past, all plots were of equal size and there were strict rules about what kind and size of building could be built. Given the limitation that a dacha house could be no larger than 40 square metres, the dwellers faced a creative challenge to utilise the space to the maximum. Cheating the officials regarding the actual size of the living space was an extremely common creative practice, the idea being to extend the spaces as much as possible while remaining within the official limits. This is why triangular and many other shaped buildings, all rising up towards the sky, can be found in dacha neighbourhoods. For many dacha dwellers, the originality of their dachas was very important to them. Designing the

dacha, within the size limits, was one of the few activities that were relatively free from regulations. Olga's (b. 1921) husband, for example, dedicated his retirement primarily to creating a truly original dacha that would reflect who he really was. The dacha, which he acquired in his retirement upon settling in Narva as a newcomer, became his life project, as Olga put it. This project enabled him to put his engineering skills fully into practice. Olga recalled, proud and giggling at the same time, that everybody knew their dacha by its extraordinary hexagonal shape.

Figure 18. A dacha in Kulgu. Photo taken by the author

Many dachas had been built over a long period of time, forever being added to and changed, and never completely finished. Dachas rarely represented one clear architectural style (figure 18). They were sites of recycling and creativity bound together. Dacha interiors usually expressed very clearly how time had passed and how the various eras had presented different material opportunities. New items rarely found their way inside; in the past, the dacha was rather a place where everything that was no longer needed at home was given a new lease of life. In this respect, not much had changed by the time of my fieldwork. Dachas represented a

Figure 19. A living room in a dacha. Photo taken by the author

mix of a great variety of different periods in the furniture, tableware, utensils and home appliances (figure 19). The items were not only Soviet but may have originated in various historical periods: pre-Soviet, traditional and antique, and from many different parts of the former Soviet Union. Although such items were no longer practical in the apartment environment, they were often culturally and symbolically important to their owners, having their own stories and being attached to family histories. The walls of dachas were often covered with old pictures, diplomas received by the dwellers and their children, awards, medals and other symbols of times that had long passed. Different styles and materials were used with no thought as to whether they matched. Dachas could be very ecological places, although the rationale behind recycling was often the mentality of collecting memories along with economic scarcity rather than environmental thinking as such (Field notes, 23.04.2011).

Since in Soviet times proper building materials were often unavailable, people needed to use their imagination and find available functional alternatives. As a result, a single wall might have been built out of several different incongruous materials and all the windows and doors might have looked different. Despite the scarcity of

materials and the inconsistent look, the dwellers usually tried to create cosy and comfortable dachas that were not just a building but a vehicle of self-expression, a reflection of the kinds of people the dwellers were or wanted to be.

The appearance of dachas can be interpreted as a combination of what the values, aesthetics, ideals and available material opportunities were at different times, for Soviet and post-Soviet people (Kannike 2002). While urban Narva and its apartment blocks, apart from their interiors, were restricted areas where everything had to be in accordance with the rules, the dachas provided relative freedom of expression. Therefore, the dachas should be understood as crucial sites of creativity in the lives of Russian-speaking Narvans (cf. Boym 1994; Yurchak 2005).

The practice of mixing different materials and styles in dachas has continued throughout the post-Soviet period and has perhaps increased because opening up the borders has provided access to endless new ideas, and a wide variety of materials that were previously unknown and inaccessible came within reach. For dachas, as with apartment renovations, people often bought whichever materials were being sold at the cheapest discounted price. Often these were available only in a limited amount, which resulted in the need to mix different incongruent materials. Or, people used materials that were given to them free of charge by friends and relatives, left over from their own building projects. Next to the small Soviet dachas, many of which have remained almost unchanged, completely new dachas (figure 20) are being built, and many old ones extended and renovated. These days there is a great deal of variety in how the dachas are extended and modernised. Usually the aim of extending is to obtain more living space and to fit in modern conveniences – a shower, a flushing toilet, a proper kitchen. Often extensions are built in different stages, seemingly without a clear overall vision, and they therefore have an eclectic look. Post-Soviet-era dachas are usually large, tall buildings, often built to resemble luxury villas and therefore looking out of place against the background of the old ones.

Privatisation enabled people to buy additional land to widen their existing allotment gardens. In this way, some dacha dwellers had extended their territory to 1,200 square metres and even further if neighbouring land was available. While in the past practically all the available land was cultivated to the last centimetre, nowadays the proportion of cultivated land has often diminished considerably, and part of the garden has been covered with lawn. More space has been given to flowers, bushes and spaces for relaxation. Many contemporary dachas are missing a gardening

plot as such entirely, with the whole space laid to lawn and the only work that needs doing being mowing.

Figure 20. A modern dacha in Kudruküla gardening suburb. Photo taken by the author

6.7   The dacha as a site of care production

The older generations generally have a common approach to dachas: they need to be taken care of. This cannot be successfully done without caring about and caring for both one's dacha and its garden. Dachas and gardens are objects of care through the never-ending labour and commitment directed at them. But this practice-oriented and laborious "taking care of" is always coupled with an emotional "caring about and for". In this way, tied up with the simultaneously and intensively physical and emotional, the relationship with dachas is at times experienced in terms of a love-hate relationship, but ultimately it is fulfilling and rewarding. Dachas are thus particular sites of care production with their specific routines and practices.

There is no way that a dacha could be left unattended for a season or a month, or even for a week when the weather conditions could damage the crop. Sometimes people, especially the elderly, fall ill and cannot carry out their regular tasks, and somebody needs to help them. When someone realises that they are no longer able to take enough care of the dacha and nobody else in the family is willing to take on the responsibility, the dacha and garden need to be sold. Larissa (b. 1934) sold hers a few years before my fieldwork. She had postponed the decision for many years, hoping that her health would get better and her grandchildren, now all living in Tallinn, would occasionally help her out with the most difficult gardening tasks. But a garden cannot wait until young people have the time to come and help. In most cases, things need to be done immediately. In spite of her aching legs and many other health problems, Larissa was still taking care of the garden more or less alone until quite recently. Giving up the dacha was an emotionally difficult decision because, as she told me, the dacha and its garden is not just a piece of land that is bought and sold at will. It is a set of practices, in fact a lifestyle that people have dedicated themselves to for many years, with many related memories. Going to the dacha and working there had given a certain structure to Larissa's days for almost 20 years, after she retired from her work in the Kreenholm textile factory as a weaver. The dacha was important and dear to her even after it had also come to represent a sorrowful place where her second husband, a local man of Latvian origin, had died from alcohol poisoning – celebrating too heavily the restoration of the Latvian Republic with his Latvian comrades, as Larissa ironically put it. (Interview 13.12.2010)

Many elderly Narvans were more fortunate than Larissa, having more locally placed family networks and thus more available help. Although the older gardeners often complained that the younger generations had a different approach to dacha-life and that it was difficult for them to reach a shared understanding with the rest of their family members regarding what should be done in the dacha and how, having family members close by and taking care of the dacha together – even if this care was understood differently across the generations – was a good thing. The dacha – as has perhaps become clear by now – was considered a place of interlaced family relations and shared responsibilities that differed across the generations. Ideally, an elderly couple, who were first-generation dacha dwellers and had typically already retired, managed the dacha together. When in relatively good health the elderly remained the main dwellers and caretakers of the dachas for as long as they could.

They had all the necessary time and knowledge. The younger generations visited the dachas less regularly, for shorter times, and had different roles.

When I visited the Kuznetsovs' dacha in early April, the dacha was cold and damp. They explained to me that most of the dachas had no proper insulation and the owners heated them only if it was absolutely necessary, as they considered it uneconomical. The beginning and end of the season were characterised by particularly intensive commuting between the apartment and the dacha. If the dacha was in good enough shape for them to spend the night there, retired dacha dwellers, including the Kuznetsovs, usually stayed in them the whole time once the weather got warm enough, making only short visits to their urban homes about once or twice a week, mainly to water their houseplants and check their post. On these visits, they also shopped for the food (meat, dairy products, etc.) they needed to complement what their gardens were slowly starting to produce. Most of the post-Soviet gardening cooperatives had no shops nearby, but larger ones might have a small shop or kiosk that opened during the busiest time of the season and provided the gardeners with basic products. Many people received regular or occasional help with shopping from their children and/or grandchildren, in which case it was done by car. Most elderly Narvans, however, did not own a car themselves.

Duties in the dacha were not limited to gardening. Besides gardening, building, doing repairs and renovation, dealing with water, waste and wood supplies, cooking, preserving, cleaning and washing were what everyday life in the dacha revolved around. The dacha has been theorised as a site where daily life is organised according to divisions of labour by age, ability and above all gender (Caldwell 2019). As a labour-intensive site of everyday life, it makes Soviet gender roles especially notable. Both from what I observed and what I was told in Narva, there were many similarities with Caldwell's (2011, 2019) extensive research on Russian dachas in the surroundings of Moscow and Tver, where labour was organised largely around the principle that men were responsible for construction, barbequing and gardening and women for food preparation, canning, cleaning and child-minding, or as Caldwell (2019, 166) has highlighted, men's chores included gathering and women's preserving. Caldwell (ibid., 183) also notes that women were involved in "more intangible dacha labours, most notably forms of emotional work", which included childcare and food preparation as well as hospitality. Caldwell (ibid.) has also characterised the dacha as a "feminised site of problem-solving", which points to the fact that it was women in particular who listened to the problems expressed by

members of other generations, and by neighbours and hosts during the many hours they spent cooking, canning and pickling preserves in their tiny dacha kitchens. However, dwelling in dachas sometimes also shifted the habitual borders of work and structured gender roles differently, compared with in the urban environment. For example, although they did not cook in their apartments, several of my informants' husbands helped with canning and pickling in the dachas, or were more actively in charge of child-minding than in the urban environment.

The work in the garden and in improving the living conditions in the dacha never ends. As my informants frequently stated, the dacha is never ready. There was always something to do – to repair, change or improve. The elderly dacha dwellers did not recognise the concept of having things in a good enough shape to just pause and enjoy them – and it had always been like that, irrespective of the political regime or economic conditions. During the winter season, greenhouses were damaged by the storms and heavy snowfall, shelter roofs and pipes leaked, window frames came loose and needed painting, and door hinges needed oiling. These were the small repairs that were done almost every year. Then there were the larger projects like building a new veranda or sauna house, or increasing the house's height or width by building smaller or bigger extensions.

Years ago, when the allotment gardens were distributed, the typical dacha dwellers were young families who needed to take care of the dacha and its garden after a six-day working week and while bringing up children. Undoubtedly, taking care of a garden was an extra laborious task that demanded a great deal of time and dedication. It was only sometime later that dacha practices changed and began to be primarily associated with grandparents and their grandchildren. Many generations have spent their entire summers from early childhood in dachas, being looked after primarily by their grandparents while their parents were working. And perhaps it can be rightfully said that these two generations have engaged the most, both physically and emotionally, with and received the most immediate pleasure from the dacha setting.

6.8 Negotiating the practice and purpose of the dacha between and among generations

Regardless of the varying physical and emotional investments, even during Soviet times dachas served a variety of purposes and were meaningful in different ways for a number of people, in spite of the commonly known state-led combination of the ideological and the practical – to control Soviet workers' use even of their leisure time by solving the always acute problems of food scarcity and monotony. For some, gardening and taking care of the dacha was a pleasant pastime – laborious but still quality time spent in the fresh air, which resulted in abundant produce that could be enjoyed over a long period. For others, the dacha was a place of creativity, enabling them to realise ideas in their own way. Again, for others the dacha was primarily associated with gardening, with tedious, hard work that simply needed to be done to make ends meet and bring variety to the family menu year round. Others appreciated above all the community life that unfolded around the physical plot. Still others, even during Soviet times, put much less effort into food production and working the land and treated the dacha more as a place of relaxation and leisure. Russian-speaking Narvans who owned a dacha in Kudruküla often combined their stays there with regular visits to Narva-Jõesuu's sandy beaches, located just a stone's throw away. For those who dwelled close to the Narvan "sea", the dacha was inseparable from going to the "sea", fishing and spending time repairing motorboats in the garages (figure 21). To many, dacha-life was unimaginable without foraging in the forests far and near for mushrooms and berries and engaging with the surrounding nature. Dacha-life is thus not necessarily only about the devoted hands-on experience of turning a plot of land into food by investing labour and care; the space of meaning around the dacha is much larger and richer than that, varying from person to person and generation to generation.

Figure 21. Enjoying a fish soup made from fish from the local "sea". Photo taken by the author

Today many gardening plots and dachas are passed on to the younger generations and this, affected by the socioeconomic change that took place in post-Soviet

Estonia, has brought with it different standards of living, different ways in which dachas are practised, and shifts in meaning associated with dachas. While walking in the Kulgu gardening cooperatives on a sunny Sunday afternoon in May 2011, I could clearly observe the divide in the contemporary usage of dachas across different generations. In many dachas, younger people were sitting in the gardens, having barbeques and enjoying other people's company. Others were sunbathing in deckchairs. When the gardeners were elderly people alone, they were tirelessly occupied with the traditional gardening work. I was able to observe a notable shift towards treating the dacha as private land that is meant for relaxation and recreation rather than for effort and production. More and more, taking care of a dacha is seen as needing to be easy and not time-consuming, and therefore large areas of lawn along with trees and bushes that are visually nice but need almost no care, at least not regularly, are slowly become prevalent in dacha settings.

For younger Narvans, the dacha was increasingly associated with leisure and relaxation rather than with labour. Before my host Julia (b. 1973) and her husband decided on a house in suburban Tallinn, Julia was daydreaming of a dacha in Narva-Jõesuu. Being the owners of a four-room apartment in Narva but not of a dacha, her family had spent the last three summers in Narva-Jõesuu, renting a whole second floor in one of the houses near the beach. Julia described her feelings while in this summer apartment in terms of having a three-month summer holiday, with clean, good quality air, birds singing all around, and peace and quiet. She claimed that the whole family had slept well there, and that this was especially noticeable at the beginning of their stay. After this pleasant experience the dream of a dacha arose. In Julia's dacha-dreams she saw the space there as an ideal space for freedom and creativity, satisfying the needs of her small daughter, her numerous pets and herself. She imagined having a small vegetable garden, a greenhouse and an orchard, with pear and apple trees, raspberries, strawberries, red and black currants, and peas. In a later conversation I had with her mother-in-law, however, I was told that Julia, like many contemporary people, had no idea about the endless duties and worries that owning a garden and a private house would entail, and that she was living in a dreamland (Field notes 15.12.2010).

Several other of my interlocutors demonstrated that not all Russian-speakers in Narva merged their urban and rural practices to the extent the elderly dacha dwellers did. In fact, people in Narva were generally well aware of the exact routines and commitments that owning and looking after a dacha involved. Although they also

usually saw the positive and idyllic aspects of dacha-life, things they did want to experience from time to time, for them the dacha and gardening were more closely associated with total devotion, lack of freedom, worry and endless hard work. To own a dacha and not work there did not seem to be a realistic prospect for most of them. Among my informants who disliked the idea of gardening and dachas, there were several women who affirmed that they had no interest in owning a dacha because it equated to never-ending slavery. In addition to the hard work, gardening and dachas need continuous presence and care, which imposes specific life-arrangements in dacha season, a lifestyle with its specific routines year after year. In fact, the garden and the dacha dictate the rhythms and routines of the rest of the year as well because people's practices during the dacha and the town seasons are always to some extent interrelated, affecting one another. For example, annual holidays must be scheduled taking the dacha into account and investments that need to be made occasionally in the dacha pinch the yearly budget and affect other possible spending. Two of my informants, Galina (b. 1946) and Elizaveta (b. 1967), had early childhood experiences of gardening work; they had been responsible for various duties in the garden in order to help their parents out. They understood that surviving without garden produce would have been near impossible at that time, but they admitted that they had had enough of it and now that they were no longer children and could make their own choices they would never go back to that life. Although they did not own dachas and gardening plots themselves, they were still not completely distanced from the gardening life because they occasionally lent a helping hand on their siblings' and friends' dachas. In return they usually received some garden produce, but they stressed that they helped for the sake of helping, knowing how hard the job was, not to receive vegetables, berries and preserves. And, above all, they had control over whether and when to help out.

As discussed by Caldwell (2019), changing perceptions with regard to what purpose the dacha serves and what exact practices should be carried out in them, is the source of intergenerational conflict. Above all, it is the meaning and value of intensive labour at the dacha that has shifted and caused misunderstandings. Most of the older Narvans treated dachas as a necessary source of supplementary food, which was only possible to achieve with hard work. Towards the end of the Soviet, and throughout the first post-Soviet, years, which were characterised first by an extreme food shortage and later by a lack of economic means to afford anything in spite of the abundance of goods suddenly available, labour in dachas became directly

associated with survival (cf. Ries 1997, 2009; Caldwell 2011; Lovell 2003). Fruit and vegetables were grown, eaten during the summer and autumn, and stored over the winter in the form of pickled or salted preserves, jams, juices and compotes. The garden produce was complemented by mushrooms and berries picked from the forest and fish caught in the surrounding waters. My informants did not get tired of emphasising that had they survived these times only thanks to their dachas. The concept of survival is difficult for those younger generations who did not live through it to comprehend, but for the elderly this connection with the dacha lives on as fully meaningful.

6.9   Translocal and transnational family relations in dachas

The collapse of the Soviet Union cut into the dacha practices in many ways. First, the question of ownership needed to be resolved. As the gardening plots and dachas were not private properties, they first went from Soviet state ownership to the town of Narva. Later, the "local people" were allowed to privatise the lands. This privatisation was not a smooth, equitable process from the point of view of the dacha dwellers, especially since the legally defined state perspective regarding who the "local people" were focused on Estonian citizens and residents, which did not always correspond with who the dwellers were in practice. Nor did the Estonian or Russian state, when erecting the physical state borders and implementing visa regimes, take into account the extensive inter-family practices intrinsic to dacha-life, which were translocal in nature rather than bound to a single territory. Dacha dwellers who were affected by these wider political changes needed to renegotiate their dacha practices in this newly emerged transnational space.

Over several decades of dwelling, dachas around Narva had become increasingly translocally inhabited and practised. For many families, dachas were the sites where extended family members who were dispersed between various locations across the former Soviet Union came together in one place at some point each summer. Grandchildren who lived faraway were sent to Narva to spend their school holidays with their grandparents while their parents were working – in the same way as the children of Narvans were sent to be looked after by their grandparents and other relatives living elsewhere. Furthermore, as has been discussed by Pfoser (2014) and

other authors (Brednikova & Voronkov 1999; Nikiforova 2004), during Soviet times many extended families formed a fully functional unit with shared routines and practices in the borderland space that included Narva and Ivangorod (as well as a number of other nearby places). A typical dacha setting on the outskirts of Narva in late Soviet times could easily have brought together three generations and three different locations: a core family comprising a mother and a father – the owners of the dacha, both living and working in Narva – and their children; retired grandparents who lived in Ivangorod but spent their summers in their daughter's dacha in Narva; and other grandchildren who otherwise lived in Leningrad. Although during the rest of the year the lives of the members of this extended family unfolded in different locations, the summer routines and rhythms, as well as family reproduction, were built around the dacha practices in Narva.

How then did the emergence of separate nation-states and borders impact the dacha practices of this kind of extended family? As its members became subjects of different states, their specific border-crossing procedures were tied to citizenship. Although the Soviet-era nationality of most of the family members was Russian, under the conditions of the new nation-states they could have easily obtained different citizenships and even chosen to have no citizenship, as was common in Narva (this complex and sensitive matter will be discussed further in Chapter 8). For the dacha dwellers who remained on the Russian side of the border, travelling to Narva became expensive and cumbersome due to visa fees, nerve-wrecking border procedures and many related uncertainties. In practice, for many this eventually resulted in fewer family gatherings and weakening ties. It was also not unusual in Soviet times that the dacha dwellers' main life outside the dacha season unfolded entirely on the Russian side of the administrative border, with the dacha and garden on the other side, in Narva. In such cases, the resulting relationship to the dacha and the land usually led to them both being given up. Yet not always. Some families living in Russia for many years, sometimes even decades, bought dachas in the surroundings of Narva and spent their holidays in Estonia, obtaining an Estonian visa each year, and in this way continuing to belong to the Narvan dacha communities.

The extended Kuznetsov family gathered each summer in their dacha in Kudruküla. At the time of my visit, they had bought a neighbouring plot of the same size and created an extended dacha. As they explained to me, the previous owners, once they realised that they needed to simplify their extended family life by relocating

permanently to Russia, were lucky to be able to sell the plot to them as their long-time neighbours. As in many such cases, the owners greatly valued the fact that their property, in which they had invested so much care that it had become an integral part of their home-space, holding much emotional value, would be passed on to people they knew and could trust to take care of it. While the Kuznetsovs' own dacha was just for themselves and their family members who visited occasionally, the other plot, equipped with a new house, belonged to their younger daughter's family who lived in St. Petersburg during the rest of the year. Almost immediately after the summer holidays started, the daughter and her husband drove their teenage son to the dacha to stay with his grandparents. They also brought along the husband's elderly mother, who stayed for the whole summer as well. The daughter and her husband then returned to St. Petersburg to work and came back later, when their summer holidays started, to stay for a month or so. While dacha-life inside the two houses unfolded separately, the garden areas were actively used by the entire extended family.

Given the difficulties and uncertainties related to cross-border movement, the increasingly unequal economic conditions between different post-Soviet places, and the shifts of value and meaning attached to dachas across generations, many extended families were not able to reconfigure their dacha lives in transnational settings as peacefully and comfortably as the Kuznetsov family had. Especially for the elderly Russian-speakers, the difficulties, ambiguities and conflicts that arose around reconfiguring their dacha lives in post-Soviet era, potentially resulted in the selling of dachas. This again meant a loss of an extremely important element of their sense of home in Narva, one that was often seen as beyond their control, and which was then placed under the responsibility of the Estonian state (an aspect of home-making that I will discuss in Chapter 9). Nevertheless, for many Narvan Russian-speaking families dachas continued to be the fundamental sites that provided the necessary space for maintaining and reproducing families, and were an integral part of their practices and sense of home in Narva.

6.10   Discussion

Rather than treating Narva simply as the urban place it is administratively defined as, I approached the town in this chapter through my informants' daily practices, which encompassed the many ways in which they actively engaged with dachas, gardens and nature within Narva and in its surroundings. As became apparent through my close examination of Narvans' dacha practices, rural and urban practices were intertwined yet also clearly distinguishable, as certain practices could not be performed outside the place where they belonged. The interlacing of the urban and rural in Narva was exceptionally tight thanks to the small size of the urban place and the physical closeness of the dacha settings. In Narva, the transitions from one place to another, unlike for example in many Russian metropolitan settings (cf. Caldwell 2011), went quickly and smoothly, which made the periods of dwelling in dachas even more extensive and more integrated with the urban. My data confirms what Caldwell (2011, 4) has noted, in stating that dacha practices constitute "a lifestyle [that] is not peripheral to Russian social life but is in fact a central, even ordinary, part of Russians' everyday lives at the personal, community, and even national levels".

Following Lovell (2003, 107), the older generation Narvans clearly represented the Soviet leaders' vision of the ideal Soviet person (*Homo Sovieticus*) who felt "equally at home on potato patches as on the factory floor". The easy access to dachas and the extensive practices that unfolded in these settings from the 1960s onwards, had considerably enriched urban Narvans everyday lives and, together with this, the practices and meanings related to home-making in Narva. While the early dwellers in post-World War II Narva were able to refer to their deep engagement with the construction of the city, of the urban home to dwell in, the dacha setting broadened significantly the sphere of home-making by enabling both physical and emotional engagement with the land and the surroundings beyond the urban, as well as a sense of belonging to communities that invested in home-making in the same manner. Symbolically, digging the land and tending the garden was a way of building a physical link between people and place, and thus a more visceral type of emplacement compared with dwelling in an apartment.

I also propose that differently from Caldwell's (2011) dacha dwellers who as native Russians already belonged in Russia, for Narvan resettlers who needed to undergo a process of emplacement to feel that they belonged in Narva the laborious

effort they made in their dachas can be interpreted as a path towards more fully belonging, thus expanding the meanings of dacha-life beyond those already known. While my data did not directly suggest such a connection, what remains an interesting question to explore further is whether the resettlers' offspring who were born in Narva had less of a need to dig the land in the dacha because they already felt that they more naturally belonged in Narva and did not need to put down roots in the land, either physically or metaphorically.

Phenomenologically, following the discussion of Casey (1996, 24), through their active living and bodily movement in the place, the dacha and the Russian-speaking Narvans started to constitute one another. When Narvan men and women were constructing, cultivating and preserving in their dachas, the extended rural-urban place was made into a home through a profound practice of dwelling, in Heidegger's (2013 [1971]) terms. Engaging with the land and nature by getting to know and using their gifts – the soil, fresh air, fish, berries, mushrooms – made the Russian-speaking resettlers both deeply familiar with their surroundings and better able to reproduce their own local culture, "biologically, socially, and spiritually", deeply rooted in natural environments (Caldwell 2011, 4). Given the rural origin of most of the elderly Soviet-era Russian-speakers in Narva, adopting an urban lifestyle had meant upgrading their living standards in many ways. The new possibility to dwell in a dacha provided them with the opportunity to continue using the skills and knowledge they had once acquired and, in this way, to stay rooted and pass on their heritage to future generations. There was thus no tension between initially escaping the rural settings and later merging rural and urban practices in Narva. On the contrary, thanks to being able to apply their existing rural skillsets, Narvans successfully managed their lives in Narva to their full capacity, joining the rural and urban together in a well-functioning whole. Besides, the dacha was a place of crucial importance where they were able to escape the constraints of the state. Just like Caldwell (2011, 42-43, italics in original) has noted, "dacha pursuits [were] personally fulfilling and meaningful because these were activities that one did for oneself, *not* for the state". I argue that the special environment in Narva and its surroundings that facilitated the convenient intersection of urban and rural practices – both having their strong benefits – was the key factor in making a homely space out of the unfamiliar that the Soviet workers encountered on arrival in Narva in Soviet times. Moreover, while Soviet urban Narva was a place of hope in its orientation to the future through promises of increased standards of living, continuous improvement and growth, rural practices in the dacha

can be seen as an anchor that significantly stabilised this forward-moving life by creating connections between past experiences and hopes for the continuity of dacha practices as they had been. The active work and leisure that was undertaken in dachas entailed living life to the full in the present yet, through the practices of the preservation and reproduction of family and culture, the connection with cultural heritage and the values of the past was continuously being created and attempts made to pass it on to future generations – not always successfully.

Later, the rural dimensions of daily practices also largely supported Narvans' survival in their town during the extremely harsh years immediately before and after the break-up of the Soviet Union and during the economic and social collapse that followed (cf. Ries 1997, 2009; Zavisca 2003; Hervouet 2003; Caldwell 2011, 2019). Given the fact that a large proportion of the population in Narva considered themselves to be living in conditions of economic deprivation at the time of my fieldwork, provisions that resulted from the dacha practices continued to be important to family economies, especially from the perspective of elderly Russian-speakers. A transforming but enduring dacha-life was undoubtedly also crucial for home-making in the area of family reproduction, both locally and transnationally, and dachas provided a physical setting and an emotional space for this. Despite the strongly felt economic, social and symbolic deprivation (Dzenovska 2018, 2020; Annist 2017) in this post-Soviet periphery, where the Soviet-era Russian-speakers found themselves often incompatible with the opportunities offered by neoliberal capitalism as well as betrayed by the governing Estonian state (I will discuss these aspects further in Chapters 8 and 9), dachas often remained a site of escape from painful everyday realities. Through the comfort of their habitual practices of digging, food and sociality, dachas often provided a safer and more "normal" place (Greenberg 2010; Jansen 2014) in which to "navigate and experience the feelings of loss, disorientation, upheaval, and anxiety associated with the post-Soviet condition" (Caldwell 2011, 106), yet the changing meanings of the dacha itself for younger generations did not leave it completely untouched by the fear that the homely practices related to it might also eventually disappear.

7 BECOMING AT HOME THROUGH SOCIALITY, FRIENDSHIPS AND BEING A MORAL PERSON

The social dimension of home implies that migrants seek sociality in order to engage with places in a meaningful way. I have discussed in previous chapters how sociality was directly and sometimes implicitly part of the Narvans' practices of urban dwelling in apartments and rural dwelling in dachas. Sociality was not there immediately on arrival in Narva; it needed to be created from scratch or be reactivated and reinvented in the new setting if social ties with the town already existed, which was more often the case in later Soviet decades.

Many have noted the impossibility of separating the public and the private in Soviet life (cf. Boym 1994; Yurchak 2005; Attwood 2010), and sociality is an aspect that emerges in the intersection of the two and, furthermore, often in coexistence with moral groundings (Rasanayagam 2010). Compared with capitalist countries, the Soviet state had a much stronger hold over its subjects' time and the spaces they inhabited outside of work, which is why it fed into interpersonal relations and sociality in multiple ways (Swader 2010).

In this chapter, I will investigate the various ways in which sociality as an aspect of home was created in Soviet Narva and will pay attention to the state's role in this. I will also explore how sociality and its moral reasoning have been transformed in post-Soviet Estonia and how the locals perceive and explain this change. My inquiry is guided by the following questions: how did the Soviet-era Russian-speaking resettlers achieve homely social comfort in Narva? What personal and institutional mechanisms were involved? And how have sociality and its moral groundings among Narvans changed from Soviet to post-Soviet times, and what has caused this change?

7.1   Soviet internationalism: a culture of friendship and sharing

The Soviet friendliness discourse, depicted by Yurchak (2005, 128) as belonging to the realm of "deterritorialized" cultural processes, embodies the various ways in which Narvans actively worked to create sociality, a natural striving to engage with and respond to one another that almost inevitably entailed a high degree of communality. The process of emplacement is marked by familiarity (Hillier & Rooksby 2002) and a sense of being part of a community (Douglas 1991). Migrants often cannot rely on relations and existing networks to help them to socialise in places where they settle. In Narva, Russian-speakers arrived in the town encouraged both by migration policies and personal networks, with different migration waves being characterised more by one or the other. In the life-stories of my informants in Narva, friendliness, sharing, trust and equality were occurring narratives, and these could be seen as the building blocks of the mutual relationships in the town. The quality of relationships between colleagues and neighbours was often one of the most important criteria by which the pleasantness of life in Narva was assessed, and it indicated the success of emplacement in town.

Vladimir was born in 1939 and grew up in a Siberian deportation camp that was characterised by a great ethnic mix. All his ancestors on his father's side were Estonian; his Russian mother was born in Narva. Both parents were deported to Siberia in 1941. Later on, when the deportees were released by the communist state, Vladimir's family had the chance to return to Estonia, but instead they settled in the historical Siberian city of Tomsk, a place where many deportees went to continue their lives. According to Vladimir, Tomsk was one of the most international and learned cities in Russia, and not only at the time he lived there: the city had a centuries-old exile population that included a numerous Russian intelligentsia and it also had one of the oldest universities in Russia. Vladimir did not feel either Russian or Estonian; in fact, he could not speak Estonian even after his more than 30 years in Narva since resettling there in 1975 and despite existing family ties in entirely Estonian-speaking South Estonia. When he turned 16 and got his first passport, on his father's suggestion he told the officers to register his nationality as Russian. First and foremost, he considered himself a pure Siberian and he proudly called himself a Siberian. According to him, due to the exile histories and the need to survive in extremely hard conditions, at the heart of Siberianness lay an extraordinary openness and friendliness that was superior to anything he had ever encountered anywhere in

the Soviet Union. In the following excerpt Vladimir recalls the sociality of the community that surrounded him in his childhood home and which had its roots in the most diverse places in the Soviet Union:

> V: To be short, in our house there were 12 families. Us [drawing with a finger on the table to illustrate his words], next to us the Jewish family, then the Lithuanians, Latvians. And here lived a Bessarabian from Western Ukraine. Here a German. Down a German family and a single German lady. Two Tatarians and a Jewish family. You see, we lived in an *internat'sional*[45]. And we had a big yard. Our house stood here, and the central road was just here. And in this wooden house another *internat'sional* was living, many rooms filled [with international people].
> JK: Did you get along with all these people?
> V: Of course! We were all friends. We all were friends there, visiting each other, celebrating all the holidays together. (Interview 30.10.2010)

Siberian warmth and hospitality were special characteristics that featured more than once in the stories I heard in Narva. Siberianness was not connected to ethnicity or even regionality; in my understanding it represented a culture of sharing and friendship that emerged in a circle of people of various ethnic backgrounds and, for Vladimir, it was the right way to be in the world, both morally and socially, and was something to be desired and reproduced (cf. Zigon 2009, 2010a; Howell 1997). Although such sociality was equally activated and reproduced in the miserable life circumstances shared in the extraordinarily harsh Siberian conditions in the places of deportation, it was not taken there by the deportees but rather emerged in place, when the existing local culture and the austere conditions came into contact. To many Russian-speaking Narvans Siberianness seemed to be a symbol of the Russian "broad soul" (*shirokaya duscha*), which meant non-pragmatic, open, sincere and hospitable people (Šliavaite 2005, 131) and was not associated with communist ideology but had a much older and deeper heritage that was not encountered in Narva even in Soviet times. However, in the view of most of my interlocutors, Soviet Narva was characterised by friendliness, which, even if it emerged in a diluted form compared with the ideal Russian "broad soul", was a widely lived and truly positive experience, something that became distinctively noteworthy only in hindsight through the post-Soviet experience, when it arguably no longer existed.

Life in a Soviet *internat'sional*, as Vladimir narrated, marked social worlds that unproblematically crossed every boundary based on ethnic, national, racial or

---

[45] An emic notion for international community.

linguistic divisions within the international borders of the Soviet Union. My informants' social worlds generally extended up to the borders of the Soviet Union and their understanding of internationalisation, with only a few exceptions, was limited to its Soviet, not socialist, form[46]. Like Vladimir, their lived practices of warm interethnic relations were often summarised in the notion of "living in a Soviet international" (*žyli v internatshional'ė*), which referred to living next to and forming informal relationships with people from different nationalities, mainly in their neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces. Many if not most Russian-speaking Narvans I talked to came from social settings where ethnic mixing, to a greater or lesser extent, was already the norm as far back as their childhood. Their parents, and less often their grandparents, might have formed ethnically mixed families (for interethnic marriages in Soviet Estonia see Lember 2014). Even if their own families were mono-ethnic, many had had classmates or neighbours from other ethnic groups or of other nationalities. Industrialisation, the collectivisation of farmland and large population movements all started much earlier in many other parts of the Soviet Union than in the Baltics, so we can more or less imagine that many of those who resettled later in Narva had (family) experiences of movement and uprootedness from places where their families had long dwelled (cf. Šliavaite 2005; Seljamaa 2012; Kesküla 2012). Their familiar surroundings were in many cases definitely more multi-ethnic than those in which Estonians in Estonian territory felt at home. The atmosphere of cordiality and friendliness between people of different Soviet nationalities was thus a lived reality in Narva, not an ideologically produced imagining or an issue that my informants wanted to present to me as such.

In one of our conversations, Viktor (b. 1939, Russian) accurately formulated how the Soviet ideology of friendship between people was so deeply ingrained in Soviet people's mind that it became a natural lens through which people's attitudes and behaviour were assessed: "I went to school in 1947, so I am already the post-war generation, so that for us… we consider the ideas of socialism as very true: peace and friendship between people. We absorbed this into ourselves" (Interview 31.10.2010). It was notable that there was a generational difference in how Soviet-era Russian-speakers embraced the idea of Soviet friendship and *internat'sional.* For those among my informants who had become adults around the time of the Soviet

---

[46] Very few Russian-speaking Narvans had personal experiences, let alone lasting social and cultural ties, that took them across the borders of the Soviet Union to other socialist countries or facilitated long-lasting cross-border communication.

dissolution and had lived most of their lives since in an independent Estonia, where the old moral frameworks changed in line with ideals related to freedom of speech, individualism and personal development, the vocabulary was clearly different. Not that friendliness and warmth would not have been appreciated in post-Soviet Narva, but they lost their ideological connotations.

Elizaveta (b. 1967, Russian-Mordovian), who moved to Narva with her parents in 1977 at the age of 10 from a Mordovian village community, explained how sociality was naturally the first thing her parents started to foster. She had extremely warm memories of how sociality quickly developed after their move, facilitated by their relatively large existing family network in Narva and the space and practices that came with a private house, but she also importantly incorporated the hospitality of one particular person into her narration: her mother. After moving to Narva where her aunt and all her older siblings had already settled, Elizaveta's parents purchased a private house nextdoor to my grandparents. She recalled:

> As we owned a private house, there were always people in our house. All the time. My mum was very hospitable. Our relatives and acquaintances were always welcome and people were visiting us all the time. During the weekend we did not close the door at all. So, we felt ourselves supported [here in Narva after our settlement]. We did not feel alone and totally abandoned here. People were friendly with each other, helped… My brothers constantly tried to renovate the house. Once they fixed the roof, then insulated the floor… and I remember that they always talked to [your] grandfather. He was always there for us with his advice and help. He always supported us. Well, thanks to the fact that we had such a warm-hearted and kind mother, we ourselves, of course, didn't stay in our shells. We were open, yes. (Interview 11.10.2010)

Elizaveta's emplacement in Narva had happened rather unusually through a private house setting. In the life-histories of my informants, dormitory life was one of the more typical, widely experienced sites of Soviet sociality. Since a significant proportion of the young people, both single and in couples, at first ended up living in dormitories, these were the places where common practices and values related to equality and friendship between all nationalities were formed and transmitted. Over the Soviet period, the Kreenholm textile factory was said to have had 10 different dormitories, and many other enterprises had their own too. Although towards the end of Soviet times the majority of Russian-speaking Narvans had become private apartment dwellers, large dormitories with their characteristic life still existed. In Soviet Narva, living in dorms was seen as a temporary housing solution, but, as I

showed in Chapter 5, for many this turned out to be a rather long-lasting arrangement. Life in the cramped communal dorms where ascetic single rooms were shared with other people – during the early Soviet period with up to six or even more – and facilities such as showers and laundry rooms, and sometimes even toilets, were shared with all the other inhabitants of the dorm were not, however, remembered as difficult or repellent in any sense, despite the lack of privacy and comfort. Dorm life was usually organised so that single people shared a room with several others of the same sex and couples shared with each other. Dorm life required special arrangements and the creation of certain daily practices that evolved depending on how the (factory) work shifts were organised and how people negotiated their comings and goings between themselves. Maria (b. 1935), for example, remembered her communal living in the Kreenholm factory dorm in the mid-1950s in the following way:

> There were six of us living in the same room. We were all young girls. We had only two toilets at the end of the long corridor to be shared between all the girls. The hall was long, and in each room there were six people. […] And at the beginning there was no kitchen, we cooked on the hot plate [in our room]. But later they set up a room downstairs as a canteen and they started to bring us warm meals there. […] The room we lived in was big. It fitted six beds. One bed was here [she pointed with her hand to the places in her room while we talked], two there, two there, but the sixth one… there was already a cabinet, so [the bed stood] on that side of a cabinet and that's it. Six people. And in the middle [of the room] there was a big round table and that's it. But life was good. I remember even now that everything was good: we had no worries, we were not married. […] We were in a good situation because our factory worked in shifts. We had a morning, evening and night shift. We organised [ourselves] so that all [six girls] were working the same shift. So that when we finished our night shift, we all could sleep. […] But in other rooms it happened that one was coming off a night shift, but another person was going only in the evening. Like this, you cannot sleep. But we had it all good. (Interview 16.01.2011)

Between 1975 and 1987, when Irina (b. 1950) spent her youth and early adulthood years in another dorm in Narva, the general attitude towards the dorm as a convenient and positively social place was still there:

> We [my husband and I] had everything [we needed for life] in our dormitory. We had a room of 15 square metres, a toilet and a canteen. We had a toilet in our room and a sink with cold tap water. On the ground floor, we had a washroom where we did the laundry. On the first floor [where we lived], we also had a place we got hot water from. In the dorm, we had janitors. These were retired men. There was a phone on their desk and their main task was to invite people to pick up the phone when

someone called them. We never locked our doors. No one stole; our children lived like in a commune. We were all young. I was working shifts and our [my and my sister's] husbands were working at *Gres'* (power plants). Their shifts went like this: three morning shifts of eight hours and then a free day; then three evening shifts and a free day; then three night shifts and a free day. So, when both of us [parents] were working and there was no one to take care of the kids the neighbours looked after them. Doors were all open, so the kids could come and go. (Interview 15.09.2010)

These two narrations, like many others I heard in Narva, revealed – in their current discourse – that, more than anything, good relationships and sociality were characteristic of dorm life in Soviet Narva. Dorms were places where a certain kind of collaborative sociality and trust were reproduced, which Russian-speaking Narvans, many of whom were first-generation urban dwellers, came to appreciate in Soviet times. The dorm culture as it was experienced and later recalled, especially by elderly Narvans, during our conversations was used as a reference point in their evaluation of later relationships and social change in Soviet and post-Soviet Narva. My informants stressed without exception that both the people and the general atmosphere in the dorms were nice, friendly and helpful, unlike in post-Soviet Narva where people had become self-centred. At the same time, my informants also recognised that their overtly positive experiences of dorm sociality and the easy, carefree life there related to a specific time in their life-course that coincided with their youth and often with being single and childless. It could be argued that the collaborative and supportive attitude that was typical of dorm life was the only effective strategy in a situation where Narvans had no easy option to change their workplace or place of dwelling. Today, when there is relative choice regarding where and how they live and work, people have completely different strategies of socialising and getting along with colleagues and neighbours. Narvans, however, associated this change with predatory capitalism and its emphasis on individuals rather than the common good.

In contrast to these previous accounts, making close friends in Narva was frequently mentioned as a challenge by my younger informants or those who had arrived in the town in the late Soviet period. Aleksandra (b. 1962, Ukrainian), for example, moved to Narva in 1982 with her Narva-born husband after completing her higher education in Leningrad. Her story depicted the difficulties of settling in Narva, especially of making close friends, even though her husband was born in the town and his kin were living there. After settling in Narva, it took years and some good luck for Aleksandra to find a close friend.

Our family's closest friends, with whom we have been friends for probably 15 years, are people with a very similar destiny. The husband is Narvan, born and raised here, but the wife is from the South, not from Ukraine as I am, but still from the South. And perhaps what first brought us together was loneliness. The fact that we were both alone here. When you do not have the history, you do not have roots here, when apart from your husband's family you do not have anyone else. It was quite difficult at first, because we were both accustomed to living an active life, with a large number of friends, acquaintances, contacts. And once we finally found each other we became very tight. We are not kin, but our ties are now close to family ties. We are not related by blood, but spiritually these are very close ties. I was lucky to find my best friend. That we found each other. I can be absolutely sure that we can rely on each other in any life situation and always help each other. When their daughter was born, and I became the godmother of this girl, this bound us deeply. Well, probably it is typical that people attract people who are in a similar situation and they can support each other in such situations. (Interview 24.01.2011)

Like Aleksandra, my younger informants born in 1960 and later and resettling in Narva from 1980 onwards, were more educated and none of them was a factory worker. Their greater difficulties in making close friends could be mere coincidence, pointing to the fact that their criteria for befriending others were stricter than those of factory workers, or it could indicate that the structural conditions for establishing friendships had changed somewhat over time. The latter could mean, for example, that by the last decade of the Soviet period the social fabric had already been established, and since new resettlers were not moving to the town anymore in large waves it was harder to find other people with the same orientation and the same openness to making new friends. After all, as Aleksandra poignantly mentioned, for two people to develop an intimate friendship it is helpful if they feel that they are in the same situation.

7.2   Workplace mediated sociality

When the Kreenholm textile factory (figure 22) permanently closed its doors behind the last factory worker in January 2011, it was clearly felt in the town that it was the end of an era. I was in Narva that very day. On some level, the day had been anticipated in the town for at least a decade, but people in general preferred to hope that a miracle would happen, and someone would change Kreenholm's destiny. The closing of the factory has clearly been viewed in the town as a consequence of how

the neoliberal capitalist state functions. The effect of the closure was painfully received because, as Kapajeva (2020) states, every single person in Narva had meaningful connections with the factory. Internationally awarded Narva-born artist Maria Kapajeva has masterfully depicted the personal and collective memories that weave the social and collective patterns of Kreenholm in her artistic book (ibid.) as well as in many exhibitions. In the 1950s, one in six inhabitants worked in the factory, and every Narvan either had a family member working there or knew well someone who did, and the lively Kreenholm district with its many services occupied a significant space in the town's infrastructure. Most Narvans longed for the past, when the town was "busy like a beehive" (cf. Dzenovska 2018, 19). The flow of people regularly and routinely coming from and going to the factory vividly captured the sociality of the community, characterising the whole of the historical Kreenholm district that by 2011 had emptied of movement and activity and resembled a ghost town, in stark and painful contrast to its famous past.

Figure 22. The abandoned Kreenholm factory complex located on the outskirts of Kreenholm district. Photo taken by the author in the spring of 2011

Kreenholm was once one of the large state enterprises that significantly shaped the town's sociality. It could even be said that in post-WWII Narva the emerging sociality, marked by qualities such as kindness, friendliness and equality, was associated almost entirely with large state-owned enterprises, above all Kreenholm. The enterprises were the loci where sociality was systematically and even strategically produced, reproduced and experienced. Kapajeva (2020) conveys the everyday life of the predominantly female Kreenholm workers and accurately captures how the factory and its collective permeated all spheres of life. Rather than being a unit of production, an industrial enterprise was "the focus of almost every aspect of the social existence of its employees" (Clarke 1999, 57). In the words of one of Kapajeva's (2020) informants, "[t]here was no division between work and home: it was all our life". As the enterprises organised nearly all areas of their workers' lives – work, housing, subsidised food, dachas, childcare places, healthcare, and cultural, sporting and even leisure activities – they had such a hold over their workers' resources, time and routines that little was possible outside of the work collective. The fact that post-WWII Narva was built anew and gradually populated by resettling workers only facilitated the integration of the work collective and personal life.

The rich cultural life of factory workers was organised by houses of culture (*dom kul'tury*), owned either by the state (or municipality) or by large enterprises and managed by the corresponding trade unions. Houses of culture were responsible for organising Soviet workers' recreational life, and they had a strong educational – and thus genuinely ideological – agenda. These bodies can be seen as the mediators and reproducers of the moral framework aligned with the founding principles of socialism as a classless society, delivered in a light and social form. Along with providing plenty of opportunities for organising one's leisure time in the form of singing, dancing, sports and other hobby groups, and showing movies and hosting plays, concerts and other performing arts from Soviet Estonia and other Soviet republics, houses of culture also organised propaganda lectures and speeches by agitation brigades. Each enterprise employed personnel, members of the trade union and the communist party, who were in charge of organising the cultural – and in practice social – life of its workers. In Narva, the major enterprises themselves built cultural palaces. The V. Gerasimov cultural palace (figure 23) was opened on the 100th anniversary of the Kreenholm textile factory in 1957, an achievement in itself considering the poor state of housing and other communal facilities at that time. The Baltijets military factory built a cultural house called "Oktoobri 50. a. nimeline

Kultuurimaja" in 1967, and the electric power plants built the Energeetik cultural palace in 1974. Several professions and jobs had their own clubs, some of which were affiliated with the state and some with industries, for example the teachers' club and the builders' club.

Figure 23. Kreenholm's V. Gerasimov cultural palace. Source: V.Gerassimovi nim kultuuripalee hoone, NLM KMM F 20:8, Narva Muuseum SA, https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/2478264

The cultural work carried out in these institutions was truly impressive. Practically every evening was filled with the activities of different hobby groups, and with visiting theatre, choir and other performances from Soviet Estonia and other republics, most often Leningrad. Narva Museum's archives hold materials from the Kreenholm factory (an example of which can be seen in figure 24), including announcements and advertisement texts that illustrate the content and mood of the events that were organised for workers in the factory. One of the materials from 1983[47], an invitation to a regular gathering organised by the Rovesnik youth club – a

---

[47] Source: Abonement, Gerassimovi nim. Kultuuripalee klubi Rovesnik, NLM _ 231:14 KMM D 102:14, Narva Muuseum SA, http://www.muis.ee/museaalview/1378402

so-called thematic evening – that took place on the last Thursday of the month in the V. Gerasimov cultural palace, stated that "these gatherings provide the chance to meet interesting people, listen to poetry and songs, watch a movie on a specific problem, and, of course, dance in their DISCO HALL" (capitalisation in original, Narva Museum, author's translation).

Figure 24. The celebration of Kreenholm district's anniversary. Women dancing in front of the V. Gerasimov cultural palace. As the picture vividly reveals, there were not many male partners available to dance with. Source: Kreenholmi linnaosa pidupäev, tantsuplatsil kultuuripalee ees, NLM KMM F 74:329, Narva Muuseum SA, http://www.muis.ee/museaalview/2693812

Lonkila and Salmi (2005) have studied the Kirov factory work collective in St. Petersburg, which employed 50,000 workers at its height, and have made significant findings with regard to the integrity of the informal social ties of a Soviet work collective and its continuity in post-Soviet times. By investigating the extent to which the Kirov workers turned to their co-workers for socialising, help and support in daily life, they found a considerable overlap between colleagues and informal social ties and, moreover, this overlap differed significantly between migrant-background workers and those who were born in Leningrad. Those who had migrated to the

town as young professionals were often married to colleagues and their best friends were colleagues also, and the people to whom they turned when they needed help of any kind were most typically some of their colleagues too. In a small town like Narva, with a population that was entirely migration-based, the work collectives were even more formative in the informal social ties and sociality that emerged among Narvans, with the exception that male partners in Kreenholm were in short supply due to the factory's feminisation of labour. While I did not specifically inquire into the social fabric and importance of work collectives in Narva, the all-encompassing role of enterprises, work collectives and colleagues and the sociality they provided was nevertheless a recurrent and important theme that my informants referred to as giving a positive flavour to life in Soviet Narva. Some of my elderly informants felt that they owed all their achievements in life to the factories (cf. Lonkila & Salmi 2005). Perhaps this is not that surprising when we consider that practically every aspect of their life could have been seen as embedded in the structures of a factory, and in the work collectives and socialising practices that evolved in these settings.

Nikula (1997, 90) has mentioned that by the time of the Soviet fall almost every other blue-collar worker in the former Soviet Union was of rural background, born in a village. In line with this is the observation of one of my informants, Vera (b. 1956, Russian-Polish), that Narva's post-WWII social fabric was predominantly that of the nearby Russian countryside. To Moscow-born Vera, who considered herself very much as belonging to the urban intelligentsia, this simple rustic village-based sociality, which characterised Kreenholm above all but also some other industries, was not a positive one. However, what is perhaps even more important in her judgement is that the kind of sociality that emerged in work collectives was not so much shaped by the top-down, ideologically driven command line, but by the dominant feature of the collectives' members, in Kreenholm's case rural sociality. When Lidia, born in 1933 into an Ingrian family in a nearby Ingrian village across the Narva River, moved to Narva in 1948 and started to work in Kreenholm as a cotton spinner, she was immediately surrounded by young men and women from the same village and neighbouring Ingrian and Estonian ones. She was therefore able to maintain and actively practise her existing social networks in Narva and, by marrying a Russian-speaking man from a village in the same area, she extended her networks and eventually became a Russian-speaker.

Lonkila and Salmi (2005, 290) noted that the Kirov factory workers considered their work collective in terms of "good", "normal" and "friendly" – all at the same

time – and characterised their relationships with colleagues as "good" and "warm". This was also very often the case among the elderly Narvans I interviewed. One of the Kreenholm workers whom Kapajeva (2020) has quoted, said that Kreenholm "was a collective that reprehended, advised, assisted, mentored, forced and motivated you all at the same time". This phrase perfectly summarises the moral framework – and the sociality – that was mediated by the factory as a workplace (cf. Kesküla 2012, 122-123). Ashwin (1999, 147-151) has underlined the different function of the Soviet collective from a gender perspective, maintaining that for women it was a source of emotional support and even a "second family", while for men it was about companionship, offering "light relief" in the form of drinking and bonding. Many postsocialist ethnographies have discussed the overconsumption of alcohol as a true companion of postsocialist transformation, in that it has a destructive effect on people's health and family relations as well as a link with increased violence. In Narva, the role of alcohol and drinking among male colleagues was regarded not simply as negative; depending on the function of the drinking and the subject-positions, drinking could be negative, neutral or positive. As Kesküla (2012, 157-158) has explored among Russian-speaking miners, in Soviet-era everyday encounters drinking was inseparable from the sociality of the male workers and continued as such in post-Soviet times, and its positive effect can even be seen in how it created group solidarity and reduced group distances between workers of different status.

A quarter of my informants, however, had very little experience of working in a Soviet collective – they had become adults and had resettled in Narva around the time of the Soviet collapse. In their narrations, it was clearly recognisable that the categories used by their elderly co-inhabitants in Narva were not part of their own experiences; they recognised the sentiments, and were able to sympathise with them, but did not consider them their own.

7.3   Good people, normal people: Russian-speaking Narvans' moral worlds

Jarrett Zigon (2010b, 159) defines sociality as a mutually constitutive process between persons, institutions and discourses that shape each other. For Johan

Rasanayagam (2010, 18) morality and sociality are contingent rather than separate, because they are "enacted within the flow of social relations". Zigon (2009, 261) has also argued that moralities are not universal to all members of a specific society or community, even though morality is generally unconsciously enacted. Zigon has differentiated between several forms of morality – institutional, public discourse and embodied dispositions – but they have significant overlaps and are pluralistic in nature. Discrepancies between ideological and embodied moralities sometimes occur, for instance albeit condemned by the state, drinking as part of sociality was still routinely practised and celebrated among people in Narva. Characteristic of Soviet society was that institutional and public discourses of morality almost entirely overlapped and there was no debate or contestation within institutions. If in a democratic society the public discourse morality consisted of "the media, protest, philosophical discourse, everyday articulated beliefs, opinions, and conceptions, moral expressions in the arts, literature and stories, and familial teachings", in the Soviet world all of this was ideologically regulated (Zigon 2009, 259). As workplaces had a central role in ideologically shaping Soviet people's morality in line with an ideological stance, workplace mediated sociality and morality were two sides of the same coin. Morality was strongly influenced by the all-Soviet ideology, which was particularly favourable to finding common ground socially and morally in a migration-based locality like Narva, where the resettlers sometimes came from very distant locations and had a diversity of backgrounds. Strong ideological underpinnings assured that there were no competing moral or public discourses (Zigon 2010a).

The normality discourse was a common feature in Narva. It is a discourse that people in many former Soviet states and more widely in socialist countries identify with and that discursively lives on in postsocialist societies as a valid point of reflection, as not living up to contemporary social realities (Jansen 2014, 2015; Greenberg 2011; Galbraith 2003). In Narva, the notion "normal" usually occurred in two forms, either as a characteristic of a person (*normal'nyi chelovek*) or as a behaviour (*normal'nye otnoch'enye*). In both cases, it referred to a normative frame, a socially expected and accepted behaviour, one that was no more and no less than the social standard. For my informants, as can be seen in the example of Viktor (b. 1939, Russian), normality was a universalistic measurement of a particular quality of a person in Soviet society.

> I have been travelling around a lot and I have worked with very different people. For me, the main principle of life has always been – just like the Sumerians already said – do not steal and be a normal person (*byt' normal'nym chelovekom*). By the way, in Altai there was a rule that what matters is not the shape of your eyes, but what your human qualities are. Nothing else is more important. If your attitude to work is okay then you are a normal person. If your attitude to work is not good – you are not a good person. (Interview 31.10.2010)

In the above case, the normality discourse appears as based on Soviet people's correct attitude to work. Especially for my male informants who belonged to the older generations, attitude to work largely defined a person, whether he was considered worthy or unworthy, reliable or unreliable. The way in which Viktor described a normal person and a good worker concerned moral qualities that were not extraordinary or aspirational but typical of and natural to Soviet people, indicating how an "ordinary" person needed to be and act in society to lead a moral and dignified life. Reading from the positive narrations of my informants, most Russian-speaking Narvans in Soviet times, at least in retrospect, lived up to those standards; collegial and neighbourly relationships in Narva were typically described as good, warm and normal. Belonging to a rhetoric of Soviet ideology, "normal" as a universalising moral quality somehow outweighed all other qualities and I assume that discursively it even helped in overcoming the ethnic, racial and linguistic divisions.

Given that it was rather difficult to change workplace, especially for a specialist in a specific industry, as was typically the case in Narva, and it was impossible to fire someone, even if they were drunk or very bad at what they were doing, it becomes possible to apprehend how someone's personality at work was crucial in evaluating them as a moral person in all areas of life. From this perspective, it was considered truly good luck in Soviet Narva to be surrounded by "normal" people, and bad luck to work day after day with someone who constantly misbehaved or underperformed. For Viktor and Vladimir, who had both worked in managerial positions for decades and constantly needed to recruit people, being able to figure out who the "normal" people were in the recruitment process was a key factor in their success. If they made a mistake and hired someone who turned out to be "abnormal", the whole team would suffer for the mistake, possibly for a long time, if not forever. In contrast, Zigon (2010a) has demonstrated how, in post-Soviet Russia, work – regarded as not constitutive to who a person was – was clearly separated from other realms when

someone's morality was being assessed, and this can be considered a post-Soviet transformation of morality.

While "normal" was typically associated with describing specific people and situations with regard to the standards set by Soviet ideology, "good" was also a common description of people and situations in Narva, but its meaning and usage was different. To be "good" was not to behave according to (Soviet) social standards, that is, to perform well in some situations and to behave or perform in an expected way in others. To be "good" was to act according to one's heart, to be caring, understanding, generous and forgiving. "Good" referred to the humanistic, inner qualities of a person, approximating the Russian "broad soul".

Although at first Elizaveta (b. 1967, Russian-Mordovian) recalled her childhood memory of the warm and friendly private and neighbourly relationships that her family immediately managed to build after their arrival in Narva, she went on to explain how support was also felt and experienced through more official, institutional encounters. However, as we can see in the interview extract below, the help and compassion that were displayed in this situation, and which Elizaveta strongly appreciated, were not the result of the function of the institution and the role the person there was fulfilling; rather they were related to the person's inner qualities and process of moral reasoning.

> The director of my school, Tamara Aleksandrovna, who was half-Estonian, had the fame of being a very just and sympathetic person. She knew the background of each person, of each of her pupils. I mean she was not a manager somewhere at the top, but really cared about people. And when my father died, I remember that she called me up to tell me that from now on I would eat for free during the school lunchtime. And she told me not only not be shy, but to go into the dining room after the classes, where I would be given free soup or something else to fill my stomach. When I later told my mum about it, she was a bit shocked, but then she told me that if there was such a possibility, if food was left over there anyway, why not accept it. She understood that we were left without a breadwinner, without a dad, and she had the chance of some help. And I remember her always like that, I also had a friendly class, the memories of school have remained very good. (Interview 11.10.2010)

My informants typically pictured Soviet Narva as a place filled with good people and where good, friendly relationships easily emerged. The narrations gathered in 2010-2011 are based on the experience of 20 years of Estonian nationalism, which means that everything that was said about life in the past was already unavoidably being viewed through the prism of intersubjective relations in contemporary Estonia. People systematically referred to Soviet life by contrasting it with

contemporary life, especially from the angle of ethnic relations, while positioning themselves as victims in situations sometimes directly created by the state (see Chapters 8 and 9) and sometimes more indirectly, by capitalism.

When people in Narva talked about post-Soviet changes in communication between people, they frequently mentioned the indifference and individualism that had emerged as a consequence of the neoliberal capitalist mentality. Varvara (b. 1937) explained how, in her view, today's people are individualists.

> V: Before, for example for the celebrations of the First of May [May Day], all the neighbours in the same apartment block participated in a *subbotnik*[48]. We washed the communal windows in the entrances, we washed the panels, the floors, planted and watered flowers and trees... All the neighbours gathered together and took part in these jobs. The men would go to the forest to dig up some trees while the women dug the holes. When the trees finally arrived, we planted and watered them all together. People were friendly. But now people are more… For example, the board of the housing cooperative writes a note: "Today is a *subbotnik*". And what do you think, how many people come and participate? Five people, five or six, no more.
> JK: The elderly or the younger ones?
> V: Mostly the elderly. But now even the old people have become lazy, I can say. Here we recently had a s*ubbotnik* to change the pipes in the basement. First the old pipes had to be removed... They were all insulated, so all this insulation had to be removed before these metal pipes could be handed over. And what do you think, did many people join in? Ten people from the whole house, and this house has 76 apartments!
> JK: People are not interested, right?
> V: Before, if a *subbotnik* or *voskresnik*[49] was organised everyone, without exception, participated. If a wife could not go then the husband went. If the husband could not even go then one of the children certainly went. People were much more friendly than in these days. Unfortunately, this is the truth. People have become much more… I don't know. (Interview 26.10.2010.)

During our conversation in her dacha, Lidia (b. 1933, Ingrian) expressed similar laments about contemporary sociality, saying that today's people are strange – everyone stays on their own, minding their own business and avoiding communication. She juxtaposed this observation with the past sociality, characterised by plenty of get-togethers and doing things together. She claimed that if someone had a birthday in the past, people always gathered and celebrated it. If it

---

[48] A Soviet-era term for officially voluntary but in essence compulsory events that took place on Saturdays, organised by workplaces to use the industrial workers' labour resource in projects that were seasonal or temporary, but labour intensive: cleaning, building, dismantling buildings, harvesting potatoes, planting forest etc. Today the term continues to be used by the older generations but it mainly signifies volunteer clean-up events in neighbourhood private spaces.

[49] The same as *subbotnik*, only organised on Sundays.

was a public holiday or a personal celebration people always put up a table and gathered around it. If someone was visiting the dacha you would never let them leave without loading their bags and pockets with garden produce. It was not only relatives who were in close contact, visiting dachas and each other's homes, but friends and colleagues as well. While explaining how the sociality had dramatically changed, Lidia was happy that in her own family they had managed to keep a different sociality going: the families of her two daughters, located transnationally, got together regularly, and even her grandchildren's friends were frequent and welcome visitors in their dacha.

People had become more closed in post-Soviet times (cf. Kesküla 2012) and when someone did not have a work collective to socialise through in Narva, the isolation was especially harsh. Anna (b. 1961, Russian) had moved to Narva in 2002 when life in a Northern mining town had become impossible. She was one of very few of my informants who did not have a Soviet-era history with Narva. As a highly experienced dressmaker, she hoped to work in Narva, but finding a job became a real struggle, and more so for her husband who had been working in a mine. Even though Anna was familiar with Estonia and Estonians – her husband's mother was originally from Estonia and after she had returned there from being deported to the Far North they had spent every summer at her house in the countryside where Anna became familiar with the characteristic coyness of Estonians, as she put it – she was shocked by the coldness and aloofness she experienced in Russian-speaking Narva as she has expected to arrive in a similar resettler-based urban community to the one she was used to. She partly admitted that this certainly had something to do with the fact that she had difficulties in establishing herself in a job and ended up working mostly from home as a self-employed dressmaker. Anna and her husband had lived for more than 20 years in the mining town and had strong social networks there, but she had initially been a resettler there as well and she considered the Russian-speaking post-Soviet environment in Narva much harsher than the one she had previously encountered. Her husband's experience in Narva was even worse – his workmates were spiteful to him in person and he experienced depression as a result. When I inquired as to how the relationships between people in her former hometown had been, she replied:

> Very good, yes. Friendly. Even if there were some conflicts – conflicts happen in every job – even if somewhere someone did something wrong, they could raise their voices, quarrel, but no one ever turned against you personally. I mean they never

insulted your family, never in such a way. People never hurt deeply. After five minutes everything was forgotten, people started talking again, and everything was fine. Conflicts happen at work, that's normal. But here [in Narva] it is not like that. Here they get personal, these denunciations... Such things did not exist [there], that someone would go and complain about you to the manager. This was impossible to imagine even. We talked between ourselves, sorted things out. Here, somehow, everything happens behind your back. This is unpleasant. […] People are different [here and there], completely different. Here, it turns out, people do not say who earns how much. There, people easily talked about it and no one cared. To ask, what your salary was at the end of a month, was totally normal. Not that I would have really cared, but it was not taboo either [to talk about salaries]. But here people would not say it, they consider it a private matter. Also, before you can go and visit someone, you always need to call and agree, but there we simply rang the doorbell, "Hello, I'm here!" – "Come in!" The relationships were much more easy-going. No, here you must agree on everything: what time, where, how and whether you can come at all. I don't know what is better, maybe it is better to warn people about your coming in advance, but for me it was easier there. (Interview 02.11.2011)

Anna continued in the same vein:

Narva has changed, the people here are a little different [from in the Far North]. We are all different in some ways, yes. But here, people are more scattered, there are not such strong friendships. I do not know. My husband's colleagues, how can I put it, I do not want to offend anyone, but no one would ever support him with advice, no one is there to help out... there is no shoulder to lean on. Everyone is on his own. And even to the point that they are able to go and report your mistakes to the top. If something happens, no one thinks of helping but they figure that it is better to go and report that he was wrong. We are, of course, very surprised about why people here are so… (Interview 02.11.2011)

Anna and her husband experienced difficulties at work and were not lucky with their neighbours either. Upon moving to Narva, they sold their apartment in their former hometown for very little money and bought a very similar apartment in Narva, but it turned out to be in a bad building. Several of their neighbours had constant trouble with drugs, alcohol and smuggling. Despite appreciating Narva as a clean, and generally calm, Western town, Anna and her husband were not happy with the sociality there; they had difficulties making the town home for themselves. At the same time both of their grown-up children had quickly adopted the place as their own and felt happily resettled. Anna told me about her dream to move to an Estonian village and become a sheep farmer; however, she struggled to find the confidence that they would survive as self-employed farmers. Anna and her husband clearly found it hard to get used to the moral and social landscape in post-Soviet

Narva, and this was perhaps due not solely to the different "local moralities" (Zigon 2009), but also to the difficulties in reorienting themselves and becoming accustomed to new moralities related to neoliberal capitalist values and ubiquitous uncertainties.

Anna's disorientation in market capitalism can also be seen in the sense of estrangement she experienced when she needed to advertise her skills. After becoming self-employed she realised that, since she did not have an adequate social network in her new hometown, she needed to start advertising her services. Having printed her business cards, she had to gather courage and transcend her moral code to be able to walk around in the town and distribute the cards to random people. Such awkward self-promotion was simply outside of her moral universe. Nevertheless, once she managed to do it, she saw how it paid off. Anna's story shows that lacking a welcoming work collective and arriving in the middle of post-Soviet transformation in Narva had a significant effect on her sense of sociality in the town and made the emergence of feeling at home complicated.

In response to being asked what living a normal life meant for people at the margins of society in post-Soviet St. Petersburg – in this case, drug addicts living temporarily in a rehabilitation centre – one of Zigon's (2010b, 149, brackets in original) interlocutors said, "A normal life like everyone else gets to live. To work, to eat three meals a day, to have some friends and talk [*obshchat'sya*] – a normal life". If these three pillars held strong, it was possible for anyone to lead a normal life without major problems in post-Soviet society. What my informants told me about normal life in Soviet Narva related to broadly the same issues. In my data, it is clearly observable how the migrant subjectivity in Soviet times meant that making friends was more difficult than finding work and having food to eat, something that is universal to migrant experiences across the world. In comparison, "normal lives" in post-Soviet times, as Zigon (ibid., italics in original) has pointed out, were about matters that were similar in "*form*" to these but different in "*content*".

In his book *Making a New Post-Soviet Man*, Zigon (2010a) particularly focuses on the experiences of *obshchenie*, which can be translated as "communication", "association" or "social intercourse" but, as he stresses, *obshchenie* is not a simple conversation (*razgovor*) but rather an "intimate and dialogical sociality during which the participants become in some sense different persons". Following Yurchak (2005, 148), *obshchenie* is "both a process and a sociality that emerges in that process, and both an exchange of ideas and information as well as a space of affect and

togetherness". Anna Wierzbicka (2002, 425) has noted that *obshchenie* relates to sharing, commonality and being together, which may not entail speaking at all but "a dialogical kind of being-together-with" in particular situations. All these authors underline how there is an essential difference between just talking and talking intimately, heart to heart.

When I asked my informant, Anna, what had been most difficult for her in Narva, she replied:

> Genuinely, I have no one here to talk to heart to heart (*po dusham pogovarit'*). My impression is that there is a glass ceiling that stands in my way. There is some kind of barrier. I do not have deep communication (*ne hvatajet tovo obshchenia*). Well, it's not only about communication as such, because even though life is better here… my soul is lonely… And my husband feels the same. He, too, takes it sometimes very hard that… before he could go to the garage, friends came to him, acquaintances passed by. Here there is nothing like that. Work-home-work-home and that's it. Sometimes we go to the farm [on the other side of Estonia], we stay there, but again only the two of us. But here no one opens up to anyone. I think we will not be able to find the kind of friends here that we had there. I think perhaps this was the reason I called you to have this interview. I guess it was because of this [lack of communication]. I have only just realised that. Psychologically, I probably had to unload. So I want to thank you for that [opportunity]. (Interview 02.11.2010)

After the collapse of the Soviet world, morality and sociality were set in motion just like everything else. Suddenly, there were new interpretations of what it meant to be a moral person, of how people could remain true to themselves and what they could expected from others. Much of the nostalgia and the claims that Narva was no longer the same place and that people had changed, generally for the worse, were tied to the realisation that a shift in moral worlds had taken place. It is often difficult to establish whether the criticism regarding the emerging coldness, individualism and indifference that was observed in fellow townspeople was directed at the state or whether the issue was more complex (cf. Todorova 2009). After all, there is a thin line between whether people became cold, uncaring and withdrawn because of the surrounding economic and political difficulties, a hardship overload related to financial and emotional suffering, or as a consequence of the transformation from a socialist to a capitalist value system in which individuals came to rethink and realign their moral world. It is clear though that under the change of regime the "nonconscious moral world of being" (Zigon 2009, 261) came to be contested, and everyone went through the process of asking themselves what was moral and what was not in the new world. After decades of an imposed state-driven ideology

celebrating unity and collectivism, it was not easy to adapt to "competing notions of morality concerned with balancing individual and collective interests in the pursuit of wealth" (Wanner 2005, 515). My elderly informants who had been born, raised and lived most of their lives in a moral framework that was shaped institutionally, in public discourse and through their practice, accepting and adopting the new moralities that emerged after the Soviet dissolution was hard. Many felt that people had previously led moral and respectable lives and that suddenly everything was a mess. So, it was not only that many Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans did not want to and were not able to adopt the new moralities but that they disapproved of their very foundations. Many postsocialist anthropologists have also demonstrated how the transformation of Soviet and socialist societies was characterised by a multiplicity of unprecedented moral beliefs and practices, because hybrid forms of Soviet moral codes and temporal moral reasonings were applied (Humphrey 2002; Wanner 2005). While particularly the elderly Narvans generally resisted and criticised the moral transformation and tended to see it in negative terms, they at the same time realised that returning to the old was impossible and, looking at how their children and especially their grandchildren, born and raised in a different world, had totally different values, they silently accepted that the future would be different whether they liked it or not.

Above all, the new questionable moralities were seen as having emerged in the course of switching to a market economy and as related to the massive influx of new opportunities connected to imported liberalism: "radically new conceptions of the economy and the place of money in people's lives" (Verdery 1996, 181) and "the cult of money" as an emic concept (Ries 2002). While the proliferation of a black economy, criminality, mafia reprisals, blackmail, corruption and illegal business was by no means comparable with what happened in Russian and other postsocialist metropoles, as richly depicted by Ries (2002) and Verdery (1996), these new forms of life did not leave Narva unscathed. Narvans recognised the dark side of the town that emerged in the early 1990s, but when I inquired into this topic in 2010-2011 the locals considered issues related to the image of a "criminal Narva"[50] as belonging to

---

[50] I occasionally felt that criminality and clandestine economies, especially those related to the early 1990s mafia activities in Narva, was an aspect of life that my interlocutors univocally wanted to skip over or at least not focus on in our conversations. I can only assume that this was related to a shared desire to get rid of the unfair image of a dangerous and abnormal "criminal Narva" that the town had acquired in the eyes of the Estonian public and which Narvans were reminded of every now and then

the distant past and no longer part of their everyday realities. During my fieldwork, the dark side of Narva was mostly associated with local drug addicts and small-scale clandestine cross-border traders, an issue that was seen as a miserable consequence of high unemployment and socioeconomic deprivation (see Chapter 9) rather than as an aspect of life that made the town particularly dangerous[51]. This dark side of life in the town was certainly seen to be a result of the post-Soviet transformation that had affected morality and sociality, but the people involved in these activities were pitied rather than condemned.

While the old forms of sociality were gradually fading away, some new forms started to emerge in post-Soviet Narva. The Soviet state had promoted its own highly ideological vision of secular morality and sociality, but in post-Soviet Narva religious congregations, and orthodox and various protestant churches, appeared as new forms of sociality (cf. Caldwell 2017; Steinberg & Wanner 2008). Ethnicity had previously been an intimate sphere of life in the town, but the Estonian state institutionalised it by encouraging the emergence of ethnic associations and their activities. First, the state recognised the historical minorities in Estonia, although these included only those members of ethnic groups that had lived in Estonia before the Soviet era and thus not Soviet migrants, and then it highlighted equality between ethnic communities in the constitution while denying them automatic citizenship (unless they were able to prove their historical roots in Estonian territory). Notwithstanding this contradiction, the state itself largely sponsored the establishment and financing of dozens of ethnic associations from within state programmes, obviously with the aim of separating culture and political belonging (Mnogonatsional'naya Narva 2019). The formal spaces and activities of ethnic associations emerged as alternative ways to achieve sociality in Narva, but their role has been a minor one, and they have definitely not filled the void that was left when state-owned companies gave away their sociality reproduction functions. Pensioners' clubs and housing cooperatives, which I have already referred to briefly, are some of the many places that can be associated with new forms of sociality. The point here

---

even though they themselves did not consider their town as more criminal or dangerous than any other place.

[51] I was, however, repeatedly warned by my interlocutors not to walk around unaccompanied after dark, because you never knew who you might meet along the way. The most probable danger in the town was that a drug addict would rob you in desperate need of money for their next fix, Polina once told me, while pointing to my camera bag and suggesting I disguise it by hiding it in an unattractive plastic bag when walking in dark or remote places.

is to stress that Russian-speakers in general felt that their touchpoints with other of the town's inhabitants had reduced significantly in post-Soviet times, and even contact with their own relatives, let alone those who lived across borders, had also diminished dramatically.

In the next section, I will present some insights about contemporary sociality in the Narva Pensioners' Society to better grasp what kind of sociality the town's elderly were looking for and were willing to contribute to in order to feed their sense of homeliness.

7.4   The Pensioners' Society

In mid-January 2011, my informant Larissa took me along to Narva Pensioners' Society. We met at the bus stop in front of her apartment block around 9 am and took the bus to Kreenholm district, on the other side of the town. For Larissa, visits to the Pensioners' Society had been part of her daily routine for years. The society was located in a large, light blue, two-storey building that had previously served as a kindergarten. We rang the doorbell and Irina Pavlovna, the social worker they called the hostess (*hoz'yaika*), opened the door. Later I heard that there was also a nurse working in the society. The premises were spacious and generally cosy: a large living room, a fully equipped kitchen, a basic gym with a couple of very old static bicycles and a few other items, a nurse's office, a bathroom and a separate toilet. The bathroom was fitted with a shower, a regular bathtub and a special bathtub for disabled people. It was explained to me that the elderly who either did not have washing facilities at home or needed assistance could use this bathroom for a small charge. There was also the possibility of doing laundry, again for a small charge. In the living room, there were big sofas, coffee tables, a large dining table and computer tables. On the wall behind the computer tables I noticed many photos of the society's members, all women, both in their youth and taken at various of the society's events. The society was not for women only, but only a few men had found their way into the place over the years and, even then, irregularly. Most of the ladies were sitting on the sofas, doing handicrafts and chatting during my around three-hour visit that morning.

The women's talk mostly revolved around Estonian politics and its effects on the everyday finances of individuals and families. On 1 January that same year, just a couple of weeks previously, Estonia had joined the euro and people were still greatly confused about the new currency and resentful about how it had immediately increased prices. The women were anticipating a further even bigger increase, because they had heard that this had happened in Germany and Finland after the euro had been introduced there. The forthcoming parliamentary elections were another topic of their conversations and, as I expected, most of my interlocutors showed unshakable support for the Central Party, which was currently in power in Narva, and were very critical of the Reform Party, which had previously held power in Estonia for over a decade and was associated with hostility towards Russian-speakers. Larissa took it as her responsibility to introduce me and my research, and with reference to this started a discussion about ethnic relations and discrimination against Russian-speakers in Narva. Since I had already conducted a life-story interview with her, I was familiar with her views (see more detail in Chapter 8), and was therefore not surprised when she vehemently claimed that the Estonians were oppressing the Russians, for example by systematically paying them less for the same job. I noticed that when Larissa opened up the topic of discrimination, other women were at first suspicious and careful about whether they could openly express their opinions, but on seeing my calm reaction to Larissa they seemed to support her views.

A little later, the hostess joined us and suggested that we go through the details of the New Year party that was to take place there the following day. The women were planning what sort of *pirogy* (pies) to bake and agreed that the hostess would buy all the ingredients and the cost would later be shared equally between the participants. During my time in the building, 12 women visited the society. The society was open on weekdays between 8 am and 3 pm, and women could come and go as they pleased during that time. Around noon, several of the women stood up and asked who wanted to join them in the canteen next door for lunch. Larissa commented that most women took this opportunity to have a warm lunch at a very reasonable price when they were visiting the society. The lunch was modest, usually soup, but it was a very cheap and convenient way of covering one meal a day, especially since most of these women lived alone. Some of them, however, preferred to take their own food along and eat it in the society's kitchen. Larissa went for lunch, but I stayed a little longer, with some of the other women, to go through several

albums that were filled with photos of many of the society's events. Many of the pictures had been taken on the society's premises but also during group trips to events, plays and concerts in the town. Trips to St. Petersburg and various places in Estonia outside of Narva were also organised. The women zealously recalled these trips to more faraway places and explained that pensioners in Narva usually did not have the money or the opportunity to go on cultural trips outside their town. Therefore, for them, these organised excursions were truly memorable and much appreciated. For example, one of their latest trips had taken them to the theatre and on a city tour in Tallinn, which was a big event for many. Some people who joined the trip had in fact, not been to Tallinn for 20 years.

Figure 25. Russian New Year celebration in the Pensioners' Society. Photo taken by the author

The next day, I was invited back to the society for the New Year party (figure 25). They were celebrating the Russian New Year, which takes place according to the Orthodox calendar two weeks after the Western New Year celebrations. There was a great variation among my informants regarding how and the extent to which the Orthodox New Year was celebrated, but in the society it marked a years-old tradition of coming together, setting a festive table, dressing up, eating, drinking,

talking and spicing up the day with an entertaining programme. This time, a couple of the society's members who liked to perform had produced a short humorous show about a Russian soldier and his lover. The absurdity of the show was about the fact that the soldier had come to Estonia to protect the country from Russia, and it was full of relationship and marriage advice for young lovers. The performance was well received and great fun. Berry wine was offered round and, as the party proceeded, some of the ladies started to tell anecdotes, many of them rather dirty, and seemed to have a great deal of fun. I stayed there for a little longer than two hours and although when I left some of the others had already done so, some five or six of them continued the party in a very festive mood.

By the winter of 2011 when I met her, Larissa had become one of the society's most active attendees. She regularly visited its premises in Kreenholm even during the summer season when many of the members were busy with their dachas and thus temporarily stopped attending. The society, in fact, came into Larissa's life after she sold her dacha and untangled herself from the dacha community, and it seemed to me that in some ways she had felt the need to exchange the routines and rhythms of the dacha for those of the society for her daily life to make complete sense. Larissa explained to me that the society's living room, with its liveliness, talks and communal activities, had come to signify a truly important place to her. Daily visits there filled her otherwise dull and lonely days at home with the social factor, *dusha*[52] (the soul). In the society, people socialised by meeting with others, doing handicrafts together, sharing their personal problems and information, giving advice, drinking tea, reading newspapers, playing cards, celebrating each other's birthdays and organising parties for a variety of feast days. Many of the members had once worked in the Kreenholm textile factory and had a common work history. The society welcomed all elderly Narvans, but only some found their way there, particularly elderly women who were widowed and/or lived alone. There are a few possible explanations for the gendered nature of the spaces of the elderly in Narva: women have historically formed a slight majority in the town, and women in post-Soviet Estonia live on average 10 years longer than men. When I asked Larissa about the fact that the society, despite its meaningfulness for those who actively attended it, attracted relatively few members, she just shrugged her shoulders and commented that "people in Narva have become

---

[52] Here she meant mostly liveliness, not the Russian *dusha* in the complexity that Pesmen (2000) has famously described it.

very lazy and withdrawn, they complain but then prefer not to do anything. Many, of course, also have problems with their health that simply prevent them from leaving home". (Interview 13.12.2010 and Field notes 13.-14.01.2011)

7.5   Discussion

Homes are not private matters but emerge at the crossroads of intersubjective relations, which can be between individuals, communities, or even members of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) such as states. In this chapter I investigated how Russian-speaking Narvans, upon arrival in a new place, started to work towards a space of comfort, familiarity and safety through the practice of sociality with their fellow townspeople. I argued that through acts of daily life and experience Russian-speakers became socially and morally aligned with "local cultural imaginaries, models for interaction, social institutions, cosmologies, and models for experience" as posited by Rasanayagam (2010, 179), which in turn helped them to achieve a sense of being grounded in Narva. When Russian-speaking Narvans considered that their lives had become precarious and unsatisfactory in post-Soviet Estonia, not to speak of the even grimmer futures that were anticipated for the town, much of the blame for this situation was placed on the Estonian state (this will be analysed in Chapters 8 and 9). Pain related to state politics of nationalism, and language, citizenship, border-practice and socioeconomic struggles, were all caused by external forces. However, the vanishing sociality and morality that my older informants in particular witnessed could not be entirely explained as externally imposed. Sociality and morality were transformed and in my elderly informants' view ceased from the inside out, the change happening intersubjectively between Narvan Russian-speakers themselves. This chapter attempted to explain this "inside out" transformation that caused a "moral breakdown" (Zigon 2010a) in post-Soviet Narva and made my informants become disoriented in the present and towards the future, yearning for a past homeliness.

It usually takes a long time for migrants to feel part of the social fabric in places to which they migrate, and the process is often never completely over. In Soviet Narva, the emergence of sociality was not the concern of individuals alone. On the contrary, the state was interested in sociality being facilitated institutionally, for adults

particularly through their workplaces. The functions of Soviet workplaces went far beyond those carried out by capitalist ones; they were allocated resources and were expected to perform the role of organising Soviet workers' free time in a socially and ideologically controlled manner (Lonkila & Salmi 2005). My interlocutors, while being aware of the ideological agenda of workplace sociality, did not see their workplaces (more widely, the state) as exercising control over their lives through the after-work and other organised social activities, many of which were only formally voluntary. Instead, my informants in their reflections accepted this realm of their life with a great deal of gratitude, seeing the institutionally provided spaces of sociality as fostering their sense of homeliness in Narva. Institutionally enhanced sociality was easily absorbed into all areas of life, especially by resettlers who had no kin and no extensive social networks in the town, so much so that it was often difficult to distinguish whether there were any areas of life at all in which sociality was a personal matter. For many, life in apartment blocks and dachas, as shown in the previous chapters, was also connected to the work collective, because apartments and dachas as sites of dwelling and daily practice were distributed by workplaces, frequently meaning that members of the same collective were located in the same spaces outside of work also. Praise of workplace mediated sociality should of course be treated with a degree of cynicism and caution, given that the turning points of history amplify the negative and positive associations at both ends. The fact that my interlocutors' memories about the sociality and moral worlds of Soviet-era Narva were overtly positive probably does not exactly reflect the lived realities, pointing rather to the huge contrast with the lived realities full of moral confusion and social discomfort in post-Soviet Narva. Besides, sociality does not evolve once and forever but is a long-term process involving various points of encounter and action, reconsideration and navigation, which makes it more difficult to grasp through concrete moments than through the emotions it evokes or the memories of how it felt. Much of sociality, and the moral reasonings that guides it, happens relatively unconsciously on the go, as we live our lives.

Friendliness was the principal humanistic value associated with Soviet life; it was seen as fundamental to that life, to its moral foundations, behaviour and practical arrangements. In contrast, unfriendliness, many of my informants agreed, especially those who had lived most of their lives under socialism, was characteristic of postsocialist societies, not directly because of socialist values being systematically dismantled after socialism but as a result of the neoliberal capitalist rule that Estonia

and other former Soviet states had applied. My informants were not experts in the capitalist system and its various applications – the majority having worked as simple servants of the Soviet state – but their general understanding was that a capitalist society could not be a good (or fair) one and their own experiences seemed to have proved this. In their experience, capitalism had brought about dehumanisation through aggressive rampaging capitalism, forging self-centeredness, indifference, unnecessary competition and brutality. From the moral perspective, dehumanisation was thus at the core of Russian-speaking Narvans' complaints about the new social and economic order of post-Soviet life. Dehumanisation and its expression through unfriendly behaviour importantly shook up the social order and home-space that my informants had been used to in the town. Yet I got the sense that they had an understanding that dehumanisation due to capitalism was not specific to Narva, in its distortion their home-space in the Estonian-Russian borderland, but that it could have happened to them anywhere in the post-Soviet space.

Zigon (2010a) views the post-Soviet era as a time of moral breakdown. While work could be seen as the centre of Soviet workers' (moral) universe, the changing post-Soviet workplaces stopped mediating many of the previous non-monetary goods and benefits, and the workers felt let down by them. In her ethnography of postsocialist working-class lives in a predominantly Russian-speaking North-East Estonia mining community, Kesküla (2012) has addressed this emerging tension between workers and the post-Soviet state in terms of the breaking of a normative reciprocal contract of "moral economy"[53] that was established between the workers and the state, who previously owned the enterprises. The devaluing of workers' identity, a feeling that the state had betrayed them by breaking a binding moral contract coupled with the growing sense of marginalisation in the Estonian state, was widely noted among Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans, the majority of whom identified as industrial workers.

Caldwell (2017, 61) has noted the growing discourses around "social and moral decay" in both public and private conversations in Russia, which in her interpretation point to "fears about the disarray and disintegration of the very structures and codes

---

[53] By "moral economy" Kesküla (2012, 112-113), drawing from Thompson's (1976) and Scott's (1971) analyses of the moral economy of the poor and of peasants, refers to "particular relations of reciprocal exchange between the elite (the landlord, the rich or the state) and the subaltern class", which determines what can justifiably be expected from the elites in terms of economic subsistence and other forms of support.

of norms that comprise Russian social order". Russian-speakers in Narva, dwelling in some ways in an in-between-space affected by the developments in both Estonia and Russia, live perhaps in an even more fragmented world, disconnected from Estonian society and only virtually connected to Russian society. Most of my informants had largely withdrawn, for reasons I disentangle more in Chapters 8 and 9, from wider societal discourses, and had focused more on very local and familial domains of life. The Pensioners' Society was an exception to the tendency among my informants to extract themselves from webs of relations and obligations that would locate them outside their own lives, in contact with the wider world and achieving a common good. This was due both to their life-course, which made them focus on different obligations and duties than in their younger years, and to their unwillingness to adapt to new forms of moralities and socialities and their difficulties in doing so. Inactive in public and semi-public forms of sociality, they still painfully longed for the lost sociality and moral groundings in their nostalgically loaded discourses after 20 years of post-Soviet experience.

8   THE VEXING STATE: NATIONALISM, LANGUAGE AND CITIZENSHIP IN POST-SOVIET ESTONIA

This chapter looks at how Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans made sense of their belonging as legal and political subjects of two different states between 1944 and 2011. By making conceptual connections between political anthropology of home and anthropology of the state, it seeks to explore how politics, emotions and everyday rationalities became entangled when the Russian-speaking Narvans negotiated their home not only in Narva but in the Estonian state after the Soviet collapse. First, I will look at how Narva as a particular kind of homely space, described as a "Russian town" and very much characterised by its friendliness and equality, as core values of the Soviet ideology, emerged and how this lived experience came to be idealised and used as a reference point when it no longer existed. Next, by investigating Narvans' experiences with a state that was closely locked into politics that addressed nationality, citizenship and language, I will discuss how and why the Estonian state emerged as hostile towards Russian-speakers and how the Narvans made sense of the state's failure to treat them well. More precisely, this chapter seeks to enlarge the understanding of vernacular interpretations of "politics of belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011) in Narva through the following questions: how do the Soviet-era Russian-speakers experience their relationship with an independent Estonian state and, in particular, what role do nationalism, and language and citizenship politics play in relations between the state and its Russian-speaking subjects? How has the atmosphere of Estonian nationalism and its related citizenship and language politics manifested in Russian-speaking Narvans' home-making practices?

8.1   A "Russian town": everyday language and culture in Narva

After World War II, Narva slowly turned into a genuinely Russian-speaking town. As a new social and cultural fabric related to the first waves of resettlers was formed, it became more and more natural to every subsequent generation to think about the town as being inherently Russian-speaking. In spite of many other languages being spoken in multicultural families that moved to the town or were created there, no one really questioned the role of Russian as the official and vernacular language spoken in public spaces[54]. Russian-speaking Narvans did not know any other Narva; the past local histories together with the rules that had been in place previously, prior to their arrival, were neither relevant nor applicable. It is only in post-Soviet Narva that language, as I will show later, poses some sort of question or challenge from the point of view of the resettlers and the subsequent generations.

Today's Narva is a town where Russian is used in everyday situations nearly everywhere, despite Estonian being the only state language. In public spaces, Estonian is visible on street signs, and appears in product information in shops, in instructions and to some extent in commercial advertisements, but it is usually complemented with Russian (in smaller) print. Estonian is officially required for working in public offices, schools and healthcare but in practice this stipulation is only formally followed and most communication happens in Russian. The few local Estonian-speakers usually find it more natural to speak Russian to the Russian-speaking townspeople. When asked why they do not try to communicate in Estonian with them, simply to give them the chance to practise the state language, the Estonians usually just shrug their shoulders and say, "that's just the way things are here in Narva". It is not just that the local Estonians have worked out their habitual ways of communicating with Russian-speakers; in the rest of Estonia everyone knows that in Narva you need to communicate in Russian to get things done. It was like this in the past and it continues to be so today no matter what the law says or what the aim of the language politics is.[55] While Estonian-speakers inside and outside

---

[54] There were some exceptions though: by the end of the Soviet period, Narva had 14 schools, one of which was an Estonian school, where the teaching was in Estonian. Such minor Estonian spaces, not intersecting with the wider public space, could be seen as private in nature despite their public function, and as a consequence they did not change the overall feeling of Narva being a Russian-speaking place.

[55] A limited number of public spaces where Estonian is practiced in inter-ethnic communication have emerged after my fieldwork in 2010-2011, for example the premises of Narva College (see in

Narva comply with the situation they also constantly bemoan it. Russian-speakers in Narva, for their part, keep speaking in Russian and complaining about the Estonian language politics and Estonians' negative attitudes towards them as Russian-speakers, but they are also well aware of the limitations and deepening disadvantages that await them – in terms of both their working life and social cohesion in Estonia in general – if their knowledge of the state language does not improve (Field notes 2010-2011; Raik 2013).

Narva is frequently called a "Russian town". This label, however, means different things to different subjects. When used by Estonian-speakers it sounds like a criticism of an abnormal situation in an independent Estonia that should be fixed but is unlikely to be – in other words, Narva should not be a "Russian town" and should become an Estonian one again. In the arena of geopolitics, international relations and security policy, tightly connected to the contemporary Russian state's influence, this association every now and then draws attention to Narva as a fixed location of international security threats (Feldman 2005; Berg 2001, 2003; Berg & Ehin 2009; Smith & Wilson 1997). And in the view of the Russian state, Narva's association with Russia makes the people of Narva but not the territory itself subjects of Russian diaspora politics (Zevelev 2008; Laitin 1998; Kallas 2016). When my informants themselves talked about Narva as a "Russian town", it was impossible neither for them nor for me to separate out the territory and the people. This Russianness was certainly not seen as something imported by the Soviet regime that should be somehow changed or got rid of under the Estonian state, as was the common view among Estonians; rather, it was something that had emerged locally and was connected to the everyday experience of dwelling in Narva. For the locals, the Russian language as the primary association with the town extended far beyond a means of communication; it combined meanings related to different layers of history, a set of power relations, social networks and the entire system of logic behind the local social and cultural practice. Locals tended to stress the specificity of the microcosm they lived in, stating repeatedly in our encounters that in order for people to fully comprehend what it entailed they had to live there themselves (Field notes, January 2011).

Jašina-Schäfer & Cheskin 2020 and Jašina-Schäfer 2021), but they remain exceptional "isles" with their own code of conduct and culture gathering more specific segments of Narvans (younger generations or of higher educational background) rather than indicate a notable change of practice in the town.

Regardless of Narva's long history before the destruction of the war, for Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans the inception of their hometown happened in 1944. The war-ravaged landscape and missing population provided a sensation of an empty space to be "filled" with practice and meaning (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]). Part of the texture of the local culture were the personal and family histories, interwoven with the town's official Soviet history, of building the war-torn town from scratch. The first resettlers in particular had many stories to share in our interviews about how different places in the town had changed over time greatly thanks to their own physical and emotional efforts. The influx of poor, young workers supported the emergence of a culture of equality and of patterns of helping each other in the context of a lack of existing structure and support mechanisms (Chapter 7). Therefore, the local culture in Narva greatly captured the personal and collectively embodied experiences of endless effort, progress and satisfaction, whereas the Soviet collapse marked the end of this era and, along with the economic difficulties it brought, presented a challenge to the local culture's basis of reproduction.

Yet the emerging local post-war culture was not natural or easy to adjust to for all Russian-speakers in the town. Some Russian-speakers with whom I conversed had memories of pre-war Narva and they remembered and idealised the town differently. One of my informants, Evgeny (b. 1942, Russian), was born in war-time Narva and we can see in his narrative how for him the pre-war situation, which he could not have remembered as a personal experience but had obviously learnt about from the narratives of his parents and their contemporaries, was normal and, consequently, what came later was abnormal. He described the subsequent events using much of the vocabulary (e.g. mass migration) and emotions that the pre-war Estonian Narvans typically tended to employ:

> E: When the mass migration started, the Estonians [who had stayed in Narva after the war and the reconstruction] started to leave. Obviously, many people started to feel very uncomfortable here.
> JK: Where did they go?
> E: Anywhere. If they had relatives somewhere [else in Estonia], they went there. And it was not only Estonians [who started to feel uncomfortable]. In general, all locals, let's call them that. A wave of people came in, all unknown faces everywhere passing by. They [the Soviets] started to open new schools because children were born. I tell you, each wave was related to building and the opening of some factory – Kreenholm, then *Gres'* [power plants], then… Three years pass, and again a new wave of people [comes], and you immediately notice how hooliganism grows. Then it calms down and again [the same thing is repeated] because normal people stay and the hooligans move further away. Then the next construction and the next… (Interview 10.11.2010)

It appears that Evgeny, although a Russian-speaker himself, did not take the post-World War II development of the town and its transformation into a "Russian town" as positively and painlessly as tended to be the case in his fellow townspeople's reflections. His position in the town was different and he could not help but compare the transformation to the idealised image he had of the town from pre-WWII times. It is unlikely that memories of dwelling in Narva were entirely positive either for those who got to know the town only after 1944; certainly their accommodation contained moments and experiences of coping with strangeness, criminality, resistance, loss, struggle and so on (cf. Paklar & Hinrikus 2009). However, what was most important in the emergence of the local cultural fabric associated with the "Russian town" was that the Soviet-era Russian-speakers did not know any other Narva, neither a better nor a worse one.

My informants frequently asserted that they did not identify their culture with that of contemporary Russia and felt a sense of alienation when moving in Russian space (cf. Fein 2005). Without exception, they specified that the culture in Narva was not totally Russian even during the Soviet period, and that it was even less so in the post-Soviet era when Narvans lived in a different country – it was fairly interesting in itself that the universal concept of "Russian culture" still seemed to prevail among Narvans even though everyone kept talking about Russia being huge in size, and the disparities between various places, urban and rural, as well as between different regions and their local practices were vast. Some authors, such as Laitin (1998, 71) and Smith and Burch (2012), have firmly argued that thanks to the Russian-speakers' perception of Estonia, similarly to other Baltic republics, as the "Soviet West", which made them consider its living standards as prestigious and something to attain rather than reject, the Russian-speakers who settled in Estonia and other Baltic republics were inclined to adapt the local Estonian culture and develop a specific "Baltic Russian" identity[56] (Smith & Burch 2012, 420; Vihalemm & Masso 2002). My interlocutors often emphasised the cultural difference between their hometown of Narva during the Soviet period and other places they came from or had experienced, depicting Narva as more cultured[57] or civilised, and accordingly their own way of life also as such. In their narratives, evidence of the life situations

[56] Melvin (1995), associating this tendency with ideologically underpinned processes, has called this identity "Baltization".

[57] It should be remembered though that Western and Russian culturedness (*kul'turnost'*) belong to different discourses, having their roots in different ideologies.

in Narva and elsewhere in the Soviet space (for example, Ukraine or the Black Sea area) that provided a picture of a different mentality, appeared rather frequently, and usually had an undertone that how things happened in Narva was normal (how things "should be") while other places were culturally outside of the norm (dirty, rude or uncultured).

An illustration of the cultural estrangement noted after resettling in Narva can be found in the example of a trading situation in a Ukrainian town that was presented by Irina (b. 1951, Ukrainian). If someone wanted to buy 500 grams of tomatoes, they were typically forced to buy 1 kilogram or more, because the seller rudely refused to let them buy any less. In this same purchasing situation, they would have also very likely been forced to pay for some rotten fruits among the good ones and to have been shouted at if they dared to point out to the seller that this was unfair. In addition, although littering and people not taking care of their neighbourhood was associated with many other Russian or Soviet places, my informants liked to stress that this was not the case in Narva. They also believed that people in Narva spoke more quietly and were more reserved and well-behaved in public compared with the inhabitants of other former Soviet places.

The latter was sometimes equally pointed out as a negative feature, associated with Northern coldness and aloofness, but it was ultimately still preferred to the hot tempers in other places. When Polina's (b. 1975, German-Ukrainian) Ukrainian kin from rural Kazakhstan were visiting her for a month in the summer of 2009, they were deeply shocked by all the rules and regulations that organised everyday life in Narva. For example, it was difficult for them to apprehend why the nicely kept playgrounds around kindergartens were considered private spaces that "ordinary" citizens could not enter and use as public spaces in which to sit on a bench and chat, when they stood empty and unused during after-work hours and at weekends. Even the ethnic Russians in Narva highlighted how after living in Narva for so many years, through both Soviet and post-Soviet times, they considered their culture was neither Estonian nor Russian but rather local Narvan (cf. Brednikova 2007; Brednikova & Siim 2001). This culture was based on decades-long experience of living in a Russian-speaking multi-ethnic place created by resettlers themselves and increasingly influenced by the culture conceptualised as Estonian. Galina (b. 1946, Russian) told me:

> It is actually already incomprehensible who we are. We are not yet Estonians, but we are no longer Russians either, because we have lived side by side with Estonians for

so many years. We became different. We have a different approach to many issues. Yes, we are Russian in terms of language, but our worldview is already different. Yes, we are trying to form our community... We would probably find it difficult in Russia as well. And here we find it difficult because we are different. And there it would be difficult because we are different. But I am talking about the older generation. When it comes to the younger generation, I think that, as a matter in fact, they already identify more with Estonians. (Interview 03.05.2011)

Today's relationship between Russian-speaking Narvans and both the Estonian and Russian cultures was mediated in my informants' reflections primarily through language, and the relationship was seen as very controversial. It appeared that despite sharing a language with millions of Russians, this was not enough for them to stand on the same ground culturally in today's world. They lacked the everyday experience of life in Russia that would allow them to feel that they culturally belonged there, even though many of them lived in a parallel information space to that of the Estonian state they inhabited, following daily the imaginaries of Russian realities broadcast by Russian traditional and social media (Jõesaar 2015). My attempt to unlock what Narva as a culturally "Russian" place meant for my informants who once moved to Narva rather than were born there resembles what Jašina-Schäfer (2021) has recently usefully argued in studying Narvans through the lens of everyday belonging. She (ibid.) has concluded that Russianness and cultural belonging in Narva does not have a clear shape and commonly recognised reference points with other things and places "Russian" can be hardly found. Rather, the local Russianness is part and parcel of Narvans' general strive to acceptance and recognition, which is an ongoing and internally contested process, a locally-bound expression of long-lasting complex experiences of inclusion and exclusion that draws from multiple political, personal and symbolic interactions.

8.2   Citizenship, passports, language and stateless Narvans

When during our conversations in 2010-2011 I more or less directly inquired about my informants' citizenship, it transpired that out of the 42 people I interviewed and considered my direct informants probably 26 had Estonian citizenship, 11 Russian and two Ukrainian, and three were stateless. I say "probably", because asking about citizenship was often rather uncomfortable for me as an ethnographer; while

some of my informants spontaneously reported their citizenship status and obviously did not have an issue with discussing the topic in detail, for others it clearly constituted a deeply sensitive matter, along with nationalism, discrimination and post-Soviet personal suffering, so I decided to let the question about citizenship go and to hopefully learn it later from the context. Stateless people in Narva, including those among my informants, rather than reporting that they were non-citizens used the vernacular statement, "I have a grey passport", while the state utilised the term "undetermined citizenship" rather than "stateless" to indicate that citizenship had not yet been defined. The number of stateless people is slowly but steadily decreasing in Estonia, partly because its incidence is higher among the older generations, and partly because of the 2016 modification in the law towards the *ius soli* citizenship principle, which now enables Estonian citizenship to be granted to all non-citizens born in Estonian territory after 1991.

Despite the improvement in the figures of "stateless people" or those with "grey passports", the fact that Russian-speakers were not immediately included in the national body of Estonia by being granted automatic citizenship is what matters when Russian-speakers consider their relationship with the post-Soviet state. What was meant to be a temporary status has lasted for more than 25 years now and on the part of the Estonian state there has been no willingness to try to find a more satisfactory solution to the situation by making changes to legal instruments. The state's focus has been on integration activities (Kalmus 2003; Nimmerfeldt 2011, 2010) mainly through state language teaching, which have not been very successful (Nimmerfeldt 2011; Nimmerfeldt, Schulze & Taru 2011), rather than on solving the problem of statelessness itself. In recent years, however, discussions around the possibility of granting Estonian citizenship to all stateless people permanently residing in Estonia have been renewed. For example, during the 2019 parliamentary elections the topic was raised to some extent but then sidelined by economic issues. Sometimes, the situation regarding stateless people in Estonia is described, particularly by foreign journalists, as a "legal limbo" (Gabot 2012), but this is not an entirely correct definition, because the law does not push people into an area of unknowingness as the term suggests but actually clearly defines what they should do to obtain citizenship.

According to the insights I gained from my research, the reasons most Russian-speaking Narvans did not use the existing citizenship instruments – passing the language and constitution exam – were generally threefold: people perceived meeting

the citizenship conditions as unattainable; they felt that the conditions were wrong or demeaning and they did not agree with them, thus ignoring the possibility of meeting them; or they were simply not motivated enough to apply for the citizenship (see also Martinez 2018). Citizenship can be a deeply emotional matter with a high symbolic value, and it was not incidental that many of my informants tended to talk about it in terms of their passport and its specific colour. A passport was an instrumental tool that gave Soviet citizens permission to move around and settle in various places in the former Soviet Union; in practice it continued to be so for Russian-speaking Narvans in independent Estonia, as they wanted to keep things simple. Passports had no emotional value in Soviet times, thus it remained incomprehensible to my informants that the Estonian state needed to saturate passports issued in the country with the meaning of political citizenship, which above all was shaped by the prevailing Estonian national narrative, and that they had to be earned, rather than being given, by demonstrating loyalty to a country, and in that way symbolising their holders' patriotism to the Estonian state. The politico-emotional value attached to passports through citizenship, besides allowing emotional commitment and loyalty to a single state only, made things all too complicated for Russian-speakers. From what I learnt in Narva, there is a crucial difference between Russian-speaking Narvans talking about citizenship in terms of a passport, primarily conveying its instrumental value as a legal document for mobility, and their considering its legal and political dimensions in addressing the rights and duties of membership in the Estonian nation-state. These issues, in some ways two sides of the same coin and constituting one another, are often difficult to disentangle and thus produce inconsistent narratives.

I will first look at citizenship as a practical matter. My landlady Julia was from Ivangorod. She had lived in Narva since 1990, but her mother Yaroslava continued to live in Ivangorod. Julia knew enough Estonian to be able to pass the Estonian citizenship exam, but she preferred to hold a grey passport, which enabled her to enter Russia without a visa. Her elderly mother applied for an Estonian multiple-entry visa each year. With this kind of visa, it was possible to stay in another country for up to 90 consecutive days. I remember the anxious time in the spring of 2011 when Julia was arranging her family's move from Narva to Tallinn and needed her mother's help in Narva, but Yaroslava had to stay in Ivangorod to wait for her visa renewal. In Julia's close family, the situation with citizenships was the following: her mother had Russian citizenship; Julia herself had no registered citizenship, since she

had not applied for the Russian one she was legally eligible for nor had she passed the Estonian citizenship exam to apply for the Estonian one; Julia's current husband had Estonian citizenship, which he had received by passing the citizenship exam, and their five-year-old daughter had received Estonian citizenship from her father; and Julia's elder child, a son from her first marriage, had had no citizenship until quite recently. He had, however, passed the Estonian citizenship exam just a year before, when he became an adult. Julia was very proud of her son's achievement, warmly recalling the state ceremony in Tallinn organised for all new citizens, and she added that her son was an excellent example of how the Russian-speaking youth could become real patriots of the Estonian state and at the same time be cosmopolitan in their minds: her son was spending a year in Turkey as a voluntary worker when I got to know Julia. While Julia was able to apply for a visa for her daughter at the Russian consulate in Narva, Yaroslava had to travel to St. Petersburg to get her Estonian visa, because Ivangorod was too small a place for there to be any consular service. When I asked Julia why she had not applied for Estonian citizenship herself, her explanation was that she wanted to have uninterrupted border-crossing at any given moment. She wanted to make sure that she had the right to enter Russia to see and take care of her elderly mother regardless of whether her visa had been renewed.

The passport issue was complicated also by the fact that it was not easy to give up Russian citizenship once it had been chosen. Polina (b. 1975, German-Ukrainian), who in 2010 held Estonian citizenship after passing the Estonian language and constitution exam, explained that, directly after the Soviet collapse at least, it was very easy to receive Russian citizenship even with no kinship ties to Russia. After relocating to Narva in the early 1990s, she then moved to Moscow for several years. At first, she applied for Russian citizenship in order to make her commuting smoother and cheaper and she received it immediately. Given that she considered Kazakhstan her home and was ethnically German-Ukrainian, I was confused by her choice.

> JK: I do not understand, why did you decide to take Russian citizenship if you did not have any relationship with Russia?
> P: But what kind of options did I have? It had to be either Estonian or Kazakh citizenship. But living in Moscow, I needed to travel back and forth to visit my mum here in Estonia. And I still had not finished my university studies in Narva. So how do you travel continuously without [Russian passport]? Certainly, it was easier [to

have Russian citizenship]. And so, I formed my citizenship in a fast way, by paying extra money for it, and it was arranged in a day.

JK: Did they ask [at the Russian consulate], whether you had any blood connections to Russia?

P: No, they do not care about that. At that time, they gave Russian citizenship to anyone who wanted it who had lived in the former USSR. But later when I wanted to give up [my Russian citizenship], that was a complicated and lengthy procedure. Here in Narva, the [Russian] consulate causes you many problems with it. It is not a good consulate. It took me two and a half years to give up [my citizenship]. I started to apply for it in 2005 and finally was accepted at the end of 2007. […] They asked for a horrible number of documents from the Russian tax office to prove that I did not have any debts there. (Interview 20.01.2011)

Sometimes, however, it was not quite clear what exactly the most pragmatic option regarding passports was, especially since it was not possible to know what the future might bring. Narvans were well aware that family, work and even political situations could change, so instead of making decisions that involved a permanent change they may have preferred to keep their legal situation with regards to their passport unchanged for as long as possible. Anastasia (b. 1962, Russian) had an ongoing personal story that was related to this. As a regular daily border-crosser due to her work in Kingissepp municipality in Russia, she had finally had enough of border practices shaping her everyday life and decided to look for a suitable job in Narva.

I realised that here [in Narva] the municipality also has the X department. So, I decided to go to talk to the head of the department. I told him that I worked there [in Kingissepp] in that profession. He, of course, immediately asked me what kind of passport I had. I have a red passport. So, I told him that I have Russian citizenship. And he told me that in this case it was unlikely he could hire me, but he still took my contact details, without promising anything. This happened during my summer holidays and I decided that I needed to continue working there [in Kingissepp]. But in November, perhaps, Yuri [the head of the department] called me to say that there was the possibility of employing me not as a public sector official but on a special contract. I, of course, agreed, because commuting across the border had become very hard by that time. Moreover, I needed to commute to Kingissepp, which is relatively faraway. I agreed and I have been working here for five years now. (Interview 14.10.2010)

Anastasia then explained that until she passed the citizenship and language exam and applied for Estonian citizenship, she had no prospect of a more permanent contract. She first signed a temporary contract for two years and then one for another two years, but the most recent one was for a year only. Overall, the situation

was not pleasant and placed her under constant stress, because there was always some uncertainty: would her contract be renewed again in the future, would the municipality become even stricter on the citizenship issue, or would they find an Estonian to replace her? And yet, she did not seem willing to rush to learn Estonian to the level necessary to pass the exam to gain citizenship. She justified her decision on the basis of the uncertainty regarding how long her job would last, claiming that if she knew for certain that her job would continue in Narva, she would go back to the language classes to pass the exam. She seemed to be in a strange limbo wherein the language conditioned the permanency of her job and the other way around as well (Interview 14.10.2010).

Polina's story can help us to imagine what might have been the rationale behind Anastasia's hesitation to apply for Estonian citizenship and, through this, an Estonian passport. Clearly, applying for another country's passport and giving up the one she already had – if this was what was needed – was not unproblematic, and it often seemed to be perceived in this way in Estonia. Frequently, transnational family and other relations are involved, and thus emotional, economic and legal issues need to be carefully weighed up. In this sense, what at first looks like a purely instrumental matter regarding decisions over passports may ultimately engage emotional, legal and political dimensions as well.

Today, Estonian passports are in fact available to many grey passport holders if they pass the Estonian language and constitution exam, but they prefer to keep their grey passports so that they do not need a visa to travel to Russia. Currently, since dual citizenship is not an option, keeping their connection with Russia obviously outweighs the benefits resulting from Estonian/EU citizenship, because as permanent residents of Estonia they already have the right to travel freely in the EU under the Schengen agreement, whereas Russian residents face limitations. It is Russian-speakers, especially those with origins in and family ties to Russia, who would benefit most from dual citizenship because it would considerably increase their freedom of movement and their ability to work abroad (if they took Russian citizenship alongside the Estonian one), keeping all their options in both Russia and the EU open. Dual citizenship, however, was not a demand that Russian-speakers in Narva addressed during my fieldwork in 2010-2011. I suppose that this was not so much because they did not want dual citizenship but because the Estonian state had been very consistent in communicating that it was simply not an option. Thus, for

those keeping up connections with Russia, visa-free border-crossing, accessible only to Russian and non-citizen passport holders, continues to have a lot of value.

I suspect that many Narvans who kept their grey passports – politically undetermined citizenship – instead of applying for Estonian citizenship did so primarily out of a sense of political security. By responding in this way, they gave themselves room for manoeuvre if relations between the Russian and Estonian states ever dramatically changed. If they had decided to become Estonian citizens, the Russian state would have had reason to restrict their entry into Russia if a crisis occurred, and if they had chosen Russian citizenship – for which the majority of Narvans were legally eligible – they might have equally found themselves in conflict with the Estonian state. Not having Estonian citizenship has two legal limitations, on voting in parliamentary elections and working in public offices. Additionally, Estonian citizenship obliges males aged 18 to 62 to do military service. With their decision to remain stateless, Russian-speakers gave up their political rights but simultaneously maintained their space of manoeuvre until events finally forced them to decide. Such argumentation was, however, never openly presented to me, because the publicly acceptable local narrative was that Russian-speakers would take Estonian citizenship if the state automatically granted it or if it seemed feasible that they could pass the language and constitution exam. It remains, however, hypothetical how many Narvan Russian-speakers would eventually accept Estonian citizenship if the state granted it to them with no conditions attached while still not allowing dual citizenship.

Many Narvans, especially the older generation, claimed that they would gladly take Estonian citizenship and pass the Estonian language and constitution exam if this were possible for them financially, but they did not have, and never had had, the means to pay for Estonian language courses. Courses are not free and, given the serious economic situation of most Narvans, it is very possible that people really do not have the means to pay for them. This is a major resentment that is addressed at the Estonian state.

While the passport itself was generally discussed in pragmatic terms, the narratives, when coupled with a citizenship discourse, immediately gained a deeply emotional undertone. Even though many years had passed since Estonia formulated its citizenship policy, the resentment directed at the Estonian state for not automatically recognising Russian-speakers living in Estonian territory as fully

eligible citizens had not disappeared. Galina's narrative (b. 1946, Russian) is full of negative sentiments:

> G: I live according to this principle: the less I know, the better I sleep. Anyway, I would not change anything, because we [those of us with a Russian passport] cannot vote in parliamentary elections anyway. We are non-citizens basically, almost like those with a grey passport. We are *no one*. Estonians have done everything to turn us away. If they had done… at that time when everything started if they had done zero-option[58]. I mean all those who had lived in Estonian territory at that moment for at least one year. We had lived there for 20 years already! If they had done this zero-option, the situation would now be very different. I believe many things would be different.
> JK: How would you feel if you were just given [with no language and constitution exam] Estonian citizenship today?
> G: No, I do not need it.
> JK: Wouldn't you like to have it?
> G: No, right now I do not want it anymore. For what? I am completely satisfied with my Russian citizenship. I can go to Russia; I can travel through the Schengen area. Why would I need this Estonian one? What does it give me? (Interview 03.05.2011)

In this narrative, the phrase, "I do not want it anymore", indicates how a passport that primarily has a practical value for Russian-speaking Narvans became an emotionally loaded aspect of post-Soviet life when it became intertwined with Estonian citizenship politics and was associated with rejection by the state. There were sentiments of inferiority, injustice, disappointment and ultimately pride in this story of coping with the Estonian state's decision regarding citizenship that meant that Russian-speakers would not unconditionally be considered equal to native Estonians. These emotions emerged and started to crystallise long before the states, both Estonian and Russian, eventually agreed on international border-crossing. Diffusing these bitter emotions is key both to convincing Russian-speakers to accept the Estonian state and to building up trust, but it is difficult to see this happening with the older generations in Narva who are deeply engaged with these feelings. While the number of grey passport holders in the town has been slowly but steadily decreasing over the years, primarily because of the younger generations of Narvans meeting the citizenship criteria, the citizenship question is far from being resolved for those elderly Narvans who have still not acquired Estonian citizenship after three decades.

---

[58] By zero-option people refer to the automatic granting of Estonian citizenship to everyone residing in Estonian territory before the Soviet fall.

8.3   Emerging ambiguities

My Estonian grandparents were on friendly terms with their neighbours in their private housing district in Narva. Among their closest Russian-speaking neighbours was an ethnic Russian family and another was a Russian-Mordovian family, whom I briefly introduced through the narration of Elizaveta in the previous chapter. The language spoken in these families was Russian, of course, as in most of the families in the neighbourhood. On the same street, there were two other Estonian households with whom my grandparents spoke Estonian. My grandparents naturally communicated in Russian with all their neighbours apart from the Estonians. There was no intense visiting between the families, but whenever the neighbours saw each other working in their gardens they greeted each other and chatted. They also helped each other with various household matters. As my grandfather was particularly good at fixing and building things, the neighbours usually asked for his advice and help in such matters. In contrast, although I had studied Russian at school since a relatively young age, when visiting my grandparents I never spoke any Russian with the neighbours apart from the basic phrases of politeness including *pozhaluy'sta*, *sposiba* and *do svidaniya* (hello, thank you and goodbye). Perhaps I was a shy child, but my growing up coincided with the Soviet collapse and the rise of Estonian nationalism, which all of a sudden made it unnatural to speak Russian to Russian-speakers even for someone who was able to. The neighbours did not know a word of Estonian, just like the majority of Russian-speakers in Narva, and most of them, elderly people, did not learn any Estonian in post-Soviet times either.

After Narva became administratively part of the Estonian state and Estonian was named the only official language in town, as it was elsewhere in the Estonian territory, my grandparents continued to speak Russian to their neighbours and maintained their friendly relations with them. In their everyday life, nothing seemed to change in this respect. But, at the same time, the awakened nationalism and on many occasions a disrespectful attitude towards Russian-speakers started to be[59] felt also in my grandparents' home, just as everywhere else in Estonia. My grandparents used to talk about their fellow townspeople using the general term "Russians". This term tended to have a negative connotation yet, without sufficient knowledge of the wider historical, political and local everyday context, its actual meaning and purpose

---

[59] It could well be that such an attitude already existed but that I was too young to notice.

remain unclear. My grandparents knew perfectly well that many of the people they called "Russians" were not ethnic Russians, so ethnicity did not have much to do with their chosen terminology. But then again, when the conversation became more specific or when particular people they personally knew were talked about, they might have specified or corrected who exactly they had meant, or not meant, by the term "Russian".

Analytically, we can assume that the category of "Russian" in post-Soviet Narva was made up of linguistic, ethnic and political components, but "ordinary people" like my grandparents operated on the basis of their own everyday elements of knowledge and sense-making in which their own immediate experience and level of familiarity was tied up with the general political atmosphere. According to this logic, there were the bad Russian folk, the rabble – the anonymous ones – and the good, familiar Russians – the neighbours mainly – who were part of my grandparents' life. In the background, there was the personal experience of Soviet deportations, fear and occupation as well as of living as an Estonian minority in a Russian-speaking town. All of this, associated with the Soviet oppression, was commonly replaced by the simplistic shortcut "Russians", as it was the dominant nation in the Soviet regime. Every time she cursed the Russians, my grandmother immediately felt the need to make it clear that there were also the good ones, like her neighbour, Nadja. She, in the words of my grandmother, was the smartest, kindest person on earth, an angel made flesh. She also used to stress in this connection that Nadja was a wise, hard-working, educated woman, a teacher after all. Some neighbours, however, might have been classified as "Russians" with its negative connotation. I believe that they tended to be those who remained less familiar with and did not fit in with the already long-established neighbourhood practices, because they moved there much later, towards the end of the Soviet period or during post-Soviet times, and simply remained strangers in the midst of the societal transformation that had started. It seems that there were different categories of Russians in my grandparents' mind and yet the borders between the categories were highly fluid and situational.

Likewise, all of the families in Narva, even the Estonian ones, tended to become more ethnically mixed over time. Language was an important instrument, as it enabled the shaping and renegotiation of power relations in such families and, depending on the family, was directly or indirectly attached to Estonian nationalist politics. Both my grandparents' daughters-in-law were Russian-speakers and the

home-language in their Estonian-"Russian"[60] families was Russian. I clearly remember from my childhood in the 1980s that my grandparents used to speak Russian to one of their daughters-in-law[61], but that after Estonia's independence they decisively started to speak Estonian to both of them and declared that from then on only Estonian was to be spoken in their home. This, however, concerned family members and not neighbours or other people who visited. Such a rearrangement of the language rules at home did not bring with it any major tensions, but my grandparents decided to exercise their will in shaping power relations in this way. They started speaking to their daughters-in-law in Estonian even though their knowledge of the language was non-existent to begin with – so that they could practise it, they said – and they disapproved of how their sons did not do the same at home. They sometimes also used the term "Russians" negatively, in the way I described above, in the presence of and about their daughters-in-law and I remember thinking about my aunts' feelings, because this seemed inappropriate and insensitive even if the relationships between them were tense for other reasons.

It was not only my grandparents who had such ambivalent relationships with the Russian-speaking majority in the town. One of my conversations with a Narva-born Estonian man in his late 40s or early 50s was particularly memorable in this regard. Andres was a bus driver for a private company that organised trips through Ivangorod to the town of Kingissepp in Russia, located only 25 kilometres from Narva. While Ivangorod was a tiny border-town that had symbolic significance for Russia, Kingissepp was the provincial capital of Kingissepp district (*ra'yon*) in Leningrad oblast, which was an administrative centre and had more commercial power. Before I turn to the story itself, I say a few words about post-Soviet border-crossings.

Post-Soviet Narva is known for its intensive cross-border practices between Narva and Ivangorod, often described by Narvans as time-consuming, cumbersome and emotionally draining experiences irrespective of whether experienced on foot or by car. Through observing how people crossed the borders and carefully listening to Narvans' narrations about border practices, I became aware that border-crossing in post-Soviet times was a large area of local expertise. With their specific rhythms and

---

[60] I use quotation marks here because neither daughter-in-law was purely Russian in ethnic terms even though they were considered as such by my grandparents.

[61] Their other son married after Estonia became independent, thus the Soviet-era experience is missing with regard to him.

routines, crossing the border on foot, by private car or on public transport brought with it different advantages and disadvantages, and each border-crosser weighed these up carefully. For locals who were equipped with the "right" passport or had arranged long-term visas, the quickest and most common way to reach Ivangorod, either to visit relatives or to buy particular products on the Russian side, was to walk over the bridge across the Narva River through customs and check-points on both sides of the international border. This was, however, not unproblematic, because there were queues and it was possible to carry only a limited amount of baggage, and also because the Ivangorod side of the border was not well connected to the town's infrastructure and thus reaching the town posed challenges, especially when the weather conditions were bad. For more detailed descriptions of border-crossing see, for example, Pfoser (2014, 2015, 2017).

In the spring of 2011, I made two bus trips to Kingissepp to gain personal insights into how it felt to cross the international Estonian-Russian border and to find out the exact practices this entailed[62]. The organised bus trips to the open market and commercial centres in Kingissepp were a rather new phenomenon for Narvans. During my first such trip that had taken nine hours, most of this time stuck on one side or the other of the international border as well as on the bridge connecting Narva and Ivangorod – a border-zone – I had had many hours during which to establish a trusting connection with and to have a long conversation with the bus driver Andres who, to my great surprise, turned out to be a local Estonian.

On my second trip to Kingissepp, Andres and I continued our friendly chat in Estonian during the many hours, most of which, once again, were spent waiting to get the routinised border-practices done. When we finally arrived back in Narva, having left the Estonian border guards behind us, and drove along the town's long central street before the driver dropped the passengers off at several different bus stops, I, suddenly feeling uplifted by what I saw around me, made the comment that Narva felt so much cleaner and nicer and more convenient than Kingissepp. Frustrated by the fact that the streets of Kingissepp had been almost inaccessible to pedestrians, I further commented that despite its being the ugly season, when the streets were still lined with massive piles of dirty snow that was melting everywhere, it was possible for pedestrians to walk along the pavements in Narva without getting

---

[62] Additionally, I crossed the border twice on foot and visited Ivangorod on the other side of the border. I had bought a Russian business visa that enabled me to visit Russia as many times as I wished for one year.

their feet wet and the melting snow on the driveways was not moving so fast that pedestrians were inevitably splashed from head to toe but found its way into the drainage system. Andres eagerly agreed and affirmed that the visibly different road conditions were proof that life in Estonia was better than in Russia. Next, he smoothly turned our conversation, which had initially addressed materiality, to politics and belonging. He said to me, "Look at those Russians in Narva: they avoid learning Estonian and constantly whine that life in Estonia is bad and we discriminate against them and yet they refuse to return to their homeland". I was not surprised by how he established a connection between materiality and emotional politics, because I had witnessed this many times, both among Estonians talking about Russian-speakers and the other way around. Rather, what greatly puzzled me – especially against the backdrop of the details of his personal and social life in Narva that he had earlier shared with me – was his way of defining Russia as the homeland of Narvan Russian-speakers and his idea that they should naturally return there if they expressed discomfort with their situation in Estonia. He had been born in Russian-speaking Narva, he was married to a Russian-speaking woman, his social circles consisted mainly of Russian-speakers, and he spoke fluent Russian, communicating unproblematically in the language both at home and in public, including with his customers on the bus we were sitting on at this very moment (Field notes 02.04.2011).

With the help of these personal insights into the life of people who belonged to the local Estonian minority in Narva, I have exemplified how the change in the political atmosphere in Estonia enabled the established power relations between people located differently in families and communities to be rearranged, allowing for new interpretations and practices. These renegotiations of power relationships that can at first look like an ethnic clash may have little to do with ethnicity. I imagine that, when it came to personal encounters, relations between the local Estonian minority and the Russian-speaking majority changed relatively little in Narva after the Soviet collapse. My observations were that many Estonians in the town tried to maintain friendly relationships with their Russian-speaking friends, neighbours, colleagues and – differently from my grandparents – family members. It is impossible to ignore, however, the fact that a certain shift on a mental level towards Russian-speakers as a group had occurred. There were plenty of situations wherein local Estonians tried to demonstrate their superiority over their fellow Russian-speaking townspeople, as if attempting to show that they – as ethnic Estonians – were better

and more rightful subjects of the Estonian state, representing "people of a higher category" – a sentiment often expressed by Russian-speakers regarding how the Estonians positioned themselves in this new reality.

Estonian nationalism was a lived experience for all the Russian-speakers in Narva to whom I talked about this matter, but I quickly noticed that it meant a range of different things, was experienced in various ways, and was expressed in diverse forms. One of the dividing lines between my informants concerned their opinions with regard to whether nationalism was a new post-Soviet phenomenon related to the establishment of the sovereignty of the Estonian state or whether it had existed during Soviet times but had been silenced or shown in different subtle forms.

Some of my interlocutors strongly believed in Soviet internationalism in the way I introduced it in Chapter 7, and for them Soviet Narva had been an ideal place where different nationalities[63] had lived side by side on friendly terms, having equal opportunities and without experiencing any friction on an ethnic, national or linguistic basis.

Vladimir (b. 1949, Russian-Estonian) analysed the changed situation between former Soviet nationalities in the post-Soviet era and concluded in his reflection on the past that even though the overall situation between nationalities was friendly, it could not be said that relationships between all nationalities were necessarily excellent, that no differentiation was made and that nationality had no effect on people's lives. Everyone knew that nationality, popularly known as the "fifth column" *(pyataya grafa)*, was always indicated in a Soviet passport and, although why and when this mattered was incomprehensible for "ordinary people", it must have had a political function. There were 118 different nationalities listed in the Soviet Union, Vladimir remembered. He himself was born and raised "in the international" *(*see Chapter 7.1*)* and he said that during the Soviet era no one ever asked him what his nationality was. Neither did he himself ever have any expectations about people based on their nationality. Having been raised in such an atmosphere, it was impossible for him to believe that something like the "nationality problem"

---

[63] Ethnicity (or ethnic group) and nationality have a significant overlap, yet attention needs to be paid to the context in which and by whom the terms are applied. Nationality (*natsional'nost'*) was the common term and established practice for differentiating between people originating from different Soviet republics and regions in the Soviet era but in practice it was often arbitrarily applied. Ethnicity, on the other hand, gained meaningfulness in the post-Soviet era and the term has been widely adopted by Estonians as it fosters their interests in the Estonian nation-state, but although it is used by Russian-speakers it has remained an empty term for most of them.

(*natsional'nyi vapros*) could even exist. And when he arrived in Narva, there was no "nationality problem" there either, he claimed. He later clarified that there was some sort of "balancing" between different nationalities in Narva but that the strong negative attitudes on the basis of nationality that came later certainly did not exist (Interview 30.10.2010). Vladimir thus held two positions with regard to ethnic/national boundaries: first, that they were not a product of post-Soviet Estonia, but that they intensified and started to be played out in that era; and, second, that Narva with its specific resettler-based Russian-speaking social fabric was a place where ethnic/national boundaries were relatively invisible.

The members of the Estonian community in Narva, forming a tiny minority in the town, had been speaking Russian unproblematically at work and in other public places just like everyone else. When I asked my informants to recall their Soviet-era experiences with local Estonians, they usually had few memories of them as a particular group. Either Estonians appeared in their stories as one among many Soviet nationalities, a neutral ethnic group in that sense, or relationships with Estonians simply did not exist, as there were so few of them in the town. There were some moments when subtle symbolism defined the difference between the groups in the local context, but no particular interest was paid to it, as recalled by Kristina (b. 1976, Russian):

> Everyone here spoke Russian, there were no Estonians around. There was an Estonian school. And they [the boys from the Estonian school] always wore blue caps. Our boys did not wear any caps. So, when a boy in such a cap was passing, everyone knew that he was from the Estonian school. […] But otherwise… It was rare for someone to have Estonian kids living in their building. Even if somewhere there were Estonians and they were playing, running in the courtyards, they spoke Russian anyway. Sometimes it went totally unnoticed [that they were Estonian]. You simply did not recognise it. Sometimes you had grown up before you realised. When we went to concerts in Tallinn we heard Estonian spoken. (Interview 08.12.2010)

While most people in Narva would claim that the "nationality problem" was unknown in the former Soviet Union, a few of my informants disagreed. Ingrian[64] background Zinaida (b. 1934), who had lived for two decades, between 1955 and

---

[64] People who are called Ingrians are associated with the territory of *Ingermanlandiya* (Ingria), today located in North-West Russia, close to St. Petersburg. Ingrians are historically related to Finns and speak Finnish but they were persecuted by the Stalinist regime due to their attempt to move to Finland during World War II and they were forbidden to return to their historical homelands in Russia. Many of them ended up resettling in Estonia, which they considered culturally close, and in other Baltic countries. There has been a considerable Ingrian population in Narva too.

1975, in a rather large and multi-ethnic maritime town in Soviet Lithuania, experienced strong nationalistic attitudes in her surroundings, including in the Lithuanian family she had married into. According to her, the main reason for this hostility was that, due to her inability to speak Lithuanian, she used Russian as a lingua franca despite Finnish being her native language. In her experience, speaking Russian defined her as a Russian for the locals and strongly affected their attitudes towards her:

> No matter how wrong they were, for them [the Lithuanians] I was Russian. My husband had a stepmother who refused to speak Russian to me, even though, I believe, she spoke Russian. At the beginning, I did not know any Lithuanian but later I learnt it, of course. She always kept saying, when talking about me, "This Russian… Russian…" (Interview 31.10.2010)

And Zinaida continued:

> [In Lithuania] communication in Russian was complicated and tense even with people whose educational level was high enough for them to certainly know some Russian. On 16 February, they used to celebrate their historical Independence Day. On that day you heard them saying "You'll get to know us at some point!". There was nationalism. (ibid.)

Zinaida moved to Narva in 1975. An important factor in her choice of Narva was its fame as a multi-ethnic Russian-speaking town where ethnic or language-based conflict was unlikely. She expected to be treated as an equal there, or as not different, but she did not want to be classified as Russian, because her ethnic Ingrian roots were important to her.

Polina (b. 1975, German-Ukrainian) also had the tacit knowledge that all nationalities and languages were not equally accepted in her native Kazakhstan. Her grandparents on her mother's side lived in Kazakhstan and were Ukrainian and her other grandparents were Volga Germans. She was clearly aware that their different ethnic backgrounds positioned the families very differently in Kazakh society. While the Ukrainian family was respected, and could speak Ukrainian among themselves without any fear, the vulnerable position of the German family caused them to be silent about their ethnic roots in public and even at home:

> In the [father's] family Russian was spoken. Every nationality in the USSR spoke Russian. And why did they speak Russian in my German family? Because my grandpa said that they were forbidden to speak German. And all the kids [of those Germans] were taught to speak Russian, not German. And they wrote [in his passport] that my

father's nationality was Russian. It was better not to be German, only they could not get rid of their [German] family name. This is also why I have this German family name… (Interview 20.01.2011)

Igor (b. 1950, Russian), who grew up in a Russian family that had resettled in Uzbekistan during Soviet times, shared his understanding with regard to the current and past situation with nationalism there by stating, "Life there is, of course… it is difficult to live there. There is nationalism, naturally, what else can I say? This already existed in Soviet times in a strong form". And he continued, "We lived with them [the Uzbeks] on friendly terms. But my father was a senior doctor, so they treated us with great respect. But otherwise… the nationalism was and is there, there is nothing else to say" (Interview 24.01.2011). Besides the fact that nationalism was not new to post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Igor's experience also revealed how the hostile nationalistic attitudes that in this case Uzbeks felt towards the resettler-Russians could be softened or even silenced due to the professional status of some Russians, for example when maintaining friendlier relations was seen as useful on a practical level. This indicates the complexity of ethnic/national boundary-making in Soviet space and its even more intricate applications in post-Soviet society, which some authors (e.g. Kesküla 2012) have analysed as racialised relations unfolding in the intersection of class and ethnicity, rather than from a purely ethnic/national angle.

My understanding is that the perception of whether some form of nationalism was seen as part of the Soviet space depended greatly on my informants' and their families' positionality within it, whether they were, and/or felt they were, subjected to these ethnically/nationally driven power relations. The experience of nationalism did not depend on a specific nationality itself but on how certain ethnic/national groups were positioned in a particular Soviet republic or in smaller communities within it, and on whether people felt accepted in a community on the basis of the ethnic/national affiliation they had adopted and wished to perform. A great many of my Russian-speaking informants had multi-ethnic backgrounds that could play out in many different ways in everyday situations. Certain of these backgrounds were often silenced while others, usually including the Russian one, were enforced in the Soviet period, but there were also situations in which the silenced ethnicities were later used as a resource in post-Soviet Estonia, for example, as a basis for applying for Estonian citizenship through genealogy.

Regardless of how much importance Russian-speakers in Narva gave to ethnic/national boundary-making in Soviet times, everyone agreed that nationalistic

attitudes had radically gone up a level in independent Estonia, and that this had not happened by itself but was intentionally facilitated by the Estonian state. As such, it was not usually "ordinary" Estonians whose actions were seen as nationalistic and hostile; on the contrary, Russian-speakers often saw the Estonians themselves as victims of the same system that sowed hostility between people. The entity that was seen as solely responsible for the nationalistic atmosphere and its concrete consequences in the lives of the Russian-speaking population was the post-Soviet Estonian state. The view shared by my elderly informants and on several occasions by the middle-aged ones, and which I often sensed as a strong message that I was expected to put forward through my research, was that people should be treated and judged on the basis of their acts, and whether people are considered good or bad should never depend on their nationality. My informants greatly emphasised the need for people to act in accordance with humanistic values and regretted that too many listened to the state's populism as spread by the mainstream media, losing the ability to think for themselves. Larissa (b. 1934, Russian), greatly disturbed by the Estonian media, which in her view had taken on the role of an extension of the state by spreading hatred between "ordinary" citizens, summarised the situation in this way, "You need to listen to your heart and think with your own head instead of believing what these [newspapers] tell you" (Interview 13.12.2010).

8.4 Experiences of marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion

Most of my Russian-speaking informants in Narva reported in 2010-2011 that they had no Estonian relatives or friends, which is understandable considering that Estonians still form only a 4 per cent minority in the town, but they did usually have, or had had, Estonian colleagues or neighbours with whom they were on good terms. Narvan Estonians were generally seen simply as "ordinary people" by my Russian-speaking informants and their encounters and relationships with them were also depicted as "ordinary", or "normal" (*normal'nye otnachsenye*) as the common saying went. In a more general sense, however, regardless of their ethnic/national background, generation or length of Soviet experience, my informants strongly held the view that Russian-speakers as a group were marginalised, discriminated against and socially excluded in post-Soviet Estonia, and this change was seen as having

been caused by the Estonian state and its political leaders. Varvara (b. 1937, Russia), a former textile factory worker, perfectly summarised the sentiment that I heard again and again among my Narvan interlocutors, "It seems to me that our problems are created by politicians, but between ordinary people there are no problems" (Interview 26.10.2010).

To understand the multiple layers that were typically intertwined, in particular in elderly Russian-speakers' experiences of Estonian nationalism, I will turn to present some of the experiences and sentiments that Larissa (b. 1934, Russian) shared with me during our several meetings. In these meetings, Larissa, in one way or another, always addressed the topics of nationalism and discrimination against Russian-speakers in post-Soviet Estonia, from which I concluded that from her perspective this was a key message to be shared with me as a researcher on the particular topic I was studying in Narva. On her mother's side, Larissa had roots in Narva, and her grandmother was Estonian. During World War I, Larissa's grandmother and her two daughters had relocated to Petrograd[65] to join her wounded husband in a hospital there, and had no way back to Narva when Estonia gained its first independence in 1918. Larissa was born in Petrograd and raised there and in Yaroslavl, where she was evacuated during World War II with her mother and brother. Her father, a Russian militaryman, was separated from the family and had a second family in Baku, and in 1947 Larissa's mother and her two children returned to Narva, where her Estonian mother and her sister's family had relocated in the intervening years. Larissa stressed that she had been brought up as a Russian-speaker and did not speak any Estonian despite living together with her maternal grandmother who only spoke Estonian and, according to Larissa, never learnt a word of Russian. Larissa started work at the age of 13 and was employed in the Kreenholm textile factory her whole working life.

A 76-year-old widow when we met, Larissa had remained relatively alone in Narva. Even though her son's family lived in the town, she considered her daughter Marina and her three grandchildren her closest kin. She felt very close to all three of Marina's children, because she had been very much involved in raising them. When the younger ones, twins, were born, Larissa, having retired at the age of 48, had mainly lived in Tallinn with Marina's family, as a nanny for the children until they went to school. Marina was a respected engineer in a factory, her husband was doing

---

[65] The interim name of St. Petersburg in 1914-1924; it was renamed Leningrad thereafter for the whole Soviet period.

fine in his job, they had received a four-room apartment in Tallinn and life was good. All of this happened during the late-Soviet years. Later, when the Soviet Union dissolved, "everything went upside down" as Larissa put it.

> And when it all [the Soviet collapse] started, we, of course, started to have problems. We had very big problems. Marina was immediately fired from the plant, not laid off, but fired. My own pension was very small, so we were left without subsistence. Three children, we traded with whatever we could and tried everything, but [to succeed] you also need some luck. We didn't have this luck. And then things went so badly that they lost their apartment. At first Marina's elder son came to study here [in Narva]. Then she brought the other two to me, and the four of us started to live in this one-room apartment. I raised them. Katya finished the gymnasium [secondary school] here, and Sergey graduated from vocational school. He studied to be a cook. (Interview 13.12.2010)

While the above narration may look like a story of post-Soviet transformation in which some people simply came off worse than others and for one reason or another were not able to adjust to the economic change and get their life back on track, for Larissa the decay that happened to her daughter's family was an experience of discrimination on an ethnic/national basis. When, sometime later, Marina eventually managed to establish herself again in the very same factory where she had worked for many years as a highly qualified specialist, she was offered a temporary short-term contract on the lowest pay. The factory had new owners who cared little about people's experience and dedication and used the new situation to exploit the workers. Larissa claimed that her daughter was still receiving the lowest salary in the factory even though many years had passed. When I asked whether it was ever explained to her why she was treated differently from others at work, Larissa said, "No, they didn't say anything, but you understand it from how they behave".

Regarding the futures of her grandchildren, Larissa had experiences with each of them that she strongly saw as their being discriminated against in the Estonian labour market because of their Russian background (cf. Aavik 2015).

> When Katya [my granddaughter] graduated as a social worker in Estonian, and one of my acquaintances informed me that a social worker was needed in an orphanage in *Ust'-Narva*, I called the [Estonian] headmistress [there]. I said that the girl had graduated in social work and wanted to work. She told me, "Let her send me her details by computer". […] I then said to my granddaughter, "Katyshka, call this number and give them all your details". Later she called me, "Grandma, there is no answer, one week passed, then a second one, there should be some answer by now. Yes or no, but there should be an answer". I called the headmistress again, she answered the phone, and you know what she told me? "You have bought these

documents [the diploma]". She hung up. And that was where it all ended. She was out of work for a month. Then she got a job in some Russian company as a manager but, as far as I remember, she didn't work there for even a year. In my opinion, she had a decent salary, the company was from Moscow. Well, but when there was this economic recession, the company went bankrupt. […] And then someone arranged a job for her in an Azerbaijani restaurant in Tallinn as a waitress. And here is a person with a higher education who can give something to children, teach them something, graduated from university, and she is working as a waitress. (Interview 13.12.2010)

In answer to my question about whether Katya had continued trying to apply for social work positions, Larissa said, "We have tried everywhere. But there is nothing. Deadlock. You can't treat people like that. And, especially, you can't treat young people like that. I look at my daughter's beautiful children and I feel sorry for them". The career paths of her grandsons had not unfolded smoothly either. Neither of the young men had managed to establish themselves where and how they had hoped and they repeatedly encountered situations in their working life that Larissa interpreted as discrimination against Russian-speakers.

From this narrative, it became clear that Larissa was convinced that it was nationalist attitudes and discrimination underpinned by ethnic/national boundary-making that got in the way of her family, especially the younger generation, advancing in life career-wise and establishing themselves as dignified people. She referred to both state-level attitudes and also the behaviours of employers who either excluded Russian-speakers from opportunities to get the jobs they desired, or directly exploited them by paying them less where possible. On top of this, Larissa was one of very few people in Narva who had experienced a personal confrontation on the basis of nationalism with Estonians in the town:

> I do not understand the purpose of this hatred. Why teach people to hate? I lived in house number 28, we all lived like one family. There was also an Estonian family, he was Estonian. My mum looked after his two kids, Tõnu and Taimi[66]. I looked after his grandchildren. Last year his Russian wife invited me to visit them. And he suddenly tried to kick me out: "You, Russians, get out of here, go back to your Russia!" How would you like that? We had been friends. Can you imagine? He told me, "Take your two suitcases and go back to Russia". […] I have been living in Narva since I was 13 years old. I have never worked in Russia. I worked and served in Estonia so that people would treat me, my children and my grandchildren with respect. (ibid.)

---

[66] Estonian names.

Unlike many others, Maria (b. 1935, Russian), another life-long Kreenholm factory worker, did not focus on the negative impact of nationalism on the lives of Russian-speakers in contemporary Estonia. Although she strongly located her home in Narva and separated Narva from the rest of Estonia by conceding that she did not have much idea of what life was like "in Estonia", she was convinced that Narvans did not have much to complain about when it came to equality between nationalities in Estonia. In her assessment of the current situation in the town, she refused to focus on feelings and approached the circumstances very pragmatically, emphasising the materialities of livelihoods in a comparative and contextualised way.

> Here [in Narva] we have many Russians, only Russians. […] Many people feel offended here. I do not get insulted by anything. I have my apartment here; they gave me Estonian citizenship[67]. What else do I need? Some people feel very offended by many things. But how can I feel offended when I do not even know what life is like in Estonia? But then people keep saying that Russians are discriminated against. I always say that it is not true; we have the same kind of pension. We have the same kind of apartment. How can you say that Estonians have more when you don't know? […] Even though we are being insulted sometimes, our life here is still better than in Russia. Look what's going on there now. Moreover, we all came from the villages. If we had come from towns, it would perhaps be a bit different. Why did we come here? To live well! (Interview 16.01.2011)

There are two perspectives in the above narrative that I want to highlight. First, Maria was able to accept the fact that Russian-speakers were "being insulted *sometimes*" as long as they were still doing better than Russians or Russian-speakers beyond the eastern border. For her, there was no doubt that Russian-speaking Narvans, despite their economic difficulties, lived better than the average Russian and better than Russian-speakers in Russia, and that in Narva they had certainly improved their livelihoods. Second, Maria drew comparisons between livelihoods in Narva and in the rest of Estonia and concluded that, on the basis only of what was important to her, Narvans and people who lived elsewhere in Estonia were doing equally well. Also, she stated that first-hand experience was needed in order to make comparisons, and that due to her lack of contact with Estonian livelihoods she could not conclude therefore that Estonians were somehow advantaged. This was not a typical approach among my Russian-speaking informants in Narva. Most of my interlocutors had little or no contact with other places or people in Estonia but were

---

[67] For reasons of space, I do not discuss in detail how she become an Estonian citizen, but during my fieldwork I heard of several cases of people gaining citizenship in unusual ways.

nevertheless convinced that the rest of Estonia was doing better financially. The sense of being economically worse off was taken as material deprivation that did not come about as a consequence of moving from one political and economic system to another in which shortcomings were inevitable, but was linked to state-led processes of systematic discrimination on an ethnic/national basis. When, after hearing tens of times the claim that Narva was worse off than all other regions in post-Soviet Estonia, I introduced the fact that some other regions in the country had at times had even higher unemployment rates than Narva, my arguments were ignored and the conversation quickly returned to their description of the town as a major site of state-implemented nationalist politics that had the aim of reducing both Russian-speaking Narvans' livelihood possibilities and the town's Russian-speaking population entirely. Most Narvans refused to accept alternative or more complex explanations of their material suffering.

Although Estonian nationalism was a shared concern among my informants, only a few of them, including Larissa, could recall personal negative encounters with Estonians. Direct confrontations between people on the basis of nationalism were not likely to happen in Narva because the elderly Russian-speaking Narvans were rather immobile, staying put in their Russian-speaking environment. Yet, while many stated that Estonian people in general were good and that the national hostility was created and magnified by politicians, many expected to encounter nationalist friction when they left the Russian-speaking space that was geographically bound to Narva and its close surroundings. For my elderly informants, visiting doctors and receiving medical care in Estonia's largest medical centres in Tallinn and Tartu were usually among the very few reasons for which they needed to *poyehat' v Estoniyu* (travel to Estonia) – this was the expression in emic terms, referring to how they saw themselves as being located outside of Estonia while places where Estonians predominated were associated with Estonia. Contrary to the general expectation of encountering ethnic hostility from Estonian-speakers, including doctors and other medical personnel, my informants had typically experienced being treated with absolute care and respect in hospitals when more complicated medical examinations or operations were carried out, which impressed them greatly – as if they somehow presumed they would receive worse medical care and a negative attitude because of not being ethnic Estonians. The initial fear regarding confronting such situations and later the gratitude felt by Russian-speakers surprised me greatly and this is truly

telling of the scope of the fear and the anticipation of rejection in a nationalistic atmosphere.

By 2011, Narva had lost about one third of its population compared with its peak of 82,000 inhabitants, reportedly, at the end of the 1980s. Russian-speaking Narvans witnessed their town losing its population and complained about it. They felt that Narva had become empty and they wanted the state to do something about it – to create workplaces and provide normal livelihoods so that people could consider the environment liveable again. Notwithstanding these aspirations, it remained rather unclear who they were expecting to move to Narva apart from their own Russian-speaking children and grandchildren who had left the town for better opportunities elsewhere. Russian-speaking Narvans did not see Estonian-speakers moving in. Since they lived in a "Russian town", it seemed impossible to them that Estonians would want to move there in large numbers, aside from the fact that there were no proper jobs there. Vladimir (b. 1949, Russian) was of the following opinion:

> Estonians have a language barrier [in Narva]. And the [Estonians'] mentality is completely different. Why should they come here? They do not need to. And they do not come with a reason, because there are only two to three per cent of Estonians [in Narva]. With whom would they communicate here? They cannot. They go somewhere else where they have their own people. They live very well there. But they are not interested in Narva. Even more so because the mentality [here] is absolutely different. But the people in power, they must consider that they cannot finish the existence of whole population in their territory. They need to do something, so that the people here can also live normally. (Interview 30.10.2010)

A small number of Estonians had, however, moved to Narva during post-Soviet times or had become connected to the town through their work. Russian-speakers' image of Estonians moving to post-Soviet Narva was in general negative, because they associated these Estonians with undeserved state-endowed privilege rather than with the kind of professionalism and commitment that would mean they were useful and contributed something valuable to the town. First, Russian-speaking Narvans saw that the top positions in both the public sector and state-owned enterprises were placed in the hands of Estonians. The public explanations surrounding these changes were typically related to Russian-speakers' lack of the Estonian language and/or citizenship. Several of my informants had personal experience of being forced to give up their respected positions for these reasons. In Viktor's (b. 1939, Russian) narrative, we can observe the feeling of injustice and of the collapse of personal work-related life chances. Viktor had been a well-known and respected senior

manager in a large local enterprise that was closed down in the process of restructuring the economy. He managed to establish himself in a position in the municipality but was then informed that he could not continue there because he did not have Estonian citizenship.

> Viktor: I worked there [in the municipality] for three years. Then came the new law – and I have a red passport. In the municipality, they talked to me nicely and asked me to leave. If they had told me that I was not good enough… But no, apparently it was impossible to continue working because I was a non-citizen.
> Wife: Lacking language knowledge.
> Viktor: Yes, lacking language knowledge. Well, no, the main point was having a blue passport, you needed to be a citizen. And I was not. So, I became unemployed…
> Wife: But why aren't you a citizen? Because you do not know the language! (Interview 31.10.2010)

Viktor would have liked to contribute to shaping his local environment through local politics but had learnt through trial and error that he was not needed anywhere. Apart from the fact that he and many others had to forget about their political ambitions in an independent Estonia because they did not meet the language and citizenship requirements, they were seriously disturbed by how key positions, related to improving life in Narva, in both the public sector and state enterprises were assigned to Estonians, who in their estimation were professionally totally unprepared for the duties they were given. Galina (b. 1946, Russian), who had worked her whole life as an electrician in the *Gres'* (power plants), had a concrete example of this:

> G: Look at what is curious nowadays. Right now, the chief specialist in Estonia appears to be an Estonian.[68]
> JK: In Narva, you mean?
> G: Not only. You see, a huge enterprise is led by a former plumber, but he is an Estonian. What does he know about production? They let everything collapse. […] Those who can lead are few. Because if you are a shoemaker then you make shoes. When you are a plumber, then you do the plumbing. You do not intrude into areas that you do not understand.
> JK: Do you mean that there are many people who simply have no idea what they are doing?
> G: Well, maybe they themselves think they know something, but they are simply incompetent in the area they are in charge of. This is why everything falls apart. Everything. (Interview 03.05.2011)

---

[68] She is obviously referring to the local saying, "Estonian by profession".

Galina was referring to her impression that for many managerial positions in post-Soviet Estonia the prime criterion was that someone gave citizenship and language rather that expertise. In everyday language in Narva, people like this were called "Estonians by profession". Polina (b. 1975, German-Ukrainian) confirmed that the image of "Estonian by profession" strongly existed in Narva. She further explained that particularly characteristic of those Estonian people who were now filling positions on the boards of state enterprises and in municipalities and other public offices was the fact that they were not local Narvans but were commuting to the town to work and staying strictly within their own circles. Local people did not become acquainted with them, so they remained strangers and were thus viewed negatively. In Polina's words, Narvans resented the fact that these Estonians had no plans to live in Narva or to get to know the local situation. Moreover, it did not feel fair to them that Estonians who were frequently ignorant of the local situation and professionally incompetent, in the locals' estimation, were appointed to key managerial positions while the locals suffered unemployment and were cast aside.

One of the few positive examples of Estonians moving to Narva and being well thought of and spoken about among the locals was the former head of Narva College, Katri Raik. Having moved to the town in 1999, she was seen – at least by several of my younger interlocutors – as a charismatic figure who not only worked in Narva but also lived there, was politically active and persistently fought to improve life locally. Her "big project" at the time of my fieldwork was a new university college building in Narva's old town that would create modern conditions for university students acquiring their education in Narva. Moreover, Raik envisioned Narva College as becoming outstanding in its architecture and teaching content and attracting both Estonian and international visitors and event managers, placing the town firmly on the Estonian and international maps, as she used to say. The university college building was successfully completed in 2012 and in the following years Raik became a member of Narva city council and a local leader of the Social Democratic Party. In late 2018, during the time of my subsequent visit to Narva, she rather unexpectedly became a minister of interior affairs and later ran a successful parliamentary election campaign in the spring of 2019, ending up in the Estonian parliament. At the centre of her campaign were issues relating to Narva and the whole Ida-Viru region, as well as the proposal to grant automatic Estonian citizenship to alien passport holders, an option that the Estonian authorities had fiercely avoided since the 1993 Aliens Act. Even after being elected to parliament,

she continued her campaigning by actively writing in both social and traditional media, addressing issues close to her electorate's interests in Narva. Albeit a native Estonian, she ran her campaign in Russian and was always ready to speak in the language. Furthermore, at the end of 2020, after the city council had removed the incumbent from office, Raik was elected mayor of Narva, and in the municipal elections of 2021 she overwhelmingly won the elections in Narva as a leader of electoral alliance called "Katri Raigi Nimekiri" (Katri Raik's List), ending the over 20-year-long period of Estonian Central Party's supremacy in the town.

In Polina's (b. 1975, German-Ukrainian) words, Katri Raik was a unique Estonian rather than an "Estonian by profession", because she was doing things rather than pretending to do them (Field notes, November 2018). While Raik's story is exceptional, it is a good example of the kind of concrete action and qualities that an Estonian coming from outside needs to carry out and display to earn the love and respect of Narvans, so that people can stop calling them "Estonian by profession" and focus on characteristics other than their Estonianness[69].

In the above narrative, communicating in Russian appeared as a means of finding a way into the hearts of Russian-speakers in Narva. For Russians this signified a willingness not to use Estonian as a tool to demonstrate superiority in a post-Soviet society. Teaching, learning and speaking Estonian as the state language, tightly intertwined with the citizenship question, was always a topic on the lips of Russian-speaking Narvans. In this "Russian town", where Russian continued to be the lingua franca in post-Soviet times, gaining Estonian language skills and speaking Estonian was considered impossible. Five of my informants had fluent or advanced Estonian, but only three of them were confident enough to be interviewed in the language. The other four had some knowledge of Estonian but had difficulties keeping a conversation going[70]. The majority had been on at least one basic Estonian course, but they had never put their learning into practice and simply concluded that they

---

[69] Here, Estonianness, besides being an expression of otherness, generally appeared in conversations with my interlocutors as an absolutely imaginative static characteristic, something that could at least partly be considered as the result of the Estonian state's successful project of articulating the clear-cut boundaries of its nation, albeit severely hampering integration and friendly cohabitation in the process.

[70] As my interlocutors happened to be more ethnically mixed than the average Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvan, and among them were several people who had Ingrian background and ancestors with Estonian roots, together with the fact that the more highly educated were overrepresented among the younger informants, we can assume that their Estonian language skills were on the whole slightly better than the average in Narva.

did not speak Estonian. My informants' views regarding whether learning Estonian was necessary, as well as what purpose it served and when, varied widely, depending to the greatest extent on their age and education level. The pensioners who had moved to Narva in their youth and had worked their whole life in factories, leading very local lifestyles after the Soviet fall, were usually the most likely to see learning Estonian as unnecessary. The informants who represented younger generations were on average more educated and often held or had held more prestigious jobs, for which some knowledge of Estonian was required; therefore it is understandable that they did not directly resist learning the language, even though practising it in a predominantly Russian-speaking environment, including at work, might have been impossible.

Although the Estonian state saw the teaching and learning of Estonian as the means of integrating Russian-speakers into mainstream Estonian society (Feldman 2005, 96), with a minimum level as tested by a language exam being one of the official indications of Russian-speakers' suitability for acceptance as citizens, this logic of the state and its related procedure remained highly unintelligible for most Russian-speakers in Narva. Some Narvans were convinced that they were not able to learn Estonian in their environment, even to the minimum level required to pass the citizenship test, but mostly I encountered views that disapproved of the way in which language learning was made to serve as a bureaucratic means of "playing integration" before the eyes of the state but had no practical application. This realisation caused Narvans to harshly criticise the Estonian state's provision of an ineffective language teaching and learning environment. One of the prevailing opinions was that Estonian language learning was impossible to achieve in Narva in the way in which it had been organised thus far. The state did not provide sufficient high-quality language teaching for learning to take place. People's main complaints were that the quality of the teaching was very poor, the courses were far too expensive given the local standard of living and there was no environment where people could interact in Estonian to practise their learnt skills. Several of my elderly informants directly ridiculed the courses provided by the state, saying that they were useless instrumentally and weak pedagogically. Vladimir (b. 1949, Russian) told me:

> Train the personnel [for language teaching] first! First, you need to have the staff and then you can make demands. It does not work like this that you tell a random person that in three years you need to know the language. How am I going to know it? Who is going to teach me? I need a methodology; I need to have everything from scratch.

And what next? Learning the language does not happen without methodology. To have a [good] methodology you first need to train the teachers. This takes five years at least. […] So, what are you demanding from me? A person is 50 years old and you want him to learn the language? This is nonsense. What kind of 50-year-old is learning a language? It is not even funny. And secondly, when he lives in the middle of Russians, he will speak Russian. No matter whether that person is a Tatar or an Azerbaijani, he will speak only in Russian. How can you learn Estonian when you have nobody to practise with? This is not funny. And they keep dealing with this nonsense. What do they want from this corner of the world? First, create the conditions and then make demands! (Interview 12.01.2011)

This narrative does not necessarily reflect how language teaching is organised today, because many of my informants had personal experiences dating back to the early or mid-1990s that discouraged them from further language learning. It is important to note, however, that these negative sentiments had not faded away and Estonian language teaching continued to have a bad reputation in 2010-2011, persistently and strongly undermining Narvans' respect for the Estonian state. Importantly, with each passing year many people saw less and less point in learning Estonian. The older they were the more limited they saw their ability to learn a new language, their opportunities to practise the language and the need to acquire an Estonian passport.

As Vladimir continued his narrative, he pointed also to another aspect that was widely seen as the Estonian state's ineffective way of demonstrating its power over Russian-speaking populations. The state took out injunctions regarding language skills, and there was a practice in place to check whether the injunctions were being complied with. This involved occasionally sending officials, so-called language inspectors, to visit public workplaces (e.g. schools, hospitals, municipalities) in Russian-dominated areas to check the required language skills of the employees and apply the necessary measures if the injunctions were not being followed. Usually fines were applied, and employees were directed to attend language courses.

Polina (b. 1975), who worked in a school, was of a similar opinion to Vladimir, in that the state was short-sighted in its endeavour to control language learning and that all attempts to do so ended up resembling a show, because every time the inspectors came in teachers were warned in advance, and those who had missing skills simply did not show up and later presented a sick note. All of this ultimately only decreased the plausibility of the state in the eyes of the Russian-speaking Narvans.

But it turns out that they [the language inspectors] come to inspect the workplace, they issue a fine for not knowing the language. Come on guys, and what next? You will penalise me. Okay. Will I know the language better after that? Where do you send me? To free language courses? Very well! I go to these free courses and conclude that it would have been better not to go at all. This is a joke, but it is not learning the language. I remember the first years when the Russians took language exams here. Oh, dear God! People from my work took those exams. It is incomprehensible how they were able to pass and yet they did! Without knowing a word. This is how we live here! And nothing will change. I constantly laugh about it. This language problem is the most interesting thing in this corner of the world. Everywhere else, there is an environment for learning the language. Anywhere else, starting from Kohtla-Järve, there is a language environment, everything is normal there. People try to speak in two languages there. (Interview with Vladimir 12.01.2011)

From all the above, it can be seen that from the locals' point of view the state's demand that they learn and know the language had become a mere irrational political instrument with which to exercise power over Russian-speakers and demonstrate the state's superiority every now and then. Moreover, several of my informants were resistant to acting in the way the state was proposing because they did not agree with how it had conditioned eligibility for citizenship. They disagreed with the state's decision to tie Estonian citizenship and knowledge of Estonian strongly and without exception together, without taking into consideration the complicated history of Soviet mobility and Russian-speakers' variety of trajectories and agency within it. Thus the central idea of the Estonian citizenship policy – that knowledge of Estonian was a marker of one's willingness to integrate[71] into Estonian society – was a nonsense, because passing the language exam did not necessarily mean that someone was able to communicate in the language. There was plenty of proof of this in Narva. Moreover, in the sphere of work, including in public offices, the mismatch between official language policy and real-life needs also resulted in latent practices of preferring Estonians with bilingual or strong Russian skills (Berezkina 2017). Language in this context was anything but a simple or neutral issue.

Despite rejecting the way in which language and citizenship were tied together, many Narvans considered knowledge of the state language a reasonable expectation

---

[71] Kruusvall, Vetik & Berry (2009, 15) have concluded that Estonia has shifted the focus of integration mainly to the economic sphere, in which the primary responsibility is on the individual, while for the most part ignoring the cultural-political aspects that either contribute to or hinder integration. There has been a lack of willingness to recognise that for successful cultural-political integration the ethnic majority needs to enter into a trade-off position instead of expecting cultural assimilation by the Russian-speakers.

on the part of the state. They were simply unhappy with the practical side of implementing this demand. Instead of considering learning and being able to use a new language as a resource that could open doors – since elderly Narvans especially had non-existent chances to actually use Estonian – the issue had become a highly political and therefore sensitive one in post-Soviet Narva. The requirement of Estonian language skills was thus often perceived by my informants in terms of power relations that left them feeling subordinate and offended. As a result, the elderly Russian-speakers have become locked in their local Russian-speaking environment, which is the only safe place for them, where they find comfort and understanding, and where no one challenges them to change their practices or attitudes. Upholding the image of Narva as a distinct place perpetually in conflict with the Estonian state and nation is useful here for the othering process (Kaiser & Nikiforova 2008; Trimbach & O'Lear 2015, 7-8; Pfoser 2014).

Reflections on the effects of nationalism, citizenship and language politics on Russian-speaking Narvans often produced "elevated points" in their narratives. One of these appeared when I interviewed Nikita (b. 1933, Russian):

> Suitcase – railway station – Russia – by now this [rhetoric] has basically stopped. People have understood that we are not going to go anywhere. How could we? I got [an Estonian] passport, so I'm now protected, so to speak. What does it matter that I'm not very fluent in Estonian? I am a normal citizen, I am sitting here, I am not a rebel, I do not carry a gun. I am loyal to the Estonian state. And neither do other [Russian] people go anywhere from here. They will not leave. So, it is necessary to find a way to live together. In many ways, integration is reduced to forcing us to learn Estonian and nothing else. This is not enough. Even if we learn Estonian, there is no use for it. Are there any Russians in important positions in the government? Somewhere in the economy, in big business? There are no Russians, only Estonians! *You* do not let us. This is a fact. This is discrimination on the basis of nationality, whatever you say. Estonians, both men and women, receive higher salaries than Russians in any field, even though our duties are the same. Russians have less prestigious jobs. Cleaners, shop assistants, builders – all minor specialists. Every managerial position in every company is taken by Estonians. Well, it's *your* country, so *you* are the hosts of the party. But leave something for *us* as well. (Interview 19.01.2011)

8.5 Media perceptions about Narva and Russian-speaking Narvans

The nationalist view was liberally fed also by the Russian media broadcasts that focused on presenting the Narvan and Estonian Russian-speakers as victims of Estonian nationalist politics. The majority of Russian-speaking Narvans not only lived in the Russian media space in terms of continuously receiving information about Russian society and major events in the world mediated by Russian media channels, but also their general knowledge about issues related to Estonia primarily originated from the Russian media. The situation regarding access to Estonian national news broadcast in Russian by the Estonian media has since considerably improved, but in 2010-2011 Narvans had to rely on local and municipal news broadcasters that focused predominantly on issues of local and regional importance. The major local news channels, especially for the older generation, were the local radio (Raadio 4), the municipal newspaper *Narvskaja Gazeta* and free weekly newspapers filled with advertisements and having little news value. My elderly informants mentioned that the free papers were mostly useful for providing the weekly TV schedule – including Russian TV channels. The younger generations relied solely on the Russian-language online press – if that – which typically only included an arbitrary choice of news produced by other, including national, channels. There was no Russian-language TV channel in Estonia and only one major daily newspaper published news in Russian. It cannot be said that Estonian news coverage was not available in Russian, but most of the people I talked to in Narva admitted that they did not follow the Estonian news because it was not interesting enough to them or they did not trust it, or both. Many of my informants admitted that they had practically stopped following any kind of news, and even their watching of any programmes at all on Russian TV channels had ceased or had shrunk to a very narrow selection of entertainment shows. They felt that there were only dismal events happening everywhere and that, as the media only amplified everything, it was better to distance themselves from it altogether so as not to live under this constant negative influence.

Some of my informants, albeit highly educated and broad-minded people, and very keen on both international and local politics and developments, wanted to present themselves as having a neutral take on international broadcasting and as highly capable of analysing the politics in various contexts. Viktor was one of those

who liked to talk heatedly about politics when we met. During our first meetings in 2010-2011, when I sat with him and his Estonian wife Irma around their kitchen table for hours at a time, he loved to explain to me how things "actually" were. He was a very confident man and clearly tried to influence my thinking, convinced that I was being brainwashed by the overtly one-sided Western media, including the Estonian national media that was pictured by him as the henchman of the US/EU media and interests. Back then, Viktor claimed that in addition to several other newspapers and periodicals, he read the Russian-language version of the major Estonian daily, *Postimees*, and was thus well acquainted with the perspectives of the Estonian national media as well. We discussed life and world politics for hours and his wife usually let him talk and kept silent. I got to know little about her and her opinions on political issues.

The situation had changed somewhat by the end of 2018 when I met the couple twice more. My first meeting coincided with the so-called Russian military aggression, the seizing of Ukrainian navy vessels in the Black Sea in November of that year. The TV was on in the background when I arrived, and Viktor was fiercely protesting against the international broadcasting that was presenting what was happening – in his words, "business as usual" – as Russian aggression. Russia's official view, as broadcast by the Russian media, was different and Viktor obviously supported this. His wife Irma did not share his view or stay silent this time and openly reproached him for forming his opinion solely on the claims of the state-controlled Russian media. Later on, when we were discussing some other political issues, his wife once again dared to disagree with several of his claims regarding Estonian nationalism and Estonian state actions, pointing to the existence of several different viewpoints and the need to take them all equally into account. Viktor was very displeased with her reaction, and stated, "One would think that after 50 years together a husband and a wife would have formed a shared understanding but here it is exactly the opposite: the older she gets the more obstinate she becomes". This "shared understanding" was supposed to be based on his views, of course. This and some earlier situations with the Kuznetsovs revealed that, despite the family choosing to speak Russian, Irma as an ethnic Estonian and an Estonian citizen was between two worlds with regard to Estonian nationalism, which obviously generated some conflict in their family similarly to in other interethnic families, including that of my own grandparents and their daughters-in-law (Field notes 26.11.2018).

Although many Russian-speaking Narvans tended to be either rather ignorant or strongly critical of the Estonian media space, ridiculing it for being in the service of the Western (anti-Russian) hegemony and for promoting nationalism if not fascism, they did not usually address similar issues of one-sidedness, over-politicisation and lack of freedom regarding the Russian media space. It is hard to say whether this reflects the reality of how the different media were generally differently perceived from the point of view of control and independence, or whether we simply did not come to discuss the issues deeply enough since they were not among the primary interests of my research. I tend to believe though that in a different context Russian-speaking Narvans would have pointed out similar problems with the Russian media as well.

A rather exceptional conversation in this respect was eye-opening. Anna (b. 1961, Russian) raised the topic of both the former Soviet and the contemporary Russian media practice of exercising power and intentionally creating what she called "disinformation". She had lived for decades in a polar mining town where the inhabitants faced small mining accidents almost daily. These frequent accidents did not usually exceed the news threshold. She was, however, seriously shocked when in the 1980s the greatest mining catastrophe that had happened in her town was not broadcast on Soviet media channels. It was the first time she had become aware of certain events simply being silenced in the Soviet media. At the end of the 1990s, she received congratulations and admiration from her friends in St. Petersburg because the central media channel had broadcast news of how the miners in her town had received such good salaries for their hard work that they could even afford to buy expensive crystal chandeliers. In reality, it was an extremely difficult time in the life of miners and other workers everywhere in Russia. Miners were not paid their salaries for many months and Anna's family eventually resettled in Narva in 2002 because life in the Far North had become impossible. Anna could not forgive the Russian media for cruelly distorting and ridiculing their unfortunate situation in order to beautify the miserable economic situation that existed in the whole of Russia (Interview 02.11.2010 and Field notes 15.12.2010).

During the Bronze Soldier affair in May 2007, the unrest that broke out in Tallinn after the Estonian government decided to secretly relocate a monument dedicated to the memory of the Red Army soldiers who died in World War II, Anna was again surprised by friends in St. Petersburg calling her in a panic, convinced that civil war

had broken out in Estonia. This time, Russian media channels[72] had worked hard to broadcast and amplify the event in Estonia to the whole of Russia. Anna calmed her friends down by telling them that the main unrest had happened in Tallinn and that Narva remained peaceful, aside from a few broken windows at the local Estonian school. Clearly, an ethnicity-based conflict in Estonia had been long awaited in Russia, and sensing the perfect opportunity the Russian media, Anna concluded, had taken the chance to shed a negative light on this highly complicated and ambiguous topic. Even though she recognised and condemned the tense relations between Estonians and Russians, it was unforgivable in her opinion that the media used the event to play with people's feelings and even fuel the conflict (Field notes 15.12.2010).

Some of my informants complained that although it was already nearly 30 years since the Soviet fall, people in Russia yearned for negative news about Estonia. Irina's (b. 1950, Ukrainian) relatives in a Ukrainian village in the Russian countryside had expressed jealousy towards their relatives who, as they saw it, were enjoying a better life in Estonia, hinting that they had been lucky rather than deserving of their improved living conditions. Irina, however, said that her life in Estonia was not easy, but that, differently from her relatives in the village, she had been working very hard to improve her situation; she was pushing forwards in life despite all the hardship, while those in Russia had just let go, giving away control over their lives. Irina's relatives in the Russian countryside were the kind of people who paid attention to what the Russian media broadcast and tended to link it to what they saw and heard when Irina and her sister Zanna visited. The relatives, however, never visited them in Narva, in either Soviet or post-Soviet times, and never got to know what life was actually like there, Irina reported (Field notes 10.03.2011).

Many other informants shared stories of how their friends and relatives in Russia and elsewhere were interested in their lives in Estonia and were really concerned about their situation when negative news was broadcast about Russian-speakers in Estonia. At the same time, they also admitted that Estonia was developing in such a

---

[72] Not only was the event of great interest in Russia, it received significant attention globally. Subsequently, the unrest has been widely analysed by scholars and analysts in Estonia and abroad, and these studies have mostly pointing to the unsuccessful negotiation of the parallel histories, memories and counter-memories (Petersoo & Tamm 2008; Smith 2008; Tamm 2013; Melchior & Visser 2011) of ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers as well as indicating the enduring and deepening processes of status loss and the sentiments of rejection felt among Russian-speakers (Ehala 2009; Vihalemm & Masso 2007).

different direction to Russia and other ex-Soviet countries that it had become more and more difficult to find a common language to explain what was going on in their respective societies. Many of my informants admitted that a certain cultural distancing between them in Narva and their close ones in their birthplaces and other locations they were connected to was already noticeable during Soviet times. The more time passed, the more culturally distinct they felt from Russian-speakers in Russia and their other birth countries. In addition, the regional differences were enormous. So, it was not only that Estonia was growing further and further apart from the rest of the former Soviet Union but that the rural–urban differences and the inequality between different regions within Russia and other post-Soviet countries were immense.

Polina (b. 1975, German-Ukrainian) again commented on contemporary Russians' interest in and knowledge about Estonian- and Russian-speakers in Estonia, which revealed a different perspective. In 2018, when we met up after many years had passed, she had already been making frequent regular visits for several years to Russia – to a place near Moscow – because her fiancé lived there. Based on her experience of communicating intensively with many Russians, she commented, "Jaanika, Russia is huge, and no one is interested in Estonia. No one belonging to the younger generations knows about Estonia because they have no experience of it and Estonia has no place on their mental map". She then gave another example:

> All Russians all over the vast country are currently watching the Russian version of The Voice. The Estonian singer Uku Suviste who is participating successfully in this competition has attracted a lot of attention. People love him and talk about him. Now young people in Russia know that Estonia exists. You need pop stars and the media to put tiny places like Estonia on Russians' geographical and mental maps. (Field notes, November 2018)

Polina's view thus demonstrated that the perspective that today's Estonia equates to nationalism was relevant only to the people and bodies that were personally or out of some interest engaged in this kind of power relations and gave meaning to it. Since Russian-speaking Narvans who were at the centre of Estonian nationalism were aging, their population decreasing and transnational ties generally weakening, the Russian nation's interest in the goings on of the Russian diaspora in Estonia was perishing rather than flourishing.

Since the media powerfully shaped "ordinary people's" images of what life was like in one country or another, the still existing ties with family members and friends

in different places in the former Soviet space presented the only opportunity to assess the actual conditions, put things into perspective and straighten out some of the distorted opinions. Despite the general feeling of being discriminated against in Estonia on the basis of nationality/ethnicity, Russian-speaking Narvans judged their situation in the town to be considerably calm. Narvans had many more reasons to be worried about the situation of their relatives in other places, where neighbourly relations between different states were much more unstable. Many of my interlocutors experienced, however, that the difference in standards of living and daily concerns between former Soviet places was gradually becoming so big that their close ones, despite keeping in contact, did not necessarily always understand the situation in other places. Polina (b. 1975), whose kin were living in Kazakhstan, explained this:

> They [my relatives in Kazakhstan] are very much afraid of war. There have been persecutions everywhere. In Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizia… Only not in Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, Russians and Kazakhs are living together in a friendly way. And that is why they [my relatives in Kazakhstan] are very worried that it could change one day. And they are worried that this could happen here [in Estonia]. I try to calm them down by saying that thanks to the cold temperament of Estonians and of Russians who have lived for a long time next to Estonians [and have taken on their cold bloodedness], war is probably impossible. Only a cold war perhaps. Well, the cold war is permanently ongoing [here]. I do not believe that they will start to fight here for real. We already have this inner persistence. Estonians continue living their own lives, and Russians tolerate them. No one is going to touch anyone. However, when it comes to the [Bronze Soldier] riots it's just clear that this concerned only certain groups, it was nothing big. (Interview 20.01.2011)

After the 1993 Ida-Viru region's autonomy referendum (see Chapter 2), two events made the chance of a violent conflict between Russian- and Estonian-speakers, or rather Estonian Russians and Estonians in this case, a serious possibility. The first concerned the Bronze Soldier incident in May 2007, to which Polina referred above. All of my informants in whose discussions with me this event appeared, albeit condemning the way in which the Estonian government had treated the statue, were surprised at how anxious the international media was to associate the event with Narva and how keenly everyone seemed to expect Narva to naturally be the place where a possible continuation of the unrest would break out. According to all my informants, nothing really happened in Narva and they did not see why something would have.

The second event was the break-out of the Crimean conflict[73] in March 2014, when Russia annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine. This was followed by the Donbass War, in which Russian citizens backed by the Russian state led a separatist movement in the Donbass region. Since then the territories have been administered as Russian federal subjects. The international media, drawing strong parallels between Narva and Crimea due to their having predominantly Russian populations that felt afflicted by the governing state, immediately rushed to paint the situation in the former as similar to that in the latter and came to plenty far-reaching conclusions, announcing that Narva would be the next former Soviet Union location where unrest and subsequent integration with Russia were highly possible (e.g. Balmroth 2014; Berman 2014; Ottens 2014; Sander 2014; Abonyi 2015). When following the local press and social media during the years thereafter, it became clear to me that the local people were at first very disturbed by the media arbitrarily prescribing their history. The more this went on the more tired they became of foreign journalists arriving in their hordes in the town and writing superficial reports (*The Economist* 2015). It was insulting for them that the international media treated them as stupid people who did not know what was best for them. Despite constituting an Estonian periphery and, they believed, having the worst living standards in the whole of Estonia, the locals had no interest in becoming a Russian periphery instead. They were fed up of strangers misusing their hometown and its history in the production of news that would sell (Field notes, November 2018). The attitudes of the locals have also been summarised by scholars who, similarly to my understanding, have concluded that Narvans hold the firm view that in their town there is no separatism (Martinez 2018, 161) and also that, despite their deeply felt marginalisation within Estonian national politics, Narvans "maintain their strong localisms while remaining cautiously bound to Estonia and Europe" (Trimbach & O'Lear 2015, 9) and seeing Russia as their least important place-based identity (ibid.). Pfoser's (2017, 41) study has shown that Russian-speaking Narvans, through various narratives and localised cultural articulations, "claim 'Europeanness' not only to differentiate themselves

---

[73] In the aftermath of this conflict, analysts referred to it as a "Russian campaign in Ukraine" in which "Russia sought to regain its influence over Ukraine and retake ownership of Crimea after the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych by pro-Western forces" (Kofman et al. 2017, xi). The same report documents "how the conflict evolved from a localised proxy conflict in its early stages to a hybrid war between Russian and Ukraine, and then to a direct invasion by Russian troops" (ibid.).

from Russia, but also to claim belonging within Estonia and the EU". The findings of Jašina-Schäfer (2021) further expand and deepen the perspective on the need to recognise local forms of belonging in Narva. By stressing that the state-imposed meanings of Estonian language and citizenship may be misleading as tools to assess belonging and commitment to the state, she suggests to give prevalence to looking for and understanding better the local forms of performing everyday citizenship, which in her research appear for instance as deep emotional engagement with specific places and landscapes.

Regardless of the fact that Narvan Russian-speakers labelled the international media's interpretations as nonsense, opinions in the town regarding Russia's actions in Crimea were firmly split. Partly perhaps as a result of their consuming solely Russian media and living in this information space, the majority in the town seemed to be on Russia's side and to support its activity in Ukraine, which they did not see as aggression but as supporting the rights and interests of Crimea's Russian majority. At the same time, there were a few Ukrainians in Narva who firmly stood on the Ukrainian side in this conflict. Yet we also need to remember that for a considerable number of people the divide between right and wrong was not self-evident, given for example the blurring of boundaries and interests in mixed Russian-Ukrainian families in Narva (Field notes, November 2018).

One of the possible conclusions I came to, from following the situation from the sidelines and later talking to people about it – a rather narrowly based conclusion, however, since reflections on the Crimean War were not an issue I was able to study in detail – was that the conflict gave Narvans an opportunity to consider anew their situation both in their town and in relation to Estonia and other states. In these reconsiderations, partly as a form of resistance to yet another view forced upon them by outsiders – the international media – it is very likely that the crisis strengthened their sense of belonging and being at home in Estonia rather than in Russia.

8.6   Discussion

When belonging and staying put in homely terms becomes endangered by conditions in the surrounding environment changing dramatically as it happened in post-Soviet Narva, there is a need to find a reason for what has happened and why,

as well as to work out new ways of relating to the place, because people naturally strive to re-establish homeliness rather than to live in displacement (cf. Jansen & Löfving 2009). My primary intention with this chapter was to demonstrate, through empirical engagement with Narva and Russian-speaking Narvans, how the social fabric and practices captured in their affiliation to a place that was in essence a "Russian town" – perceived as an equal, friendly, convenient and culturally comfortable environment – became a nodal point of contestation and emotional suffering after 1991. Narvans were not alone in the creation and transformation of their home-space in Narva; their homing was mediated by the state, both back then in Soviet times and later in post-Soviet Narva. The state was not always an unequivocally defined entity in the narrations of my interlocutors; it sometimes appeared simply as a metaphor, representing webs of power in various situations that the Russian-speakers felt they were being unwillingly exposed to in the post-Soviet context and, furthermore, in which they felt they were being treated unjustly, subordinately or undeservingly.

Constructions of migrants' homes in Narva once entailed spaces of emotional comfort, familiarity and security (Ahmed 1999). During the Soviet period, the Russian-speakers who resettled in Narva made themselves feel at home through the practices of their local language and culture, which were based at first on Russian village culture and cultural prescriptions of the Soviet ideology, emphasising equality and friendliness between all Soviet citizens irrespective of national belonging. In Narva, the role of Estonian or any other ethnic language or culture remained minor and there was no generally felt contestation on a linguistic or cultural basis. The "Russian town" environment, providing an easily accessible and unproblematic cultural and language space, facilitated the rapid development of the kind of "intimations of homeliness" (Hage 1997, see also Chapter 7 of this thesis) that migrants always undergo in their emplacement process in a new setting. The environment itself had a role in shaping both individuals' and families' migration trajectories and the reasons why and how Russian-speakers arrived in and stayed in Narva, and it emerged as part of individual and collective recollections of what the town was (and should be) like as a home.

Post-Soviet constructions of home among Russian-speaking Narvans involved increasingly – but not solely – experiences of discomfort, unfamiliarity and insecurity. These experiences encompassed much more than individuals' struggles and emotional difficulties in repositioning themselves in a post-Soviet world and

should thus be understood as complex and collectively shared sentiments produced by the repositioning of power axes in an independent Estonia in which "safety" acquired a new poignancy. There were a number of different emotions – above all fear, anger, resentment, confusion and feeling insulted – that emerged in connection with the new post-Soviet home environment in Estonia, which placed the sense of "seamless belonging, continuity and affinity" associated with the home-space in danger (Ahmed et al. 2003, 10). In the midst of this dramatic change in the emotional landscape it can be seen how the local and national levels of experience and imagination were clearly distinguishable and produced different outcomes, albeit affecting one another at the same time. In the following discussion I thus scrutinise both Russian-speaking Narvans' relationship with the nation-state as home and home in Narva in connection with the post-Soviet transformation.

I utilise the notion of "politics of belonging" and the distinction between "belonging" and "politics of belonging" as proposed by Nira Yuval-Davis (2006, 2011) to make sense of how the state shaped the sense of home among its subjects and how this was received. According to Yuval-Davis (2011), the "politics of belonging" comprises specific political projects that those in positions of power lead so as to construct belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities, drawing boundaries that in order to include certain groups always systematically exclude others. Western states' political projects of belonging continue to focus on, but are not limited to, citizenship, language and nationalism (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011). A large number of the narratives in post-Soviet Narva circulated precisely around the state politics of nationalism, language and citizenship, affecting not only how Russian-speakers in Narva *felt* about the state but also what they *did* to manage their lives in a home-space in which they had previously, but no longer, felt safe. In some ways, these three political projects of belonging – citizenship, language and nationalism – can be seen as separate, with different insertions and repercussions, yet at the same time they were interlaced and equally produced the feeling that the state was particularly hostile, uncaring and malicious towards Russian-speakers as a specific group, rather than to the entire nation.

After 1991, Russian-speakers in Narva started to perceive themselves as objects of Estonian nationalist politics, whom the state systematically racialised, discriminated against and marginalised rather than incorporating into the making of an independent Estonia. Narvans' complaints were directed at the state's vision and its realisation of community boundaries, those that defined the "us" and the "them"

in the Estonian nation-state, leaving Russian-speakers on the side of the "other" (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2009, 8-11). The Estonian state defined its national membership body first by drawing boundaries along ethnic genealogies, and thereafter attempting to increase the membership body by incorporating Russian-speakers in exchange for the loyalty and solidarity that materialised from their passing the language and constitution exam. The imaginative work (Castoriadis 1987, Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis 2002; Yuval-Davis & Stoetzler 2002) around "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991 [1983]) of the new nation-state, carried out by the state itself, primarily its political elite, did not coincide with that of Russian-speakers in Narva. Instead, this national project was formalised in the eyes of Russian-speakers in the form of the resource of national belonging being given to the "chosen people". In addition, Russian-speaking Narvans viewed the post-Soviet Estonian state as responsible for intentionally creating a distinction, and everyday clashes on an ethnic/national basis, between its titular and minority populations, which they were strongly critical of. Nationalism and the related hostile atmosphere were matters that should have been avoided, controlled by the state through its politics regarding maintaining a homely space for all its subjects. Failing to do this was a sign that the state had failed in something essential. Estonian nationalism was seen as the independent state's fundamental political project of belonging – inscribed in other projects, those of citizenship and language politics – which in turn reproduced several discriminatory practices and disadvantaged positions.

The politics of nationalism has had repercussions in the lives of Narvans, on their self-esteem, the organisation of their everyday lives and the future prospects of the upcoming generations. When the state left Russian-speakers with no automatic rights to citizenship, this was not only a symbolic act but one that affected them directly in many spheres of life, making them vulnerable and less competitive by limiting their rights and opportunities and restricting their access to many resources that would help them to make the best of their lives in an independent Estonia. Whereas in earlier times, employment in Narva had served as a possible channel for social mobility, including moving upwards in the company hierarchy, in post-Soviet Estonia injunctions related to language and citizenship politics started to have an indirect downwards impact on Russian-speakers' social mobility (Leppik & Vihalemm 2015).

It was possible to observe many parallel, conflicting and highly ambiguous sociotemporal reasonings related to how citizenship constituted the space of

insecurity and impossibility in post-Soviet Narva (cf. Jansen 2014). It was also of note that citizenship acquired different meanings and elicited different emotions depending on whether it was associated more with the politics of belonging led by the Estonian state or with mobility and opportunity structures. Citizenship can be seen as an important instrument in structuring the mobile lives of Narvans in the context of the international border and the borderland practices emerging on the Estonian-Russian border (Pfoser 2014, 2015; Brednikova & Voronkov 1999; Kaiser & Nikiforova 2008; de Montesquiou 2010). While the border itself produced inconveniences in the lives of Narvans who engaged in international border practices, the possibility to negotiate citizenship provided them with a space of manoeuvre and some sense of agency in the wider political and economic structures.

The Russian-speakers' narratives also revealed that the citizenship project, in their view, was of utmost importance to the Estonian state; it looked to them as though the state hoped that the high value that Russian-speaking subjects placed on Estonian citizenship would sooner or later lead them to take steps to learn Estonian and acquire the citizenship. In practice, however, other citizenships such as Russian or the status of undetermined citizenship relatively successfully competed with the Estonian one, which indicated that the state had somewhat miscalculated the value of its own citizenship, failing to consider the material and practical value of other forms of political citizenship in an era of transnational mobility. In the contemporary world, Estonian citizenship in Estonia has thus more of a material-practical, and less of a symbolic and positively emotional, value for Russian-speaking Narvans located in a particular way in Estonian society. As Šliavaite (2017) has demonstrated by studying an isolated Russian-speaking nuclear town in post-Soviet Lithuania, in a situation of socioeconomic uncertainty citizenship sometimes emerged as the most tangible resource in helping people to navigate the international space and seek options in other places. Viewing the role of citizenship in this way, it becomes apparent that although the Russian-speakers, while dissatisfied with how the state conducted its politics of citizenship, were not completely powerless in controlling the effect of citizenship on their everyday livelihoods, they were nevertheless limited by the impossibility of foreseeing how the state might redefine its citizenship politics in the future. Šliavaite (2017, 107), in the example mentioned above, showed how "formal citizenship does not necessarily guarantee that the new citizens will develop

a sense of belonging and attachment to the national community, or that they will have common perceptions of citizenship and similar expectations of the state".[74]

As we have observed, the linguistic and cultural aspects of homing in Narva only became articulated, formally structured and politicised once their existence came under threat from the demands of the independent Estonian state (cf. Yuval-Davis 2011). The state expected language, similarly to citizenship, to pave the way to Russian-speakers' integration into and loyalty to the Estonian state and nation, whereas the nation itself was constructed on the conditions of ethnic Estonians only. Although the overall aim of the state was that Estonian as the state language should be perceived as a valued resource, having the potential to connect groups differently positioned in society, in closed communities like Narva, where Russian was the entirely dominant language, very different dynamics emerged. Depending on their social locations, Russian-speakers in Narva saw the Estonian state's language politics with regard to encouraging the acquisition of Estonian language skills on a scale of useful to absolutely useless, and everything in between. While the state stressed the practical value of the state language, presenting learning Estonian as a means for people to access material resources and increase their status, for Russian-speaking Narvans the language acquired a primarily negative emotional value in post-Soviet times.

In the narratives of Russian-speaking Narvans, language and citizenship policies rarely emerged as the focus of complaints about the Estonian state. Rather, these issues were strongly intertwined with other factors that involved wider material and economic structures and individuals' social locations in society (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011). To explain this, it is useful to turn to Yuval-Davis' (ibid.) conceptualisation of social locations. Applying her argumentation to Narva, being a Russian-speaker does not alone determine Soviet-era Russian-speakers' social positionality and the related inequality structures in post-Soviet Estonia because it does not define Narvans' positions in Soviet society. Each category that contributes to their social and economic positionality and, furthermore, the intersecting social divisions that constitute each other, are constructed "along multiple [power] axes of difference" (Yuval-Davis 2006, 200). Being a Russian-speaker, a factory worker, a resettler and an elderly person all at the same time positioned an individual along a historically

---

[74] Lithuania, differently from Estonia, granted state citizenship to all Russian-speaking resettlers who applied for it.

and socially conditioned axis of power that intersectionally produced experiences of marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion (cf. Aavik 2015). Kesküla (2012, 243), in her study in Russian-speaking miners' communities, has portrayed this process in Estonia in terms of the creation of a "racialised underclass". She has argued that in post-Soviet neoliberal Estonia, ethnicity and class have become overlapping categories, whereby being a Russian(-speaker) also means being a worker and, given the significantly lowered status of the worker in capitalist Estonia, Russian-speakers are unable to escape social and economic entrapment. States possess mechanisms with which they can either facilitate or prevent such large-scale disadvantaged positionings, and in this respect the Estonian state, adding into the contestation through its politics of nationalism, language and citizenship, can be seen as failing to create social cohesion equally among its subjects.

Claiming their rightful home in the Estonian nation-state has paradoxically led Narvans to stick with their efforts to consolidate their localism; as long as Narva is located in Estonian territory, the place itself is their stronghold and their guarantee of being accepted as subjects of the Estonian state, even in some cases without official citizenship. Paradoxically, the easiest way for Russian-speaking Narvans to manage the overall sense of national hostility and their life at the margins of post-Soviet society was to encapsulate themselves in their Russian-speaking town, living more local lives and accepting that the world around them had shrunk, despite the surrounding discourse that celebrated mobility and access to the multiplicity of possibilities in the Western world. Narva's association as a homely space did not disappear in post-Soviet times; rather, new threads of power appeared locally, making the power grids more indistinct, layered and situational than previously. At the same time, there was a realisation in Narva that the more locally focused their everyday practices, being entrapped in a small place, the fewer chances they had to be incorporated, socially and culturally, into what was conceptualised as the Estonian nation, and to enjoy equal opportunities to advance in life.

In conclusion, the narratives of Russian-speaking Narvans in this chapter revealed emotional investment in and desires for attachment to Estonian society. While at times Narvans' yearnings regarding the state may appear to have been inactive, they were still active participants in home-making in both Narva and Estonia through the concrete steps and decisions they took with regard to language courses, practising the language, applying for citizenship and mediating their grandchildren's employment chances. When actions taken in the realm of language

learning and citizenship did not appear to be favourable to either the Estonian state or Estonian-speaking Narvans, the state tended to perceive Russian-speakers as either passive or resistant. This passivity and resistance should, however, be interpreted as expressions of agency in post-Soviet Estonia. Incompliance and inactivity regarding the concrete actions proposed by the various state projects of belonging signalled the significant pitfalls inscribed in these projects. This can be seen as the state's conditions for being at home in Estonia being at odds with how Russian-speakers wanted to carry out their personal projects of being at home in Estonia. The more the state pressed ahead with national, language and citizenship projects, the more the Narvans either encapsulated themselves in Narva or left the nation-state. "The embodied attachment to place", as Jansen (2007, 16) reminds us, should not be taken for granted, but regarded as a possible dimension in the making of home. When a state, under the auspices of its national projects of belonging, threatens people with the undoing of their connection with their home, this certainly has its consequences. As we saw in Narva, this resulted on the one hand in people distancing themselves from the Estonian state, ridiculing it and not taking it seriously, and, on the other hand, in their clinging onto local networks that further hampered them in seeking opportunities outside Narva. Stressing the particularity of Narva and holding onto the image of the town as a place with a unique culture while at the same time distancing themselves actively from the rest of Estonia, as well as from other former Soviet places, seemed to be thus a strategy of coping with all the unfamiliar things that Russian-speaking Narvans felt threatened by and an attempt to save their place in the world.

9 FROM PARADISE TO THE TOWN OF NO HOPE: HOME-MAKING IN THE ABSENCE OF GOOD STATE AND HOPE

By 2010, Narva had come to signify a place of hopelessness for my interlocutors. The change in the town was epitomised in the Russian-speakers' narratives as a shift from "paradise" to a struggle in a town of no hope. This final chapter seeks to analyse this drastic transformation in Narvans' reflections on the general state and future of their hometown and on Russian-speakers' life prospects there by addressing their relationship to Narva as a home-space and theoretically focusing on home's intersection with the production of hope, envisioned as one of the responsibilities of the state. I examine how perceptions of home change as the socioeconomic and political conditions in which hopes are produced change over time, from Soviet to contemporary times. As hopes are projected into the future, reflecting both what people expect from the future in order to be able to feel at home as well as what their anticipations are based on their lived experiences, throughout this chapter my aim is to make sense of how and why my interlocutors see the futures of the town's Russian-speaking population and the town itself in the way they do – in predominantly grim colours.

One of the principal characters in this chapter, as in the previous one, is the state, and my task is to present local insights in Narva with regard to how the two states – the Soviet and the post-Soviet – have instilled hopes differently and have contributed to the evolution of sense of home in the town in different ways. In Chapter 8, the state policies that Russian-speakers referred to were reflected in various political projects of belonging and this chapter moves on to a discussion of the role of the state in shaping the economic and social environment and protecting the wellbeing of its subjects under neoliberal capitalism. I ask how the actions of the governing states have, from the point of view of Russian-speaking Narvans, caused them to have two diametrically opposite perceptions of the future of their hometown at different times, one depicting it as a paradise where everyone wanted to live, and the other envisioning it as descending into a lonely death.

Given the elderly age of the majority of my interlocutors, I carefully examine the role of life-course and age both in hoping and in projecting futures, placing an emphasis towards the end of the chapter on how the elderly imagine the desired futures of younger generations, rather than their own, in relation to Narva. Discussing in detail how hope was first given to and later extracted from Narva, as captured in people's everyday experiences, I contribute in this chapter to various contemporary discussions of political anthropology of home and of hope, in dialogue with postsocialist anthropology.

9.1   A "paradise": Hopes in Soviet Narva

Imaginings of the future are always rooted both in the present and the past, being a result of a balance between present-day struggles and uncertainties and contemporary depictions of the past (Hage 2003; Jansen 2014; Kleist & Jansen 2016). In order to understand how hopes, places and mobility are related in a society, Kleist and Jansen (2016, 374) have suggested "trac[ing] the social life of particular hopes over time". My interlocutors frequently compared Soviet Narva with a paradise. I argue that this paradise metaphor captures Russian-speaking Narvans' sociotemporal hopes at the time of their resettlement in the town, and my subsequent brief inquiry into the ways in which paradise was narrated paves the way to a better understanding of what this perception signalled and why it radically changed in post-Soviet times.

My interlocutors' reasons for resettling in Narva were at first often framed by the known migration triggers, such as the Soviet mass recruitments organised by growing industries or work placements that reduced the role of choice and calculation in mobility, and they emphasised the role of accidentality in their ending up in the town, but on closer examination most trajectories revealed their careful examination of Narva's potential as a migration destination (cf. Hage & Papadopoulos 2004, 120). The factors that mattered in this calculation changed between the early and late Soviet periods, some of the most powerful triggers being the possibility to exchange a rural environment for an urban one (which, as explained in Chapter 2, was restricted by migration policies during the early Soviet period), and the availability of suitable housing (analysed in Chapter 5). During the late Soviet period, starting from around the early 1970s when the infrastructure of Narva and the organisation of

local life had developed to such a level that the town began to positively stand out among other Soviet urban places, the resettlers started to pay attention to the advantages of Narva that promised a higher standard of living and a healthier living environment. The paradise metaphor, drawing from the conditions of the late Soviet period, thus remains an overall symbol of the Soviet period for many Narvans.

The distinctiveness of Narva as a paradise was often expressed in consumerist terms, as in the following narration by Diana, who resettled in Narva a few years after her sister Irina had moved there in 1974.

> When my mum came to visit us for the first time, she said, "Girls, you've ended up in paradise!" There was meat in the shops and sausages and there were no queues. And condensed milk… we did not have this [in our village in Russia] not even for the holidays. We went to the bakery and there was such a choice of items! […] Pies, pastries, all kinds of cake. And she [my mum] was saying that we've ended up in paradise. (Interview with Diana, 15.09.2010, b. 1951, Russian-Ukrainian)

In consumerist terms, conveyed expressively in this comparative reflection by Diana's mum, who continued to live in a different Soviet reality, a paradise was a place where shops were stocked with basic food products such as milk and other dairy products (quark, sour cream), sausages, meat and sugar. These products continued to be a scarcity in many other regions of the Soviet Union, but in Narva they could easily be bought on a daily basis and without the effort of hours of queuing (cf. Ries 1997) or the fear of missing out, which points to the already existing diversity in the ways in which different Soviet republics were able to provide for their population.

While consumerist desires were important to Soviet people, and more so as the end of the Soviet era approached (Yurchak 2005), the paradise metaphor signified much more than this to Narvans. Narva as a paradise indicated a complex set of conditions that conveyed a space of possibility for personal and familial growth and for upwards mobility within the highly stratified Soviet mobile space.

Many have argued that in the Soviet world the geography of places and the hopes attached to them were deeply stratified (Gorsuch 2011; Siegelbaum & Moch 2014; Burrell & Hörschelmann 2014), first and foremost along the rural–urban axis. Many urban places signified the possibility of personal and professional advancement, carrying with them a sense of continuous development and modernisation, while rural and poorly connected places meant the opposite (Zaionchkovskaya 1996;

Zubkova 1998). Because of the post-WWII gender gap[75], urban mobility significantly increased marriage and family-life prospects for women (Brainerd 2017; Avdeev & Monnier 2000). For a great many of the people I talked to in Narva, escaping from a rural environment was a life-changing step and the hopes attached to the opportunities represented by urban places typically provided them, in retrospect, with the reassurance that they had done the right thing.

One of the reasonings that stressed the importance of the effect of the rural–urban divide on living standards belonged to Elizaveta (b. 1967, Mordovian-Russian), who had moved to Narva in 1977 with her parents from a Mordovian village near the Volga river in Russia to join her five older siblings who had already relocated there:

> You know, the village was such that if a person gets old, it's very difficult to live there. You need to carry water. There is a small river with a very steep shore. And you need to go down to the edge to get water. […] My dad understood that years will pass, they are getting older, and life is going to be harder and harder, and children are in the town. And he took this hard decision to move here [to Narva].

In 2010-2011, when I repeatedly met with Elizaveta and discussed her family's mobile trajectories among other things, all her siblings and their children, and in some cases their grandchildren, lived entirely urban lives. No one ever returned to the countryside. The whole family was very much oriented towards education and they aimed high. All but one had a university degree and they were working in respected positions as dentists, teachers and entrepreneurs. Without leaving the backward Russian countryside, all these paths and achievements in life would not have been possible.

Hage and Papadopoulos (2004, 112) have conceptualised mobility as stemming from human beings' intrinsic need to move forwards in life. This means that humans have a need for a social or symbolic mobility that does not necessarily require people

---

[75] Brainerd (2017, 299) has called World War II a "cataclysmic event" that resulted in an enormous post-war gender gap across various Soviet regions, shaking up gender roles and leaving many women with no possibility of finding a partner. In 1950, there were just 76.6 men per 100 women in the territory that is now Russia. By 2015, the figures had considerably improved, but women still outnumbered men, with a gender ratio of 86.8 men per 100 women in Russian and 88 per 100 in Estonia. Meanwhile, the global ratio was 101.8 men per 100 women. Although there are plenty of reasons for these figures, one of the most significant being the low life-expectancy in both Russia and Estonia, as in many other post-Soviet countries, the post-war situation still had a considerable effect on the figures in the older age groups (United Nations 2019).

to move physically; it is a need for a sense of "going places". Social or symbolic mobility can happen within the same village or town if people perceive their dwelling there as moving them forwards in life. Yet people often feel "symbolically stuck" or moving "too slowly", and they therefore decide to migrate if the chance occurs. Hope, in Hage and Papadopoulos' words, is "a projection of our dreams of upward symbolic mobility" (ibid.). Their theorisation supports the ways in which Soviet resettlers projected their futures. For Elizaveta's family, similarly to the early resettlers from the nearby Russian countryside whom I introduced in Chapter 5, moving to a town certainly signified the potential to move ahead in life.

In the Soviet context, social and/or symbolic mobility could mean achieving rather ordinary things such as access to a registered address, housing and modern conveniences, factory (as opposed to agricultural) work[76], sufficient infrastructure and access to basic foods. The stratification of Soviet places according to the possibilities they provided was not grounded in stark rural–urban divides only. As a consequence of the unequal development of places in the Soviet Union, which divided rural and urban settings near and far, regions and different republics, some places rather than others were associated with more possibilities and loaded with hopes. These hopeful places naturally ranked higher on people's "wish list" of locations in which to settle. Northern mining towns and many other remote migration destinations with deficient or no infrastructure and where work was seasonal or project-based were connected to specific hopes, usually related to opportunities to earn a higher income[77] in the short term.

Narva ranked high when people were considering resettling for the longer term or permanently. Hopes were attached to Narva as a locality, as a social setting that provided a space for social or symbolic mobility through a relatively good configuration of arrangements concerning both the public and private spheres. In the view of my informants, the state provided an adequate social structure for living

---

[76] Sociologists have identified the increasing educational and occupational aspirations attached to urban settings as the main motivator for Soviet migrations from an individual's point of view (Dobson 1977; Kozyreva 2013). However, while the Soviet youth believed that "all paths [we]re open" for moving upwards in Soviet society through education and occupation (Yanowitch & Dodge 1969), these aspirations often did not correspond with the state's actual needs for labour, and intergenerational mobility patterns have since shown that in reality the increase in the level of one's occupation and social status did not necessarily happen (Yasterbov 2016).

[77] A higher salary was usually called either *pol'yarki* or *severnye nadbavki* in the Far North (Bolotova & Stammler 2009, 200-202) or "long rouble" more generally (Burkush 2018, 304).

a desirable mundane life in the town. In addition, many Soviet places were known as environmentally spoiled and dangerously contaminated, and several of my informants stressed in their life stories the desire to get away to somewhere clean and safe. Narva was often praised for being clean, quiet and green and providing access to nature.

Most of the early resettlers in Soviet Narva were young people, recently married or single with their lives ahead of them. Despite the family separation caused by mobility and the difficulties of keeping in touch, they usually received support and encouragement from their parents and others close to them in relocating. The despair and hopelessness in the places people left behind on the one hand, and the hope and future prospects, at least on an imaginary level, connected to urban Narva on the other, seemed to be equally strong. In addition, the Soviet idea that everybody in society was on the move held firm and encouraged mobility. Thus, seeking out opportunities outside of the native home by means of mobility was connected to getting ahead in life by using either one's own or one's close ones' resourcefulness and becoming an established person (cf. Barrett 2009).

For many Narvans, the fact that not everybody was able to relocate and move upwards on their social mobility trajectory as they had was a source of achievement and pride. While the act of mobility differentiated them socially from other family members who had stayed put, it also planted them in a community of a special kind. As I discussed in Chapter 7, when they arrived in Narva they became one of many who had experienced something similar through their own mobility, and their future experiences would intersect in the same place.

The image of Narva as a paradise elicited, formed and proliferated hopes and desires always in close comparison with other Soviet places. In many narratives, it was made clear that the notion of paradise incorporated elements of structure, organisation and cleanliness that for many Soviet-era Narvans were also their own personal qualities. While the Soviet Union was supposed to be, at least on an ideological level, a just state that provided equal opportunities for all, Narva was a real example of the mismatch in the system. Vladimir (b. 1949, Russian-Estonian), who moved to Narva in 1976 after living in Western Siberia and Central Kazakhstan, recalled the drastic differences he noticed on his first visit to Narva:

> When I first came here, I generally had the impression that I was in paradise. It's because you're not able to imagine those times and this life behind the Ural Mountains. It's difficult to explain because life here was extremely different. Life here

differed even from that in Leningrad or Moscow. […] Absolutely different relationships, life, shops, everything was different. Pure Europe, only Soviet, if we can express it like that. I was stunned. I was not able to understand why it was so: the country is the same, but we don't have anything there. In the shops, nowhere. And here everything exists! (Interview 30.10.2010)

I argue that "paradise" was both an imagining and a real experience of everyday Soviet-era life among Soviet-era Russian-speakers that importantly shaped their trajectories of mobility and their practices of dwelling and homing in Narva. Regardless of the flaws in the Soviet system concerning economic equality and the equal distribution of goods, as revealed in the accounts above, my informants were more likely to display genuine bewilderment than to provide straightforward criticism of the Soviet system. Next, I will look closer at how the Soviet state was perceived by Russian-speakers and the impact it had on its subjects' home-making in Narva.

9.2   The omnipresent, controlling, just and caring Soviet state

Despite its many deficiencies, the Soviet state appeared as powerful, effective, just and caring in my informants' recollections of their mobile trajectories and homing experiences. To be precise, my claim here is not that the Russian-speakers' *lived experiences* of the Soviet state were all about it being thus at the time, but that their evaluation of past situations and of the state's role in these as being predominantly positive became possible only after they had lived through post-Soviet times (cf. Jansen 2015). The current situation was always considered through past life experiences in which their Soviet subjectivities continued to play a central role. The fact that Soviet experiences were remembered with nostalgia does not lessen the importance of the past in reconfiguring both the present and how the future was seen in my informants' conceptualisations of their life in Narva.

The enduring belief in the Soviet state's ubiquity and might was fed, on the one hand, by the living examples of infrastructural and economic change over time that were truly visible in places like Narva, and, on the other hand, paradoxically also by people's own reversed experiences of earlier suffering and powerlessness. For many Russian-speakers, particularly the early resettlers, Narva had grown before their very eyes from a place of war-time ruins to an exemplary Soviet industrial town (Vseviov

2001). This development had been possible only because of the Soviet state's forward-looking and favourable local politics, as many of my informants reminded me. The major importance of the Soviet ideas of prosperity, success and achievement was effectively communicated in figures and rankings on both an Estonia-wide and an all-Soviet scale. This was excellently captured in Vladimir Kalinkin's nostalgic narration of the town's splendid past in Soviet times, which was published in the local Narvan newspaper in 2014. He stated that, as a local citizen who had seen the economic and social change in the town over many decades, he saw this piece as a reminder to his contemporaries and a history lesson to young post-Soviet generations.

> After two decades of heavy work the new Narva was successfully established. In the 1970s the town had already become the second industrial centre in Estonia after Tallinn. Its significance for Estonia [the ESSR] and its contribution to the economy of Russia [the Soviet Union] can be compared with that of the Ural [region]. Narva produced 98 per cent of the electricity, three quarters of the textiles, 70 per cent of the leather, two thirds of the building materials consumed in Estonia [the ESSR]. (Kalinkin 2014, author's translation)

The above narration was fully recognisable as the main building block of both self and the Soviet-era town in a number of the life-stories I collected in Narva. For those who grew up as Soviets, surrounded by Soviet ideology, such depictions of their living environment reflected the "normalcy" they had experienced for most of their lives, while at the same time carrying an expectation of the continuity of achieved success, both individual and collective, and a great deal of hope for an even better future. Furthermore, they saw the state as responsible for maintaining and furthering what had been collectively achieved and for providing continuous hope for a "meaningful life and dignified social life" (Hage 2003, 15) in a society where everyone had contributed. The aspiration to and the realisation of upwards mobility, whether in terms of living standards, occupation or social status, as I demonstrated earlier, was part of the Soviet-era experiences of the Russian-speakers and these past experiences became especially pronounced against the backdrop of post-Soviet transition to capitalism that constituted a rupture and a falling backwards in time.

The sense of personal and familial advancement and the feeling that people could more or less anticipate what was ahead of them in the years, not only the days and weeks, to come, provided the foundations for the sense of relative stability and desired predictability that existed in Soviet society (cf. Dunn 2008; Galbraith 2003;

Humphrey 2002). In their personal life, Soviet people experienced many difficulties with organising their everyday (see Baranskaya 1989[78]). Husbands' alcoholism, divorce, illness, a high level of pressure and difficult conditions at work, and struggles to balance work and family life often figured as challenges in my informants' Soviet-period life-stories in Narva. Yet all this was seen as a "normalcy" (Jansen 2015; Koleva 2017; Greenberg 2011; Fehérváry 2002) that happened to everybody else too and, most importantly, the divergencies and shortcomings that people systematically encountered in their daily lives were not immediately related by them to the deficient political system, which would have suggested that there was a need to change the system so that they could better manage their personal lives. The Soviet system's failure to provide equality was taken as an inevitable fact, which was not to be criticised but to be reacted to, on an individual level, using personal resources: communication skills, useful connections, status and authority. Often, someone's extraordinary advancement in life was interpreted as a matter of pure luck or destiny. The stagnation that characterised the Soviet 1980s was not felt as a threat to the general stability of the lives of my informants; people hoped that the scarcity of food products and consumer goods and the introduction of the coupon system directly prior to the Soviet collapse was a temporary inconvenience that would pass.

The perceived sense of security in the belief that, whatever happened in one's personal life, everything would be sorted out and life would go on, following its daily rhythms and routines, created a sense that things were under control within the ordering framework, the "grids" of statecraft in Jansen's (2015, 42) terms, in Soviet times. Most Soviet people were not used to daily life being unorganised, free-floating, nebulous or unforeseen. First of all, the role of control was ascribed to the governing state which, in exercising this control, made assurances that it was watching over the whole of Soviet society, and in this way instilled hope of stability and continuity – and a future – in its subjects. For instance, everyone knew that the responsibility of every adult Soviet person was to work, that it was not possible to avoid it and if someone tried to do so the officials would find out and punishment would follow. Also, there was no need to worry about finding a place to work because there were officials in charge who came and employed young labour directly after people

---

[78] Baranskaya's (1989) famous short story, describing an ordinary week in the life of a Soviet woman in post-Stalinist Russia, reflects the challenges of many of my female informants too. Thanks to its small scale and good food provision, Narva perhaps provided a better environment for a woman to manage all her chores.

finished their schooling. Until the last years of the Soviet period, people could trust that their salaries would be paid and that they would receive their pensions and healthcare, and what they received was enough for them to live on. The Soviet state – experienced through day-to-day practice in work organisations and personal experiences with healthcare and the military system, for example – was perceived as having a clear structure, hierarchies and a means of control that operated systematically and equitably (Zakharova 2014; Burrell & Hörschelmann 2014). If something went wrong, the state accepted responsibility and took control. Nobody was left alone or unattended. In this sense, the state was always seen as an interested, and therefore caring, state. It also appeared that my informants felt more in control of their lives during the Soviet period compared with what came after: as long as they were good workers and were loyal to the state, the terms of state–citizen relations were rather straightforward and things rarely went wrong. Stability was the feature that in hindsight was most associated with the (late) Soviet state by my informants and, in comparison, the lack of stability, which caused people to struggle greatly to manage their everyday lives, became the greatest flaw of the post-Soviet state, as I will show next.

9.3   The emergence of the new uncertain state

Nadezhda (b. 1963, Russian) moved to Narva from a Northern Soviet mining town with her husband and small children in 1991, just before the Soviet fall, to be with her parents. She first mentioned that the reason for relocating was her husband's worsening health condition – the mining town was known for serious health problems developing in its harsh environmental conditions – but later the scenario of movement emerged as being much more complex. After giving birth to her second child in 1989, she registered her newborn and herself in her parents' apartment in Narva. In this way bolstering her family's future, she was already in the stage of transition before the Soviet Union collapsed. In 1991, during the "critical times" (*perelomnyie vremena*) they moved to Narva. By giving up their two-room apartment and their jobs and taking the risk of having neither jobs nor a place of their own they trod an uncertain path in transformative times, having no clue as to when or how the future would be. The only clear possibility at the time seemed to

be that Estonia would separate from the Soviet Union and they therefore needed to be registered in Estonia and not be left outside. For Nadezhda, it felt safer to burn her bridges and relocate her family close to her parents. She and her children then rightfully received the chance to remain on Estonian territory but her husband's situation was different. According to Nadezhda, he was "no one in Estonia without a residence permit" (Interview 14.01.2011). They soon ended up divorcing.

> During these times, this [constant] lack of money, his unemployment and all the rest… it destroys families. He was here illegally; he didn't have any documents… All these things collided at the same time. Later, of course, things became legally possible – to reunite families, to apply for a residence permit. But then it was already too late, we were not interested anymore [in doing all that and being together as a couple]. (ibid.)

After her relocation, Nadezhda almost immediately managed to find an office job across the border in Ivangorod through contacts but when soon after, in 1992, Estonia introduced the krona and she continued to receive her salary in roubles in Russia it was worth too little in Estonia for her to survive. Being a highly educated engineering specialist, she now needed to accept any kind of job in Narva to earn a living.

> Oh God, I have been doing all kinds of job in Narva! I worked for a month as some sort of seller in the bakery, then as a lift operator. My salary was very low, and this was not a prestigious job. But there was nothing else to do, I needed to work somewhere. I also traded things. I went to the market in St. Petersburg, bought things there in the wholesale market and later sold them here [in Narva] in the market... you know those markets... Nowadays we do not have those open markets [in Narva] anymore. I traded on the market in both winter and summer, all year round. [In the middle of] all those clothes hangers and counters. […] And later I worked in a survey company as a surveyor, but received little salary. And then they recruited me in X department in our municipality. My profession became useful to them. (ibid.)

Going through these difficulties in both her personal and professional life in relation to Narva seemed to mark for Nadezhda a time of deep uncertainty that was long over for her by the time we met in 2010-2011. In her life-story, there was a rather clear rupture around 1991, which in retrospective ended in 1998 when she managed to return to a professional job that brought her both stability and satisfaction. Remembering the turbulent time between these points brought back to her feelings of confusion, insecurity, loss and pain linked to various loosely connected situations, and of generally not being in control of her life for many years.

Nadezhda assessed her journey in post-Soviet times through her own subject-position as a mother, woman, wife, worker and so on, and through her own subjective sense of handling these roles temporally rather than linking the difficulties to the wider political and economic milestones in her hometown. In fact, Nadezhda's personal story, with its several breakthrough moments that enabled her to see the improvement in her life during post-Soviet times, was rather exceptional among the many that were shared with me in Narva. Most of my interlocutors described the lasting sense of precariousness and even hopelessness that marked both their individual and familial experiences as well as the general situation in post-Soviet Narva. Whereas Nadezhda could see the connection between the "cut" in her life that she had brought about herself by her decision to relocate in already uncertain times, which probably gave her a sense of agency and responsibility regarding at least some of the difficulties she experienced, most Narvans considered that the circumstances that surrounded them had started to change while they themselves remained fixed.

The economic and political "transition" that many scientists and other experts have put forward to describe the changes in postsocialist contexts cannot be identified as a meaningful local category in Narva. Locals knew that they had arrived at capitalism – this in fact happened on a very short timeline – but the capitalism they had lived through had many faces and had caused disillusionment rather than bringing the economic prosperity, civility and freedom suggested by the Estonian state, which had been eagerly listening to the Western "experts" who promised the Western "dreamworld" (Buck-Morss 2000 cited in Brandtstädter 2007, 132). As the goal of "transition" remained fuzzy and the various economic, social and moral difficulties Narvans encountered in their everyday realities did not seem to be coming to an end in a reasonable timeframe, even after years of waiting and hoping, the situation in Narva can be depicted through Burawoy and Verdery's (1999) notion of "human uncertainties" rather than "transition". In fact, Narvans started to realise that the departure from socialism had led to lasting uncertainties, even to the extent that uncertainty became their state of being in the world, and definitely not voluntarily. Although uncertainty is increasingly argued to be a state of being in the postmodern world (cf. Bauman 2007), which at least to some extent should be seen as the new normal rather than as extraordinary, my informants clearly did not see the situation like this. Uncertainty belonged to the realm of the temporary, not the permanent, and it was to be avoided or surpassed rather than tolerated. As the

Estonian state was the governing and responsible body in the territory in which they lived, Narvans saw it as the entity that had singlehandedly caused the numerous uncertainties.

For Russian-speakers in Narva, the various events that comprised the period of political, economic and social transformation – so much had happened over such a long time – were generally not clearly locatable on a historical timeline, let alone unambiguously interpreted. However, the hardship (*tud'nosty*) and uncertainty (*nyeuvyeren'nost'*) importantly came to symbolise the state of being in post-Soviet times and were attached solely to the actions of the Estonian state, even though some of the transformational events had already happened during the Soviet period. In vernacular vocabulary, *putch*, *perestroika* and "cut" (*otrez|perelom)* were the words typically associated with regime change and emerging difficulties, but they were specifically connected to the post-Soviet period and the overall sense of hardship and uncertainty during the two post-Soviet decades. Similarly, the economic breakdown that was felt in Narva during the final years of the Soviet regime, vividly remembered in Russian-speakers' narratives as characterised by a deficit of food and consumer goods and unpaid salaries, grounded in their everyday lives, often appeared in practice as inseparable from the general sense of hardship and uncertainty brought about by capitalism per se. At the same time, however, people seemed to also somehow differentiate between uncertainties that belonged to the time of the Soviet break-up and the immediate reordering of their life-worlds and those that were part of the contemporary struggles in Narva. However, in 2010-2011 the general understanding in the town was that the time of uncertainty, partly but not only as a companion to capitalism, was still ongoing, and people's view of when and how it might end, if at all, was completely unclear.

All my informants had experienced hardships of different kinds in their lives. The older generation had seen the war up close, and clearly recalled it as the most horrible experience they had had. They had personal memories of famine, killings, violence, destroyed villages, and lost homes and family members, and thus knew that war was the worst thing that could happen. The experience of war also made other difficulties in life seem relative. For example, when the economic deficit arrived during the final years of Soviet times, Zinaida (b. 1934, Ingrian) was not afraid of starving to death when there was nothing to buy in the shops. As survivors of the war, people like her were confident that they would manage somehow.

Z: It was 1990 when prices started to increase. They also tried to increase the salaries.

JK: And the pensions?

Z: The situation with pensions was bad. I received 120 roubles, because my career was interrupted. You needed to work 20 years in one place [to get a bigger pension]. But I changed my job. So, I got 120 [roubles], because I had filled only 15 years. I didn't always receive a pension, because there was not enough money in the post office [where we collected our pension]. So, we had to [manage] somehow... We survived because we had a dacha. […] In general, they were strange times.

JK: But you somehow survived those times?

Z: We survived. Oh, how we queued for white bread! Look, here in Tuleviku street there is a shop. We found out that they would bring white bread there. Masha [my granddaughter] had just been born, she was in a stroller. Kostya [my grandson] was already in school by this time. Grandson, me and my daughter with Masha in a stroller – one, two, three, four people all together. I stand in a queue, Kostya runs back and forth, and when, then, my turn comes up, he is standing with me, and I say: "There are four of us, four loaves". "Where are the other two?", the woman at the counter asks. Kostya points out the window, runs and knocks [on the window]. She [my daughter] takes the child, shows the child, so that there are four of us. In this way we queued for white bread. Because there was nothing else. So it was.

JK: It must have been horrible!

Z: But me, I somehow… We had been starving during the war. I knew what hunger was. That's why I was not afraid that we would be starving. I kept telling my daughter that if there was just some kind of grain [to eat], we would survive. (Interview 31.10.2010)

Despite their similar conditions, Russian-speaking Narvans' capacities to cope with uncertainties differed greatly. People like Zinaida, thanks to their earlier experience and their tried and tested survival skills, could find the confidence to believe that even extreme times would pass, and things would get better. Many others were not able to see the uncertainty as something they could successfully handle and overcome.

Sometimes the connection between the Soviet collapse and the continuation of life under the emerging capitalism in the Estonian state is presented in public talk as if "ordinary people" had the choice to be included or to opt out. Everyone I talked to in Narva – with the exception of a few trajectories such as that of Nadezhda, presented above – presented their choice regarding their future as a zero-option. Trying to grasp what was going to happen and what options there were, apart from staying put and hoping that life would somehow go on, seemed to be the typical situation in Narva after August 1991, as I understood it.

The ethnographic insights of Ghodsee (2011), particularly based on the example of postsocialist Bulgaria, are illuminating in explaining the commonsensical

experiential way in which many people who lived under communism continue to be nostalgic about past times. Ghodsee explained this through the process by which various states handled the transition from a centrally planned economy to a free-market one, beginning with how much foreign debt each country allowed and how the state-owned assets were transferred into private ownership, decisions like this recreating the redistributive structure of postsocialist societies from scratch (ibid., 183-184). Unlike Bulgaria, Estonia is usually considered to be a model example of successful "transition". Yet the narrations of Russian-speaking Narvans, reflecting quotidian experiences in post-Soviet Estonia, reveal a different emic understanding of how the "transition" went. The hardships that they experienced, involving many material and non-material losses, of their jobs, homes, savings, social security, social networks and so on, and perhaps more importantly their having to renegotiate the moral foundations of their own worlds and surroundings, deeply challenged the possibility that they would easily approve of the transformation from a socialist to a capitalist country. The changing moral framework (see Chapter 7) forced them to reconsider the basis of dignity, deservedness, justice and so on, and as well as simply noting that society had morally changed they often also found themselves in a weaker societal position while trying to hold true to their established moral framework. This evaluation of the moral foundations accompanying the capitalist system was thus widely seen in Narva as deeply disorienting and disappointing due to its pronounced conflict with the values, ideals (see Chapter 7 on the longing for equality, friendliness and sociality of a special kind), attitudes and life possibilities my informants had garnered during their lives under the Soviet regime. The experiences of Estonian nationalism (analysed in Chapter 8) only added an additional layer of confusion and disillusionment when the moral change in society was discussed, which in the Estonian context in its public emotionality tended to overshadow the material losses of capitalism. Ghodsee (ibid., 187) explains the communist nostalgia – of Bulgarians in her case, but reportedly common across the entire socialist bloc – by pointing to the critical mismatch between the imaginings and realities of capitalism and democracy, namely the illusion that under capitalism the sufficient provision of consumer goods and the social safety nets of socialism could coexist when the reality was that "[t]hey lost their jobs while gaining the right to vote". The situation for Russian-speaking Narvans who automatically became part of a large minority with non-citizenship status in Estonia, however, turned out to be even worse; they lost their jobs but did not gain the right to vote.

9.4 Life in the town of no hope: the rise of hopelessness in post-Soviet Narva

During the whole of the post-Soviet period the inhabitants of Narva had been struggling with economic and social problems caused by the loss of the former protected Soviet market, hyper-inflation and a drop in industrial production, which gradually brought about less work and high unemployment, in fact one of the highest rates in Estonia. This was brought about directly by the complex change in the economic and political order: the shift from a planned to a market economy, which introduced border regimes with the former Soviet world and entailed switching from Eastern to Western export channels and being faced with the state's inability to reform the whole industrial sector in accordance with Western needs. Many industrial enterprises' struggles to cope, which included gradual layoffs and the closure of most of the larger ones, was portrayed by Narvans as the collapse of industrial Narva. Whereas the burning issue in Soviet Narva was housing, now it was work. According to my informants, in nearly all Narvan families there was at least one adult who had been long-term unemployed and the jobs that temporarily became available typically offered the minimum wage. These experiences can be easily supported by official figures of Statistics Estonia. In 2000 the unemployment rate in North-East Estonia was 20.7% and in 2011 nearly the same at 18.1% while the average in Estonia had dropped from 13.9% to 10.3% by 2011 (Rosenblad 2013, 109). The typical Russian-speaking Narvan was earning the minimum salary in Estonia[79]. The situation with regard to lack of jobs and low salaries in Narva resembled that in many medium- and small-sized Estonian urban places, but the change in Narva was perceived as drastic, given the town's status and opportunities in Soviet times. Day-to-day coping thus became a central issue for most Narvan families. As the situation became prolonged and no improvement could be seen, Narva transformed into a place of despair and hopelessness, and in this complicated situation the blame, as Russian-speaking Narvans saw it, was lain on one actor – the Estonian state. While critical state theory (Abrams 1988; Jessop 2016) strongly challenges the perception of a state as an actor, my interlocutors in Narva saw it as an abstract omnipresent actor, who *did* things and *had* power.

---

[79] The minimum salary in Estonia was 278 euros in 2011 (Palgainfo 2021) and the average monthly cross wage in North-east Estonia was 652 euros, with the Estonian average standing at 792 euros (Narva arvudes 2011, 16).

According to the people I spoke to in Narva, the Estonian state had failed to understand that Narva was, and should have continued to operate as, an industrial town. The industrial identity of the town goes far beyond its economic and productive dimensions. In the locals' view, industry was integral to the town as a place, and to its people and their practices, encompassing both the social and cultural spheres. Industry "naturally" constituted the wholeness of the place. Thus, in the locals' view, industry's role should not have been underestimated and sidelined as an historical temporality that was characteristic of the Soviet era and no longer relevant in a post-Soviet Estonia, and special care should have been taken by the state itself to enable the industrial town to flourish under the changed post-Soviet conditions. My informants seemed to be suggesting that if the state had decisively managed the industrial change from a planned to a market economy, "ordinary people's" lives would have been under their own control and many of the social problems and tensions that followed could have been avoided.

What happened, in fact, was the exact opposite: the state, being busy with advancing certain other regions and eagerly listening to Western advisers telling it to copy the neoliberal capitalist system (particularly its US model), left Narva's economy unattended until it was too late. It was not unusual to hear from Russian-speaking Narvans that the state intentionally *killed* Narva's industry as part of a strategy to weaken the local Russian-speaking population. These claims were strongly informed by the localised experiences of Estonian nationalism that reached far beyond the economic sphere. I was reminded on several occasions – by different people – about Estonian prime minister Mart Laar's speech during his visit to Narva in the early 1990s in which he had publicly stated something along the lines of there being no border-town in Western Europe the population of which exceeded 30,000[80]. Narvans interpreted this single sentence as the Estonian state's strategic action plan to systematically reduce Narva's predominantly Russian-speaking population from 80,000 to less than 30,000. The sentence was taken as a value-statement and was recorded in many Narvans' post-Soviet memory as the Estonian state's official stance with regard to the future of their town and its people. The

---

[80] I was not able to trace the exact event or the entire context of this phrase, and it could well be that it was a misinterpretation of Mart Laar's words, but the fact alone that the sentence took the form in which it was presented to me more than once by different people is significant enough to demonstrate the vulnerability the Russian-speakers sensed in a newly independent Estonian state in which they wanted to belong but were rejected.

phrase took on new shapes in new contexts over and over again, yet it retained a shared understanding that Russian-speaking Narvans who had moved to the town during the Soviet period were being transformed into unworthy people who the state would rather like to get rid of.

Vera (b. 1956, Russian-Polish) was a highly educated professional in Soviet times, and although she was still professionally relatively well-established in 2011 she was the only one of my informants who clearly articulated that she did not feel that she belonged to Narva and would have been happier living somewhere else. According to her, the Russian-speaking Narvans who continued to live in the town after the Soviet collapse were "stuck in Narva". In her view, staying in Narva was not a liberating choice for many, but a matter of life circumstances that needed to be accepted because of a lack of better opportunities elsewhere. Vera illustrated this by way of the example of young professional workers in the Baltijets military factory who in the mid-1990s, immediately after sensing that there would be no future for them in Narva once the whole industry completely collapsed – only a matter of time – packed their belongings and left. This generally meant moving away from Estonia. When I asked Vera why most people stayed when it was obvious that industrial Narva would not survive the economic transformation, she asked in response, "And where could they have gone?" She then explained that "the best part of Narva"[81] was quickly able to assess the situation and their chances and take the necessary steps. Thanks to their vision and connections, they were able to move and establish themselves elsewhere, mostly in more lively and progressive urban centres in Russia. But the majority stayed, because of a lack of vision and the necessary social capital (cf. Pilkington 1998). As far as Vera herself was concerned, there were a couple of realistic chances to relocate – either moving back to her previous hometown of Moscow or going to Canada, where she had the necessary connections too. However, as she was living with her dependent mother who had become seriously ill, neither of these plans was realised. Vera did not see the situation in Narva improving even after more than two decades had passed. On the contrary, in her view Narva was and would continue to be a town with no future, from which young people escaped, or should escape, to ensure better futures for themselves. In expressing this bitter projection of the present and the future in Narva, Vera leant on her subjective understanding of feeling at home somewhere, which was about

---

[81] The "best" here could be interpreted as "the most privileged" or "the wisest".

being able to sense that she was considered equal among others – no one being seen as better or worse, but just the same. To all Russian-speakers, regardless of generation, contemporary Narva was all about degeneration, injustice and a continuing atmosphere of ethnic hostility, Vera concluded (Field notes 04.03.2011).

Vera's perception of Russian-speakers' situation in post-Soviet Narva reveals at least two types of dynamics. First, the Soviet-era Russian-speakers were differently positioned in Narva with regard to how they were able to adequately foresee their futures in the town as well as how they estimated their own ability to take action to change their future prospects by altering once again their migration trajectories. Second, their sense of home in Narva became affected by negative sentiments related to a feeling of "stuck(ed)ness" (Hage 2009; Jefferson, Turner & Jensen 2019), as a result both of their losing control over the shape of their future and of the increasing sense of marginalisation in post-Soviet Estonian society.

My Russian-speaking interlocutors frequently shared the perception that the Estonian state was weak because of its small size and because sovereignty existed only *de jure* but not *de facto*, due to its being economically and politically too dependent on hegemonic global actors (i.e. NATO, meaning mainly the USA, and the largest member states of the EU). This seemed to be their critical reaction to the Estonian state's striving for sovereignty – its separation from the Soviet Union – which had cost the Estonian Russian-speakers their equal, if not superior, position in society and, in their view, had ironically primarily resulted in dependency on supra-state organisations. They thus felt cheated by the Estonian state, which they saw as having given up its long-awaited sovereignty as soon as it became independent. As much as the Russian-speakers disapproved of the Estonian state's weakness, there were other of its features – the injustice, indifference and hostility directed towards them as the Russian-speaking population through the state's political projects of belonging (analysed in Chapter 8) – that they experienced in their everyday, and thus resented even more. As a consequence, Russian-speaking Narvans often expressed that they had lost control of their lives, becoming lower-class citizens in Estonia and incapable of knowing what to expect from their futures in general. Importantly, they saw it as the state's role and responsibility to take action – something they had not seen happening in post-Soviet Estonia – to fix their vulnerable situation in society, which concerned their weaker status and worse opportunities in the Estonian labour market, as noted also in Krumm's study (2019, 48, 51).

Russian-speaking Narvans seemed to only loosely relate to the Estonian state entity, feeling that they had been left alone to adapt to the dramatic changes that the remaking of the state and society and the shift to a market economy had brought about. My informants had experienced these transformations mostly negatively, although for some people opportunities had opened up such as the proliferation of small-scale semi-illegal cross-border entrepreneurship, as mentioned by Pfoser (2015, 1697). Furthermore, Russian-speaking Narvans saw themselves as a marginalised population living on a piece of land that for them was the main locus of their lives, their everything, but was considered a periphery by the Estonian state. They were well aware that many Estonians called their town "the Estonian Russia". This could not have been interpreted as anything but a pejorative association that reflected Estonians' sense of alienation regarding Narva. This was in relation not to the territory itself but to the social space dominated by the Russian-speakers whose either pro-Russian or stuck-in-Soviet mentality – as the Estonians frequently saw it – distanced Russian-speaking Narvans from everything "Estonian", including the space they were seen to be unjustifiably inhabiting. This new reality of feeling marginal was in stark contrast with Russian-speaking Narvans' earlier experience of being at the centre of things, or at least close to the centre, in the sense not only of being located geographically close to Leningrad and being part of the desired Soviet West, but of having a certain status and perceiving themselves as fully embodying "socialist modernity" while the ambiguous spaces of marginality were reserved for those belonging to remote villages or for Soviet society's total outcasts (Brandtstädter 2007, 139).

Russian-speakers' self-perceived marginalisation was also fundamentally linked to their sense of inferiority compared with ethnic Estonians in both present-day Narva and the whole of Estonia, not only as a result of a number of state policies that were unfavourable towards them, but also in relation to public attitudes, expressed in the media and sometimes experienced in face-to-face encounters with Estonians themselves. Since such encounters in Narva were few, most of these interactions took place outside of the town, when people moved. Russian-speaking Narvans often expressed their growing sense of precariousness and unfamiliarity when geographically moving Westwards in Estonia. Many people were perfectly able to locate the boundaries of their home-space, of the Russian language space where they felt secure and comfortable, with no threat of being suddenly oppressed or insulted by the words or actions of nationalistically minded Estonians. This homely social

and geographical space extended beyond Narva, usually ending about 40 kilometres to the West, beyond the town of Jõhvi, and it reflected sensory experiences related to the decreasing usage of the Russian language as people travelled further as well as their lack of experience of so-called Estonian places outside their North-East Estonia region.

The despair of the situation in Narva was captured in a short conversation I had with a local bus driver one early spring morning. I was sitting on an empty bus filling in my field diary while waiting at the terminus for the time of departure. The driver, observing my writing, expressed curiosity about what I was writing about. Hearing that I was writing a research diary, he then asked what the research was about. I explained that I was an anthropologist doing research about Narva and its people. The driver immediately lost his initial enthusiasm, asking in return whether I had noticed the faces of the people in the town? The people look sullen, angry and withdrawn; no one ever smiles. They do not smile because the situation in the town is miserable; people are not allowed to live and work normally. If there were work, life and joy would follow. Before he ended the conversation, he added that "for many years plenty of research about Narva has been done, researchers come and go, but nothing has changed. It's all useless because nothing changes" (Field notes 17.03.2011). There was a huge gap between the existing difficulties of everyday life and people's imagining of how normal life should be, let alone that they could hope for anything beyond normal. Also, the fact that the bus driver placed his expectations on someone else, the state – or in this particular case on the researchers – clearly indicated the local expectation that help should arrive from outside.

In sum, the outcome of the shift from a Soviet to a post-Soviet Estonia seemed to have given rise to plenty of social and political struggles that had led to a sense of hopelessness, both in terms of the Russian-speakers' personal life chances and the future of their hometown. There was a shared agreement among my elderly informants, those who had seen the development of Narva over the many Soviet decades, that their town had changed from "paradise" to a town of no hope. The latter image of a "town of no hope" summarised two sentiments. First, the "nobody needs us" feeling, which was explained earlier and, second, the loss of hopes and future prospects related to the survival of an industrial Narva. While the Estonian state was the first to stand accused of causing these effects, the landscape of emerging hopelessness in present-day Narva was certainly more complex. To put it

mildly, Russian-speaking Narvans were not happy with the Estonian state, but they were certainly not happy with the local authorities either.

9.5   Relocating hopes and reconfiguring home-spaces in old age

Compared with during the Soviet past, the elderly Russian-speaking Narvans lived considerably more sedentary lives during post-Soviet times. This was not only due to the reduced economic possibilities and the cross-border politics of the states that impeded people's movement; the rising immobility was also connected to certain stages in people's life-course. Three quarters of my informants in the town were either of retirement age already or were due to retire in a few years' time. Given the relatively old age of my informants, it was in some ways expected and normal that they had become less mobile in recent decades. While most of the Narvans I talked to could not even imagine their own mobile trajectory extending Westwards from Estonia, some of them carefully analysed their own capacities for such mobility and admitted their limitations. They recognised that growing up and making crucial adult-life choices under the Soviet system had provided them with skills and resources that could not always be used in a capitalist country. Their career trajectories and life chances in a post-Soviet Estonia, and in Western capitalist countries at large, were thus significantly limited due to a major part of their working life having unfolded in Soviet space. For instance, married couple Gennady and Valentina (both b. 1950, Russian) were absolutely convinced that, had they been 20 years younger they could have searched for job (and maybe business) opportunities in other countries in the West. The reality, however, was that everything came too late for them: the Soviet collapse, joining the EU and common labour markets, and learning and practising foreign language skills. Nevertheless, they were not embittered, but rather constantly reassessed their situation and sought to enjoy the rest of their life according to the standards they set for themselves.

My elderly informants seemed to be generally satisfied with the fact that their daily routes were fixed and were becoming increasingly limited to their own hometown, being territorially constrained and constituted by a set of familiar urban and rural practices. Apart from a rare trip to Tallinn or Tartu for health reasons, many lived truly sedentary lives in Narva. For Margarita (b. 1955, Russian), the

home-centred life of elderly women in Narva was a sign of backwardness – a Soviet relic that she wished would change but did not see happening anytime soon. She described to me her visits to Tartu, known as the Estonian university town, for her job and told me about her routine of visiting a particular cafeteria just to enjoy an atmosphere where old women got dressed up and gathered to meet their friends over a cup of coffee and cake. This was a scene that could not be witnessed in Narva, in fact in no Russian town, because in Soviet culture women met and chatted in their tiny kitchens. Elderly women "naturally" belonged in kitchens and dachas and on benches located outside apartment buildings. In a situation where the population of the town was constantly decreasing, the birth rate was low and women lived 10 years longer than men[82], post-Soviet Narva conveyed more and more the image of a town of elderly women, which certainly had its gendered peculiarities that affected home-making in Narva.

The gendered nature of the town and the predominance of elderly women had implications, for example, for how the mobility and caring functions constituted each other and affected home-making practices. This can be seen as connected to the underlying cultural logic with regard to age and gender that began far back in pre-revolutionary times in Russia, survived Soviet times and continues to be reproduced in post-Soviet Narva. This logic is that women in Russian culture, at some point in their life, usually when they reach retirement age, start defining themselves as old and focusing solely on fulfilling social roles that are associated with being old (Tiaynen 2013). This implies their seeing themselves as already complete in terms of education, skills and aspirations and their focusing fully on caring functions. Accepting the fact that the main function of women in elderly life is caring for others until others start caring for them means restraining themselves from all enjoyment outside the family and the home. Women in Narva thus stopped projecting their own futures and instead focused fully on those of the younger generations.

In relation to the changing opportunities and mobility in Narva, I argue thus that where elderly Narvans are concerned it was not the decreasing individual physical mobility that was significant in the tense relationship between the inhabitants and the state. Although relatively immobile themselves, my informants envisioned and

---

[82] At the age of 50, there were 10% more women in the town than men, and this figure reached 80% by the time they were 85 (Narva arvudes 2017).

assessed the opportunities that opened up or closed in relation to mobility through the mobile trajectories of their children and grandchildren. This is in line also with a recent direction in anthropological studies of old age in which people who are getting old are increasingly seen not from the point of view of their aging but from a life-course perspective. This new perspective suggests that people, as they get old, do not constitute a distinct and easily bounded category but should be seen as an inclusive category of people who continue to participate in intragenerational relations and various institutions, of the state and beyond (Danely & Lynch 2015, 3).

Although my elderly informants in our conversations ceaselessly lamented their own considerably worsened situation in contemporary Estonia compared with in Soviet times, they had nevertheless usually come to terms with it. They often stressed that the situation in Russia or other former Soviet republics was even worse and as they – with a few exceptions – were not able to imagine their lives outside the post-Soviet space, they could only associate their remaining life with Narva. Economically speaking, people of retirement age had the greatest stability of all Narvans. Even though the average monthly pension in 2011 amounted to only 271 euros, pensioners were often the only group of people who could hope for a regular and predictable income. They had already purchased all their material necessities, they typically had no loans to be repaid and they had mastered the skill of living thriftily. It was also very commonplace that despite their scarce income they financially supported other family members. As one of my informants, Kristina, said about the resources available to pensioners in Narva, "[i]f you happen to have the good fortune to live as a retired couple – this [in terms of a stable income] is really something!" (Field notes 11.04.2011).

In my research, the fact that grandparents needed to take care of their grandchildren and provide both material and emotional support to both their children and their grandchildren did not usually appear as an intergenerational conflict or tension from a care perspective, thus not questioning the implied emotional solidarity between generations that has been addressed in other postsocialist contexts (Krzyżowski 2011). Instead, at the centre of the problem in Narva was a mismatch between the expected role of the capitalist state in guaranteeing families' ability to cope financially and local ideals that implied self-sufficient nuclear families. The self-sufficient nuclear family household was the desired mode of living that Soviet people, including Narvans, had strived for during several decades of state socialism, but it had remained out of reach for many,

primarily due to a housing shortage (Attwood 2010) but also because of the extensive need to fix the shortcomings of the Soviet "working mother contract" through the daily assistance of grandparents and other relatives (Temkina & Rotkirch 1997; Tiaynen 2013). In contrast, although individual or nuclear family housing became freely available on the market in post-Soviet Narva, the structural unemployment and low incomes compared with the basic living costs made it materially unaffordable for many, against all expectations. In neither of the state systems, thus, was the state able to provide material security to Russian-speaking Narvans and due to this mismatch many Narvans ended up in undesired long-lasting generational dependency in material terms. This reality in the post-Soviet context must thus be seen as a complaint against an incapable state that could not meet its subjects' expectations of material security.

In relation to the fulfilment of different roles throughout the life-cycle, Russian-speaking Narvans continue to value paid work over all other roles in their productive lives. Although the elderly need to economise with their state pensions to make ends meet each month, my retired informants did not so much resent their low pensions as the low salaries of those who were in work. When I asked about the main differences between Soviet and contemporary society, Nikita (b. 1938, Russian) highlighted a paradox in the logic of the functioning of the current state when it came to how productive and unproductive work was valued:

> If I need to compare what is better and what is worse… well, let me tell you what the biggest paradox is now – when I receive more money on a pension than I received when I worked. This is a fact. Such a disgrace should never happen! How can a pension be bigger than the minimum salary that is paid to our workers? This shows to some extent something [wrong] with politics and the economy. How can one get more from retirement than from working? My friends and relatives need to go to work for eight hours every day. I do nothing, but for some reason they pay me more. My pension is rather small, so that means they are paid very little. It should not be like that. (Interview 19.01.2011)

From the perspective of the elderly Narvans, the younger generations were experiencing unemployment, low pay and a lack of dignified jobs, which can be understood as a devaluing of their potential labour in post-Soviet Narva. In the view of the elderly, in this situation it was impossible for the young to fulfil their productive roles in life, something that directly translated into a sense of hopelessness with regard to building meaningful futures in the town.

Another unproductive role in Narva continued to be that of taking care of young children at home. I often heard the expression "sitting at home" (*sidyt' doma*) in connection with young women's roles. This expression, describing the situation or stage in a woman's life when she was taking care of young children at home – considered unproductive labour – and not doing a paid job, was used equally to refer to the context today and that in Soviet times. In this way, the Soviet-era attitudes certainly persisted in the town even two decades later. In post-Soviet Narva, female factory work had been gradually replaced by low-paid service sector jobs. This usually meant working as a shop assistant and receiving the minimum wage. In addition to a low salary, it also meant irregular working hours and shifts that often ended late in the evening, leaving no time for family duties. Although shift work was very familiar to Narvans because of their experience of factory work, the emerging post-Soviet standards for family life and particularly women's responsibilities in meeting them were no longer compatible with working in this way. Kristina (b. 1976, Russian) had been unemployed for several years when we met in 2010. She made it clear that it had been her choice to "sit at home" even though her only child was not that young anymore. For many families, a mother *sitting* at home was the only reasonable option. The emerging image of young women in Narva as home-based did not help to improve their status in the town. The old men in post-Soviet Narva were dead, the old women could enjoy their status as family supporters, and the young men were both pitied because of the difficulties of their working life, which often involved working far from home, and valued because of the efforts they made to support their families financially (apart from those men who had given up and did nothing apart from drinking and having social problems). Young women, in comparison, seemed to be just "naturally" part of the home as an abode, locally bound and lacking prospects. Therefore, the young women, when they stayed in the town and took low-paid jobs, were the most dependent of all, on their mothers and grandmothers for help with caring for the family, and on their husbands as the main breadwinners. Therefore, it is no wonder they wished to escape from Narva in order to choose other paths and achieve their dreams, and they often did just that.

Although in the end there was a degree of acceptance regarding the socioeconomic situation in their hometown, Russian-speakers never felt that the situation of "stuckedness" should be accepted by their children and grandchildren. When the state failed in providing the young with jobs and futures locally, mobility remained the only option; however, this acceptance did not come without its

ambiguities. Most of my informants had themselves migrated as young adults so that they could have a say in shaping their own lives to the extent possible under Soviet rule. They typically deemed their own migration trajectories a positive outcome. Yet, when their children and grandchildren needed to consider migration options in post-Soviet Estonia, migration overwhelmingly figured not as a desired or even a neutral solution but a forced one, something that had to be taken up in a situation of local insufficiencies and of disinterest on the part of the state in providing viable futures locally. In contrast to their own decisions and experiences at a young age, elderly Russian-speaking Narvans wanted local, sedentary livelihoods for their children and grandchildren. Outmigration from their hometown, either to the Estonian capital Tallinn or any Western country, was perceived as a rupture, while lives connected to Narva were envisioned in terms of how things should be if the state were "normal" (Jansen 2015). Mobility, however, entailed the possibility that younger generations could achieve the futures they deserved and aspired to, while staying put would have meant a permanent decline.

In this intergenerational context, hopes and futures in post-Soviet Narva often took on a transnational shape. Within Estonia, hopes related to better employment opportunities could be associated only with Tallinn, and many of my informants had children or grandchildren who had moved abroad either temporarily or more permanently. Some looked for better opportunities in the Russian metropoles, but most headed to better-off Western countries. Free movement in the Schengen area, and the fully fledged rights to work and mobility within the EU that came into effect in 2006, reconfigured the future for many younger Narvans. Family members' temporary or permanent migration to the European West had solved some problems and presented others, but the movement of the younger Estonian-born Russian-speaking generations to Western countries was typically considered and endorsed as the only possible path to improving their lives. Thus, it could be concluded that the hopes of the Soviet-era Russian-speakers from Soviet times up to the present had been relocated from Narva to EU countries (most often the UK, Ireland, Finland and Sweden).

In addition to this, hopes related to the educational paths of young people were increasingly transnational, and financing the desired education often constituted an intergenerational project in which both parents and grandparents cooperated and pooled resources. In fact, families often had to finance their children's studies in Estonian universities due to the high probability of Narva's Russian-speaking youth

ending up in paid education despite the free degrees that were available in the country[83]. Many young Narvans aspired to attend universities in English-speaking countries, which became a particularly costly investment in the futures of the youth. Extra language courses (especially in English) were paid for, loans and extra jobs were taken on, and even properties were sold to pay tuition fees. My elderly informants frequently recalled how they had helped to support or continued to support such studies financially whenever they were able to save something. The educational paths of the younger generation were thus both a great source of stress and an area of life in which significant material and cooperation efforts were made in order to ensure better futures.

While the elderly in Narva gained significance among their families and close ones thanks to being the only reliable providers due to their stable incomes as well as through fulfilling their care functions, I often sensed that in some ways they experienced a double deprivation on a symbolic level in their relationship with the state. One dimension of this was related to their perception of how the Estonian state devalued their own lifetime of working and dwelling in their hometown, and another was the deep sense of disgrace they experienced regarding the state's devaluing of the potential of their offspring in post-Soviet Estonia. Vera (b. 1956, Russian-Polish), for example, strongly resented the fact that the Soviet-era resettlers had been working their whole lives to build up Narva and contribute to the prosperity of Soviet Estonia while the Estonian state simply overlooked their efforts and, moreover, treated their children and grandchildren in an ungrateful manner. There was thus a strong feeling that the Soviet workers' contribution to Soviet Estonia should have been treated as part of the national capital (cf. Hage 2003) in post-Soviet Estonia and transformed into gratitude and respect. In question here is the Bourdieusian notion of symbolic capital that gives meaning and a future

---

[83] During the post-Soviet era, Estonia has not managed to resolve the issue of providing equal opportunities through education to both Estonian- and Russian-speakers. While Russian-speakers have vocally demanded that Russian-language primary and secondary education must be retained, Estonia has been moving towards a system of all-Estonian schools, offering in practice incomplete temporary mixed-language solutions in Russian schools. These transitional "meantime" solutions have been in place for three decades already and have resulted in structural language-based educational inequality. Many Russian-speakers leave the lower educational levels with practically no or weak Estonian language skills, which seriously disadvantages them in the secondary and tertiary level state-financed free education that is provided only in Estonian. As an alternative, many private higher education institutions provide education in Russian, which means that Russian-speakers have needed to invest more materially in their education.

perspective to life through social importance. The suffering of elderly Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans can be thus summarised in the words of Bourdieu (2000, 241): "There is no worse dispossession, no worse privation, perhaps, than that of the losers in the symbolic struggle for recognition, for access to a socially recognised social being, in a word, to humanity". Leaning on Hage's (2003, 17-18) interpretation of Bourdieu, it could be argued that the state's failure to distribute hope in Narva was in fact reflected in a loss of symbolic capital, especially among the town's elderly Russian-speakers, or in experiences of "emptiness", which belongs to Dzenovska's (2018, 2020) vocabulary.

9.6   Discussion

In this final chapter, I attempted to show through the experiences of Soviet-era Russian-speakers in Narva how places and their related imaginings can drastically transform in a relatively short time. My aim was to reveal how Hage's (1997) notion of "home as a space of possibilities" runs as a red thread through making sense of the emotional turmoil and daily struggles related to the political and socioeconomic transformation that Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans have undergone from Soviet to post-Soviet times. I saw Narvans' experiences of this transformation captured in paradise metaphors, an emic notion associated with past experiences and, in grim contrast, a profound sense of the present and future Narva as a "town of no hope", which in vernacular language was expressed as "[our town is] not useful for anybody" and "nobody needs us". The drastic change that is strikingly visible in these notions marks a complete transformation that concerns not only a place and the livelihoods therein but people's perceptions of themselves in that place, a fundamental mental shift from a position "where we are certain of our place in social structures to the extent that we can actually make plans for the future, both near and distant" (Löfving 2009, 150) to one where people become completely uncertain about what to expect from the future and whether there is a future they can meaningfully relate to at all (Hage 1997, 102ff; Bauman 1999, 2007).

After ethnographically observing that there was a lack of hope in Narva, I asked my informants what hope was conditioned by before, in normal circumstances so to speak, and what exactly prevented people from feeling hopeful in the present day

and from seeing their futures in a positive light, as well as what this all did to the Russian-speakers' sense of home in relation to Narva. To gain insights into these aspects, the chapter dealt with trying to grasp both the impact of the socioeconomic circumstances – and accordingly their transformation – on experiences of home and the variety of sociotemporal reasonings directed towards building futures.

Although Russian-speaking Narvans retrospectively generally perceived the Soviet state's influence on their lives as strict and controlling, it did provide them with a space where they could start out on trajectories to improve their lives. In many cases, settling in Narva brought with it a better life. By the end of the Soviet days, Russian-speakers usually perceived their lives as relatively successful, especially compared with the circumstances of their relatives and friends living outside Soviet Estonia, which in itself signified moving forwards in life. In Narva, surrounded by other Soviet resettlers employed mostly in local industries as skilled workers and dwelling in microdistricts, people had a sense of living up to the idea of local Soviet "normalcy", no more and no less.

The dominant trope in the experiences of Russian-speaking Narvans over the more than two decades of the post-Soviet period had been uncertainty. This was composed of a variety of interconnected components: the decline of industries, the loss of jobs, financial struggles, alcohol and drug problems, falling out of social security structures, and feelings of inferiority, discrimination and injustice, which were discussed in detail in Chapter 8. Furthermore, socioeconomic reasonings were related to the moral foundations and socialities set in motion after the dissolution of the socialist world (Chapter 7). Many of these social and economic problems had affected my interlocutors and their close ones directly, but most significant was the extended period of time during which they had lived with the anticipation that at any moment something even worse would happen. Among my interlocutors, there was a well-established expectation that negative events would once again befall them or their close ones and permanently wreck their chances to normalise their lives again, let alone build better futures, while the rest of the Western world – in which the Narvans saw themselves firmly belonging after the Soviet fall – seemed to be moving forwards in life or at least living much less problematically.

When the experiences of past and present and anticipations about futures were narrated in Narva, comparisons were drawn in the intersections of many different contexts and temporalities. Local change tended to be narrated through dichotomous comparisons – the time before and after the Soviet fall – which

neglected the perspective of the past as a process and presented it instead as a generally positive nostalgic backdrop, idealising and valuing everything related to the Soviet past and condemning all that came after socialism. At the same time, the current situation was assessed by drawing comparisons between the local context in Narva and the imagined situation in some of the idealised Western countries as well as in other former Soviet countries, which was highly imagination-based due to the lack of direct contact in most cases. This tendency to rather arbitrarily shift between various contexts and give a large amount of space to imaginative work makes understanding the sociotemporal realities in Narva a highly complex and ambiguous undertaking.

My elderly interlocutors' dominant narratives depicted post-Soviet Narva as a place where all the established structures had been dismantled and the governing state had provided nothing in exchange to counter the insecurities and growing emotional and physical emptiness, which produced an increasing sense of hopelessness. After the restoration of an independent Estonia and the transformation to neoliberal capitalism, Russian-speakers had hoped that the hardship would be temporary, but two decades on it had become clear that the uncertainties and suffering had become an enduring state of being. The by-products of this uncertainty in post-Soviet Narva were the growing sense of emptiness, both physical and emotional, and a sense of stuckedness and inferiority, all of which negatively affected the positive projections of future and the sense of home in the town. The Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans maintained that there was only one entity to blame for this overwhelmingly negative change in their livelihoods: the state. Uncertainties are differently perceived and managed under different state conditions, and therefore states can have better and worse strategies for securing futures and instilling hopes in their citizens. As seen in Russian-speaking Narvans' narratives, the temporal evaluations indicated that the past state had been able to provide people with hope for the future while the current one had taken the hope away. In post-Soviet Narva, home emerged thus more as a "struggle", both with a state and against large-scale political changes (Löfving 2009, 150). These "struggles for home" in Jansen and Löfving's (2009) words involve a "contest over how places are endowed, to different degrees, with hope, with a capacity to control and to project a sense of possibility" (ibid., 3).

From a comparative perspective, it is fascinating how the Russian-speaking Narvans' awareness and voicing of this struggle has drastically increased from Soviet

to post-Soviet times as the relations of power have become redefined against the interests of Russian-speakers in post-Soviet Narva. Despite their complicated negotiations with the Estonian state for the right to define their home in Estonia, a process that involved a variety of fears, resentments and anxieties, the sense of unhomeliness in Estonia and Narva (cf. Löfving 2009, 163) did not become so unbearable as to invite serious unrest, violence or escape as it has in many other places in the world. Some Narvans calculated that it was better for them to put up with this situation at the cost of their own life becoming stuck and to focus instead on increasing the opportunities for their children. By investing in education, especially in English language courses and saving money for tuition fees, they hoped to avoid the nationalistic realities in Estonia and prepare their children for what they assumed would be more equal opportunities somewhere abroad. Others, who continued to perceive the realities in Estonia through the lens of what happened in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union, concluded that, no matter what, life in Estonia was still better and more tranquil. Yet others encapsulated themselves in Narva, living very locally in their relatively convenient "Russian town" environment and closing their ears and eyes to the discomfort that lurked only "in Estonia".

I showed in this chapter how Russian-speakers in Narva dealt with the post-Soviet confusion in their local context, how the Soviet and post-Soviet states were seen as diametric opposites in instilling hopes in their subjects, and how the transformation of hopes had an essential role in the Russian-speakers contemporary sense of being at home in post-Soviet Narva. I argue that the changing landscape of hopes helps to capture the micro-understandings of what the dynamic between the people and the state is and should be. When Narvans point to the reality that their town has become empty, they mean that those activities that take the town further into the future have ceased. In this sense, what they are referring to is echoed in what Jackson (1995, 148) has said: "sense of home is grounded less in a place per se than in the activity that goes on in a place".

The sense of home, informed by everyday practices and tied to economic inequalities and social and symbolic deprivation, but primarily the Estonian nationalist discourse, had acquired a remarkably political undertone over the two decades. When the question of the belonging of an entire population can be addressed at the state level, home-making is placed at the centre of a political discourse. The more the inequalities and sense of deprivation increased in post-

Soviet Narva, the more intertwined became the issues of political belonging with the economic suffering in Russian-speakers' frustration with the state. While some individuals in Narva, just as everywhere in the postsocialist space, were able to accommodate themselves quickly to the changing political and economic climate and take great advantage of it (e.g. Dunn 2008; Verdery 1996), the majority found themselves in an ongoing struggle and a crisis of hope. Russian-speaking Narvans, partly due to global complexity and partly because of their complicated relationship with the Estonian state, formally and emotionally, have difficulties in redefining what they can hope for from the future in the first place. They no longer see significant social change that would directly and positively have an impact on their lives. When complex uncertainties linked to vast societal transformations occur, in order to move forwards in life people must find new ways to build their futures and anchor their hopes. The narratives I heard in Narva reverberated with the lack of practical ways people found to overcome the uncertainties in such a way that a hopeful, satisfying future in the town could be projected.

I argued in this chapter that the landscape of hopes and futures in Narva has changed, but not only because of badly managed neoliberalism and nationalism. Hopes are also dependent on age, life-course and duration of dwelling in migrant's life-course. The majority of my informants, having reached retirement age, had particularly negatively loaded views of the future. But while desiring change in state politics, and in the state and the mainstream population's attitudes, they did not project the effects of this on themselves but rather on their offspring's futures. They pinned their hopes on positive change happening for future generations. Importantly, we should not disregard the different positionality of Russian-speaking Narvans as mobile versus emplaced subjects in Soviet and post-Soviet times, which underlines different dynamics in adjusting to change. Whereas in the Soviet era, Russian-speaking Narvans were positioned as resettlers who arrived and adapted to the surrounding opportunities in order to strive for better futures, in post-Soviet Narva they were already emplaced and needed to be on the receiving end of changes and to accommodate to them in a more imposed form.

During the 25 years since the Soviet Union had fallen apart, Russian-speaking Narvans stayed rooted in, and in that sense loyal to, their hometown, while perceiving the Estonian state's actions towards them as unintelligible, hostile and incompatible with their various expectations. They often portrayed the Estonian state as consciously acting against their interests. The post-Soviet Estonian state was

perceived as dependent, indifferent and unjust while the former Soviet state stood as omnipresent, just and caring – and this contradictory image continues to produce hopelessness in Russian-speakers' envisioning of their futures in Narva. It is possible, however, that the common experiences of the Soviet past and the failing Estonian state, influenced by the current global economic and political flows, have resulted in an informal local resistance to the state's absence that enables Narva's inhabitants to reach beyond the sense of hopelessness. By pinning their hopes completely on the younger generations, the Soviet-era Russian-speakers actively work on attaching new meanings to their belonging in Narva while at the same time not weakening the sense of this belonging. Thus, the hope that was once oriented towards a specific locality – Narva – has not disappeared but has been relocated, producing visions of desirable life trajectories between many localities.

Furthermore, the overall feeling of hopelessness in Narva was also shaped by global mobility flows, involving Eastwards prospects that became restricted with the dismantling of the previously united Soviet mobile space, and new opportunities that theoretically opened up Westwards but remained largely unavailable to Soviet-era Russian-speakers. The opportunities for mobility in post-Soviet Narva became subject to a high level of stratification along the lines of citizenship, age, language, and material and health conditions. Similarly to in the Estonian titular nation, broader-minded and enterprising Russian-speakers initially hoped that their image of the West, which represented an ideal liberal-democratic normality, embodying ideas of success, rule of law and material plenty, would materialise in Estonia. After a while they noticed that their imagined future had turned out differently and they lost hope for a better future (cf. Jansen 2015; Greenberg 2011).

Hage and Papadopoulos' (2004) theorisation of the connections between mobility and hope, reflecting the universal need to move forwards in life, is very pertinent in the Soviet context, but today, at a time of global warming, hopes for children in many places in the world may not be as much about ways of enhancement in life, but to simply be able to maintain the level of life as it was for their parents. It would be thus fascinating to explore how the younger generation of Narvans, born in post-Soviet Estonia and those growing up there now, perceive the connection between mobility and futures, and what kind of futures would be desirable locally.

CONCLUSIONS

The research that informs this dissertation has been motivated by my personal desire to bring to the surface and do justice to some of the experiences of Russian-speakers who have dwelled in Narva during and after Soviet times. I feel that far too often the discussion about the position of Russian-speakers in Estonia has been one-sided, dominated by the Estonian nationalist views officially promoted by the state, endorsed by the national media and reiterated by the wider public. In more recent history, two events have signalled a need for a better understanding of the past, present and future aspirations of Russian-speaking Narvans. The first of these was the removal of the so-called Bronze Soldier monument in April 2007, prior to my 2010-2011 fieldwork, and the second was the Crimean conflict that began in 2014, well after my deeper engagement with Narva had ended. Both events highlighted the highly politicised and unresolved tensions in the relationship between the Estonian state and a particular segment of its subjects with mobile backgrounds: the Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans. Ironically enough, this was despite the overwhelming majority of Narvans having had nothing to do with these events.

I chose to investigate the experiences of Russian-speaking Narvans through the notion of home to show how the politics of home underpins in profound ways the relationship between people who have been mobile subjects and their states. In this thesis, the experiences that Narvans voiced to me through their narratives in life-story interviews and in the many conversations that followed, and which were further explored during my year-long fieldwork living among Russian-speaking Narvans, have been conceptualised as *practices of home-making*, albeit being considered stories of belonging by others. The focus, even in the life-story interviews, was on *doing* homes through everyday practice rather than listening to what people think about homes and belonging. Home in this research was a locus at which my informants directed their efforts of dwelling and through which they channelled their aspirations and hopes for the future. Home had many forms, oscillating between the very material and the emotional and symbolic, its meanings connected to political and socioeconomic dimensions.

The formation of the Russian-speaking population in Soviet Narva was essentially triggered by people's hopes in time and space. These hopes were both driven and restricted by the Soviet mobility system, yet they were also embedded in wider social and cultural imaginaries, such as the "Western" values and lifestyles associated with Soviet Estonia. The circulating hopes integrated Narva into the home-spaces of Russian-speakers who came from elsewhere, and gradually made the town the main locus from which their practices of home-making, encompassing emotional, material, political and symbolic dimensions, radiated out towards other places. The five empirical chapters of the thesis disentangle, from different but related perspectives, how the Soviet-era Russian-speakers have dwelled in Narva, made the place their own, and later experienced contestations and uncertainties of various kinds that have made them renegotiate their relationship with their hometown, with the Estonian state, and with places that have remained outside the nation-state, behind international borders. The process of homing in Narva involved urban dwelling in Soviet apartment blocks (Chapter 5); digging the land and living in dachas in the surroundings of Narva (Chapter 6); developing a local sociality with moral groundings (Chapter 7); relating to the state, institutions and other people locally and nationally, as well as translocally and transnationally (Chapters 8); and struggling for survival, reproduction and futures under a neoliberal capitalist post-Soviet state and the impact of global economies (Chapter 9). The list of themes and angles through which I approached home-making in Narva is highly selective, led by my own and my interlocutors' highly subjective considerations, and is definitely not limited to what is presented. My choice was guided by the themes that prevailed in my ethnographic material, both quantitatively and in their emotional intensity.

One of the main arguments of this thesis is that home-making in Narva is a complex, historically grounded, multi-layered process that can be best understood by focusing on the intersection of the institutional and the personal. This means scrutinising, on the one hand, how the states frame the space of opportunities – possibilities that feed the hopes for better futures – and, on the other hand, how "ordinary people" take action in this space with a view to their own futures. Whereas mobility can be conceptualised as a relatively straightforward demographic event, homes are complex worlds of both practice and imagination where the material, emotional, political and symbolic aspects of dwelling and relating to places, institutions and other people come together in unique ways, and where a plethora of sociotemporal meanings and associations emerge. Homes are constituted by lived

experiences of dwelling and relating to places and other people as well as by what is anticipated; and meanings shift and transform over time as new experience accumulates. As we saw in Narva, the more uncertainties people experienced and the more pathways that were theoretically possible to imagine in the circumstances of global economic flows and international mobility, the more restricted future options appeared, and the more controversial feelings related to home became. Home is a complex matrix of sentiments produced by the experience of situations in both the recent and distant past; and state is a shortcut for the webs of power that are responsible for people's sense of possibilities, the hope for better futures. Once people are socialised into grids (Jansen 2014), they keep looking to the state ideologically, even if they are opposed to its workings both technically and sociotemporally (Jansen 2015).

Another aim of this thesis was to make sense of how and why the nationalistically and locally oriented expectations in the matrix of resettlers/migrants, state, place and affiliation appeared to be in conflict. Relations between the state and its subjects were not the original point of interest of this study. The ethnographic data that I gathered in 2010-2011, however, soon started to indicate that it was precisely the ill-fated and somehow incomprehensible relationship with the state that hollowed out and complicated Narvans' dwelling in present-day Narva, a place where their everyday lives had unfolded, in most cases, over several decades already and to which they felt emotionally strongly attached, yet unsatisfied. Negotiations between the state and Russian-speaking Narvans run through two chapters of this thesis, in an attempt to shed light on this complex matter from several angles. In Chapter 8, I inquired into the relationship between Russian-speaking Narvans and the post-Soviet Estonian state and looked for emic understandings, concluding that Narvans developed two different kinds of emotional orientation, one directed locally within Narva and the other at the Estonian state. I addressed Narvans' concerns about the practices of the state through the framework of politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011), and showed how Russian-speakers resented how the Estonian state did not grant them the position of equal subjects in the making of the Estonian state but treated them instead as second-class citizens whose role was to abide by the principles of an Estonian nation-state led by ethnic Estonians. The interplay between nationalist politics, language and citizenship produced a complex and often controversial field that, while giving rise to experiences of marginality, discrimination and deprivation, also appeared as an area of navigation that allowed Russian-speakers

the option of keeping their feet in two different places, to secure futures within the limits of what was possible in an uncertain world. When experiencing exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination, Narvans thus became locally oriented, making claims for localism and place-oriented affiliation, and using this naturally and at times even strategically as proof of their belonging. Meanwhile, the Estonian state was seeking different kinds of proof of belonging. This resulted in a mismatch between the expectations of Russian-speakers in Narva and the state, the first thinking in local terms and appealing for the local good while the state was addressing the national scale and the national interest, disregarding the emic perspectives and sentiments of Russian-speakers.

Despite the strong resentment directed at the Estonian state in relation to its politics of belonging through language and citizenship politics, I witnessed that the feeling of being "at home" in Narva was certainly not in proportion to the negative feelings towards the state. Sometimes Narvans' strong relationship with their town was romanticised, and my informants themselves tended to actively do this in their narrations. It should be borne in mind that, rather than a deliberate choice, this attachment to the town was practically a zero-option situation in post-Soviet Estonia. Their increasing affiliation to Narva can be explained by my informants' encapsulation in their hometown, which was the result of increasing barriers to communication with the outside world, the emotional sense of estrangement felt in non-Russian-speaking environments, and a sense of discrimination associated with other places, as well as with material and economic obstacles. Claims about feeling more than ever "at home" in Narva were not in conflict with the idea of home as generating only positive and warm sentiments, because feeling "at home" is as much "the safety as well as the emotional engagement to be, at times, angry, resentful, ashamed, indignant" (Hessel 2010 cited in Yuval-Davis 2011, 10).

In the final chapter, Chapter 9, I continued to investigate the role of the state in Russian-speakers' conceptions of their home in Narva and Estonia, but looked at the emerging tensions between the Estonian state and its subjects through economic and social relations, unravelling the effect of neoliberal capitalism on Narvans' lives and futures, related both to their everyday realities in the present and their anticipated futures. From a limited perspective, the Russian-speaking Narvans' complaints about their situation and their yearning for different times can be regarded as the result of Soviet nostalgia and an unwillingness to reorient themselves in the new political and economic reality, but I have demonstrated that this hopelessness was embedded in

wider political and economic structures that had been undermined by the global economy, the EU and, of course, Estonian politics of ethnic relations, security and economy.

I narrated the experiences of Narvans in this thesis often by using the contrasting Soviet and post-Soviet sociotemporal orderings. This does not mean that in everyday life experiences unfolded in either/or terms, that somewhere between these two temporalities there was a rupture – the Soviet collapse – after which practices, ideas and moral worlds associated with the Soviet were no longer applicable. Rather, the post-Soviet practice emerged in negotiation with the existing one, often constituting new local forms directly incomparable with anything else in the neoliberal capitalist world so far. In some ways, post-Soviet realities in the former Soviet Union and in other countries with a socialist past are similar, but much is also different, embedded in local contexts. Similarly, state policies, practices and economic structures did not change overnight after the Soviet fall. The circumstances gradually changed in each subsequent Soviet decade, and the post-Soviet change from the early 1990s to the time of my fieldwork in 2010-2011 was significant as well. The discursive usage of the diametrical "Soviet" and "post-Soviet" came from the way in which my informants narrated their life experiences and located their suffering, hopes and joys. Turning points of history, when the political and socioeconomic surroundings drastically change, provide important juxtapositions – and therefore seemingly more clarity – through which to evaluate past experience. In these situations, what was bright may look even brighter and the dark, darker. We may also assume that the clear rupture in state regimes provided Russian-speaking Narvans with an easily intelligible temporal point through which to make sense of their own place in the world before and after. In this way, "before the rupture" can be summarised as their successful emplacement through supportive practices of sociality and morality, and "after the rupture" as all the processes that try to shake their firm grounding in the place.

These historical moments, interpreted as the Estonian state's failure to instil a section of its subjects with hope, especially hope that was equally distributed and not differentiated (Hage, 1997), are, I argue, part of the collective sense of hope/hopelessness in Narva. This particular experience of how the post-Soviet state has failed in its important duty to preserve hope for its subjects can be grasped through strong negative emotions including disappointment, despair, anger, resentment and fear, as well as through disinterest, cynicism and disbelief. The Soviet

state appears in stark contrast to this backdrop of negative emotions, as able to produce feelings of joy, contentment, exaltation and above all hopefulness. And yet, as many have noted, the past is always reconstructed through the present and through the anticipated future; if the present is a land of uncertainty and the future does not promise any different, the past can only be narrated as the best time of one's life (Knight & Stewart 2016).

The dismantling of the Soviet Union cut through the home-spaces and movement trajectories of Russian-speaking Narvans in various ways. For many it meant that their earlier established life together with their plans and expectations for the future fluctuated, even though at the beginning no one was able to predict how long the confusion would last and where would it take them. In the turbulent years immediately after the Soviet collapse, it was impossible for any "ordinary" citizen to foresee how exactly they would be able to continue their individual lives and how their futures would unfold. This momentary confusion and growing uncertainty characterised every postsocialist society in all spheres of life (cf. Burawoy & Verdery 1999; Berdahl, Bunzl & Lampland 2000; Verdery 1996). The political events that transformed the lives of Narvans not only forced them to adapt to neoliberal capitalist socioeconomic change; they permeated their moral worlds, the basis of their personhood and their sense of dignity – in some ways just like everywhere else in the postsocialist world, but also in a very specific way, intimately bound with the historical legacies of Narva as a "Russian town". "The life-changing events may be sudden", such as the dissolution of the Soviet world, "or may build up over a long time, but the result is the same: people have to find ways of "getting over" the losses, managing a new set of conditions, making life meaningful, and rebuilding confidence in their own ability to predict, plan and secure their lif[e]" (Stepputat 2009, 174).

In reference to Brandtstädter (2007, 142), who has suggested that although both the socialist and postsocialist projects can be seen as modernisation schemes the final evaluation of the process depends greatly on the subjects who lived through those worlds and their subjective projections, my study revealed that the Russian-speaking Narvans were often not able to connect the post-Soviet experience with modernisation, but that their experiences were divided along the lines of age and extent of Soviet subjectivity. The elderly Narvans who had the greatest difficulty in adjusting to the post-Soviet socioeconomic transformations and the changing moral landscape, perceived life after socialism as de-modernisation rather than modernisation. The sense of going back in time, after moving forwards considerably

in life and achieving personal success, became a source of disillusionment. In many other situations, this might have resulted in further mobility and attempts to dwell somewhere else, but most of the elderly Russian-speakers felt disabled in their pursuit of this by economic obstacles, a lack of language or professional skills, and transnational ties. Although the younger Russian-speakers were generally more open to appreciating the benefits that came with neoliberal capitalism, they were often intimidated by clearly feeling that they were not active participants in but rather passive recipients of the new modernist project of a democratic and neoliberal Estonia.

What I argue throughout the thesis is that people's long-term active dwelling, investing their time, effort and energy into being emplaced in Narva – this was the case for all my interlocutors and presumably for most of the Soviet-era Russian-speakers who stayed in Narva after the dissolution of the Soviet Union – should be regarded as their greatest commitment to the Estonian state rather than being confused with something as questionable as loyalty. Language, citizenship and loyalty linked to these issues, as an expression of being seriously engaged with a country and wishing it well, is a deeply questionable way of appropriating subjectivity. Interpretations and practical applications of language, citizenship and loyalty, as shown in this thesis as well as by Jašina-Schäfer (2021), can be highly flexible, and can be easily disregarded, but long-term emotional and bodily dedication to places and local communities, as in the case of Narva, creates commitments that can be much more profound and valuable. The real danger, as some of my interlocutors vividly revealed in Chapter 9, is when places become both physically and emotionally empty, meaningless and disentangled from local social practice and future-oriented dwelling, and there are no longer any grounds on which to build futures. The problem in Narva, as local insights reveal, is not its closeness to Russia, the cross-border movements, the consumption of Russian media or the relatively high number of people holding Russian or non-citizen passports, but the lack of a sense that the Estonian state cares and is seriously interested in reviving the local economy.

I have discussed the transformation of doing home and feeling at home with people – other Narvans, Russian-speakers and Estonians – and places – Narva and Estonia – over a life-course, marked and constituted by a series of events and experiences. I have suggested that experiences and meanings of home are fluid, contested on many levels and temporally structured. The construction of home for a migrant is about emplacement experiences along the migration trajectory, about

lived experiences of safety and familiarity in the place of dwelling in the past in relation to the present, and "about the possibilities of belonging in the future, the possibilities of finding a future in which one can flourish personally and collectively" (Thiranagama 2009, 130). As Melchior (2015, 325) has argued, "[a]s long as the past remains emotional, people cannot fully live in the present". Dwelling for better futures in Narva is complicated because the past is unceasingly highly emotional for both Russian-speakers and Estonians and the attachment to conflicting histories, memories and related identities among both groups hinders them in approaching each other and finding a less emotional and more pragmatical common ground (Melchior 2015; Martinez 2018). At times it seems that in Estonia it is felt that there is little else to do but wait until the generations change, until the emotions of former generations are left permanently in the dustbin of history and the illusionment that the younger generations will be less affected by the experiences comes to pass. The hope that younger generations of Russian-speakers will at some point be completely disentangled from the sense of injustice that their parents and grandparents felt seems rather naïve though, especially if Estonia does not want to carefully review its various forms of politics of belonging and welcome Russian-speakers born in Estonia as fully fledged citizens.

With regard to deliberate omissions, home-making across borders is one such topic that I eventually decided not to dedicate the depth and length of a separate chapter to, removing it from my analysis. The reason for this choice was twofold: the border perspective had already been extensively discussed by other scholars at the time this thesis was written – albeit not from the angle of home-making per se, the existing scholarship gives a very valuable insight into how the international border affects the everyday lives of Narvans whose social networks and practices extend to the other side of the Eastern international border (see particularly Pfoser 2014 and Martinez 2018); and, more importantly, the border did not appear as the most constitutive factor of home for my interlocutors. This consideration thus reflects my point that it should not be taken for granted that living at the border is the formative factor in the life experience of borderlanders, something that scholars studying everyday life at the border, especially in situations where borders have been erected suddenly and are widely conceptualised as a source of tension, are tempted to presume and overemphasise while being blind to alternative interpretations. My argument is not that the border does not matter in Narva but that many Russian-speakers in the town do not think about or live the border intensely.

Finally, when we imagine and project what the future will be like for the town and its Russian-speaking population, what will constitute home in Narva and for the Russian-speakers, be it in 10 or 50 years' time, many things may have changed and many may have remained largely as they are. Although at the time of my research the growing emptiness and hopelessness attached to the place seemed irreversible, and the state was showing no sign of being willing to decisively examine the ongoing economic and social processes leading to Narva's demise, much also depends on the quality and durability of intimate relationships that more than ever before are entangled more in global than local imaginaries, opportunities and webs of power. In this sense, there is always some hope for Narva and for its population, as paradoxical as it may seem – just because homes are complex matters always in the making, in flux and sometimes producing unexpected outcomes.

AFTERWORD

I left Narva having made good friends and acquaintances there. I had grown into their life on so many levels; I had come to profoundly understand their lives, the town and different spheres of the social life there. I had also started to feel increasingly compassionate about their futures and that of their hometown, and yet there was a significant amount of disillusionment. Deep down I had probably wanted to find a secret recipe that would help Estonians finally to open their eyes and their hearts and accept Russian-speakers as equals alongside them. Another part of the recipe would have helped to dissolve the bitterness of the older Russian-speakers in Narva towards Estonian people, the Estonian state, the "Western" world and even the Soviet state, for allowing so many bad things to happen to them. Viewed naïvely, the recipe would bring a resolution to the conflict. However, while the recipe remains undiscovered, the intention of my study, by revealing details of Russian-speakers' belonging to Narva, has been to contribute to building a bridge between the majority Estonians and the Russian-speaking minority, one that might help to bring closer their two seemingly very different types of understanding of themselves and of the others in Estonia.

Years have passed since I conducted my fieldwork in Narva. Many things have changed, and many have remained the same. Although I do not believe that the life-worlds and orientations regarding home-making in the town have changed significantly among the older generation of Soviet-era Russian-speaking Narvans, I perceive Narva as a less marginal place in the Estonian context today. First the Crimean crisis happened, which resulted in the international media's attention being directed to Narva, as if a similar future could be predicted for the town. Looking back, this attention turned out to be positive for Narva, because it caused something to shift in Estonians. Some younger-generation Estonian cultural leaders, by initiating cooperation with their Russian-speaking Narvan peers, took it as their mission to bring more positive vibes to Narva. They wittily turned the negative

"Narva is Next" prediction, associated with the Crimean crisis and the predicted breaking away from Estonia, into a positive slogan.

The Narva Art Residence, a unique cultural platform facilitating residencies, art exhibitions, talks and educational workshops, was opened in 2014 in an historical building that belong to the Kreenholm textile factory. In 2018 the old Baltijets military factory was transformed into a multifunctional theatre centre called Vaba Lava, which, however, was temporarily closed already less than three years later for the lack of necessary state funding. Furthermore, Narva was shortlisted for European Cultural Capital 2024, together with Tartu, Estonia's historical, cultural and university town and intellectual centre. The driving ambition to win the title brought together a group of cultural leaders in Estonia, both Estonians and Russian-speakers, to jointly work on imagining and co-creating new futures for Narva. The ultimate goal was to fill the town with new vibrant life and attract more investment in order to bring hope back to Narva and to the Ida-Viru region in general. In 2020, the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences built new study facilities in Narva, which included a sports and swimming centre that would be open to the public as well. EU funds have been successfully utilised to restore the historical Hermann fortress complex and open it more extensively to the public together with the newly built picturesque promenades running alongside the Narva River. All these efforts and relatively large investments have made Narva a more pleasant environment, each of them providing a ray of hope for the town's inhabitants that it has, after all, not been forgotten by the state. Yet the central concern remains: investing in concrete does not bring new jobs or provide substantial resources and the prevailing emptiness has been only masked rather than filled with feasible new opportunities. Young Narvans who work en masse abroad and take only occasional strolls along the town's promenades do not signify futures (cf. Dzenovska 2018).

Although several positive improvements have taken place, there is still a wide sense of social deprivation in Narva. In the coming years, the town will see the closure of its energy plants, the last remaining Soviet symbol. Due to the gradual switch to greener energies and EU directives aimed at reducing energy emissions, along with Estonia's ongoing dependency on oil shale energy production, which is now penalised by high taxes due to its emissions, energy production in the town is slowly coming to an end. While Kreenholm signified access to urban lifestyles and can be seen as having been a canvas for the social fabric that emerged in Soviet Narva, the electric power plants were the true symbols of the modernisation,

improvement and success that significantly increased the living standards and social consciousness of Russian-speaking Narvans. Closing this industry permanently signifies the end an era associated with Soviet modernity in Russian-speaking Narva. Yet, more importantly, the closure of the power plants raises very practical concerns: in a few years' time, hundreds of people, mostly men, will lose jobs that are relatively well-paid and respected in the area. Narvans are very suspicious of the Estonian state's promises to find alternative ways to generate jobs in the town and nearby (cf. Šliavaite 2017). When uncertain times have lasted for three decades, and plenty of illusionments have been created and disillusionments experienced, people dare not dream big. Narvans measure the improvement of their town by the number of workplaces created, and most of the investments and projects directed at the town have done little in this respect.

Regretfully there is still a tendency in Estonia to interpret the Russian-speakers' social marginalisation as a cultural specificity (Kesküla 2021). What should be understood as a consequence of profound long-term social and symbolic deprivation (Annist 2015, 2017) in post-Soviet Estonia, for which the state should take responsibility, is too often mistaken for the cultural peculiarities of Russian-speaking communities, Narva included. Yet a certain positive shift towards de-essentialising Russian backgrounds by the Estonian majority, generational shift if nothing else, has perhaps happened more than a decade after my longer fieldwork. When the Narva-born Estonian Superstar winner from December 2021 Alika Milova sincerely expressed her bewilderment after realising that the Estonian audience had voted for her despite her Russian name, this may be counted as a sign of hope for betterment.

REFERENCES

Aavik, K. (2015). *Intersectional Disadvantage and Privilege in the Estonian Labour Market: An Analyses of Work Narratives of Russian-speaking Women and Estonian Men*. PhD thesis. Tallinn University.

Abonyi, B. (2015). Would you go to war for Narva? *Munk – Global Conversations*, November 6. Available at https://www.munkgc.com/security/would-you-go-to-war-for-narva/ [last accessed 10 April 2021].

Abrams, P. (1988). Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1(1): 58-89.

Ahmed, S. (1999). Home and Away. Narratives of Migration and Estrangement. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2(3): 329-347. DOI: 10.1177/136787799900200303.

Ahmed, S., Castañeda, C., Fortier, A. & Sheller, M. (2003). Introduction: Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration. In S. Ahmed, C. Castañeda, A. Fortier & M. Sheller (eds) *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (pp. 1-19). Oxford: Berg.

Ahmed, S. (2014[2004]). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Al-Ali, N. & Koser, K. (eds) (2002). *New Approaches to Migration?: Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*. London: Routledge.

Aliens Act of 1993 [Estonia]. (1993). Available at http://www.refworld.org/docid/4728a3ea2.html [last accessed 2 August 2021].

Anderson, B. (1991[1983]). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. Ed. London: Verso.

Andrusz, G. D. (1984). *Housing and Urban Development in the USSR*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Annist, A. (2011). *Otsides kogukonda sotsialismijärgses keskuskülas. Arenguantropoloogiline uurimus*. [Seeking community in postsocialist Estonian centralised villages. A study in the anthropology of development]. Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikooli Kirjastus.

Annist, A. (2015). Formal Crutches for Broken Sociality. In J. Morris & A. Polese (eds) *Informal Economies in Post-Socialist Spaces: Practices, Institutions and Networks* (pp. 95-113). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Annist, A. (2017). Maaelu muutuv tähendus ja väljaränne [Emigration and the changing meaning of Estonian rural life]. In T. Tammaru (ed) *Eesti Inimarengu Aruanne: Avatud Eesti* [Estonian Human Development Report: Open Estonia] (pp. 247-254). Tallinn: Eesti Koostöö Kogu.

Annus, E. (2018). *Soviet Postcolonial Studies: A View from the Western Borderlands*. London: Routledge.

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Appadurai, A. (2004). The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition. In V. Rao & M. Walton (eds) *Culture and Public Action* (pp. 59-84). Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Appadurai, A. (2013). *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. London: Verso.

Aretxaga, B. (2003). Maddening States. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32(1): 393-410. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.anthro.32.061002.093341.

Ashwin, S. (1999). *Russian Workers: The Anatomy of Patience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Assmuth, L. (2005). To Which State to Belong? Ethnicity and Citizenship at Russia's New European Union Borders. In T. M. Wilson & H. Donnan (eds) *Culture and Power at the Edges of the State. National Support and Subversion in European Border Regions* (pp. 255-288). Münster: Lit Verlag.

Assmuth, L. (2007). Politicizing Language at a Post-Soviet Border: An Estonian School in Russia. *Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 32(1): 36-46.

Assmuth, L., Hakkarainen, M., Lulle, A. & Siim, P. M. (2018). Children in Translocal Families. In L. Assmuth, M. Hakkarainen, A. Lulle & P. M. Siim (eds) *Translocal Childhoods and Family Mobility in East and North Europe* (pp. 3-33). Cham: Springer International Publishing AG.

Atkinson, T. (1998). *The Life Story Interview*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Attwood, L. (2010). *Gender and Housing in Soviet: Russia Private Life in a Public Space*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Avdeev, A. & Monnier, A. (2000). Marriage in Russia. A Complex Phenomenon Poorly Understood. *Population: An English Selection* 12: 7-50.

Bakewell, O. (2020). Challenging the Idea of Rooted Homes. In P. Boccagni, M. Belloni & L. Pérez Murcia (eds) *Thinking Home on the Move: A Conversation across Disciplines* (pp. 78-81). Bingley: Emerald Publishing.

Ball, B. & Demko, G. J. (1978). Internal Migration in the Soviet Union. *Economic Geography* 54(2): 95-114.

Ballinger, P. (2003). *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Balmroth, T. (2014). Russians of Narva Not Seeking "Liberation" by Moscow. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 4. Available at https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-estonia-not-crimea/25321328.html [last accessed 10 April 2021].

Baranskaya, N. (1989). *Nedelja Kak Nedelja = Just Another Week*. Columbus Ohio: Slavica.

Barrett, M. (2009). The Social Significance of Crossing State Borders: Home, Mobility and Life Paths in the Angolan-Zambian Borderland. In S. Jansen and S. Löfving *(eds) Struggles for home: Violence, Hope, and the Movement of People* (pp. 85-107). Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Barth, F. (2002). Towards a Richer Description and Analysis of Cultural Phenomena. In R. G. Fox & B. J. King (eds) *Anthropology Beyond Culture* (pp. 23-36). Oxford: Berg Publisher.

Baschmakoff, N. & Ristolainen, M. (2009). *The Dacha Kingdom: Summer Dwellers and Dwellings in the Baltic Area*. Helsinki: Gummerus Printing.

Bauman, Z. (1999). *In Search of Politics*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bauman, Z. (2007). *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Malden: Polity Press.

Beissinger, M. R. (2002). *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Berdahl, D., Bunzl, M. & Lampland, M. (eds) (2000). *Altering States: Ethnographies of Transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Berezkina, M. (2017). Russian in Estonia's Public Sector: "Playing on the Borderline" between Official Policy and Real-life Needs. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 20(4): 417-427. DOI: 10.1080/13670050.2015.1115004.

Berg, E. (2001). Ethnic Mobilisation in Flux: Revisiting Peripherality and Minority Discontent in Estonia. *Space & Polity* 5(1): 5-26. DOI: 10.1080/13562570120049636.

Berg, E. (2003). Some Unintended Consequences of Geopolitical Reasoning in Post-Soviet Estonia: Texts and Policy Streams, Maps and Cartoons. *Geopolitics* 8(1): 101-120.

Berg, E. & Ehin, P. (eds) (2009). *Identity and Foreign Policy. Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Berman, D. (2014). Will Narva Be Russia's Next Crimea? *The Diplomat*, April 8. Available at https://thediplomat.com/2014/04/will-narva-be-russias-next-crimea/ [last accessed 10 April 2021].

Blunt, A. & Dowling, R. (2006). *Home*. London: Routledge.

Boccagni, P., Belloni, M. & L. Pérez Murcia, L. (eds) (2020). *Thinking Home on the Move: A Conversation across Disciplines*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.

Bolotova, A. & Stammler, F. (2009). How the North Became Home. Attachment to Place among Industrial Migrants in Murmansk region. In C. Southcott & L. Huskey (eds) *Migration in the Circumpolar North: New Concepts and Patterns* (pp. 193-220). Edmonton: Circumpolar Institute Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian Meditations*. Trans. R. Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Boym, S. (1994). *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Boym, S. (2001). *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge.

Brainerd, E. (2017). The Lasting Effect of Sex Ratio Imbalance on Marriage and Family: Evidence from World War II in Russia. *Review of Economics and Statistics* 99 (2): 229-242. DOI: 10.1162/REST_a_00649.

Brandstädter, S. (2007). Transitional Spaces: Postsocialism as a Cultural Process. Introduction. *Critique of Anthropology* 27(2): 131-145. DOI: 10.1177/0308275X07076801.

Brednikova, O. (2007). "Windows" Project ad Marginem or the "Divided Histiory" of Divided Cities. A Case Study of the Russian-Estonian Borderland. In T. Darieva & W. Kaschuba (eds) *Representations on the Margins of Europe: Politics and Identities in the Baltic and South Caucasian States* (pp. 43-64). Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.

Brednikova, O. & Voronkov V. (1999). Granitsy i restrukturirovaniye sotsialnogo prostranstva. [Borders and the restructuring of social space]. In O. Brednikova & V. Voronkov (eds) *Kochuiushchie Granitsy* (pp. 19-25). St. Petersburg: CISR Works 7.

Brednikova, O. & Siim, K. (2001). Divided Town in Transition: Social Space, Identity and Discourse. In E. Berg (ed) *Negotiating Borders of Multiple Meanings: Research Report* (pp. 17-36). Tartu: Peipsi Koostöö Keskus.

Brickell, A. & Datta, K. (eds) (2011). *Translocal Geographies: Spaces, Places, Connections*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Brown, K. (2004). *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Bryant, R. & Knight, D. M. (2019). *The Anthropology of the Future*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bryceson, D. & Vuorela, U. (eds) (2002). *The Transnational Family: New European Frontiers and Global Networks*. Oxford: Berg.

Buck-Morss, S. (2000). *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Buckley, C. J. (1995). The Myth of Managed Migration: Migration Control and Market in the Soviet Period. *Slavic Review* 54(4): 896-916. DOI: 10.2307/2501398.

Buckley, C. J. (2008). Introduction: New Approaches to Migration and Belonging in Eurasia. In C. J. Buckley, B. A. Ruble & E. T. Hofmann (eds) *Migration, Homeland, and Belonging in Eurasia* (pp. 1-22). Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Burawoy, M. & Verdery, K. (1999). Introduction. In M. Burawoy & K. Verdery (eds) *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Post-socialist World* (pp. 1-19). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Burkush, K. (2018). On the Forest Front: Labour Relations and Seasonal Migration in 1960s-80s. *Labour History* 59(3): 295-315. DOI: 10.1080/0023656X.2018.1428776.

Burrell, K. & Hörschelmann, K. (2014). Introduction: Understanding Mobility in Soviet and East European Socialist and Post-Socialist States. In K. Burrell & K. Hörschelmann (eds) *Mobilities in Socialist and Post-Socialist States: Societies in the Move* (pp. 1-22). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Caldwell, M. (2011). *Dacha Idylls: Living Organically in Russia's Countryside*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Caldwell, M. (2017). *Living Faithfully in an Unjust World. Compassionate Care in Russia*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Caldwell, M. (2019). Dacha Labors: Preserving Everyday Soviet Life. In A. Lakhitikova, A. Brintlinger & I. Glushchenko (eds) *Seasoned Socialism: Gender and Food in Late Soviet Everyday Life* (pp. 165-192). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Carsten, J. & Hugh-Jones, S. (1995). *About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Casey, E. (1996). How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena. In S. Feld & K. Basso (eds) *Senses of Place* (pp. 13-52). Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research press.

Cerwonka, A. & Malkki, L. (2007). *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Christensen, A. & Jensen, Q. S. (2011). Roots and Routes: Migration, Belonging and Everyday Life. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 1: 146-155. DOI: 10.2478/v10202-011-0013-1.

Christie, H., Smith, S. J. & Munro, M. (2008). The Emotional Economy of Housing. *Environment and Planning A* 40: 2296-2312. DOI: 10.1068/a39358.

Clarke, S. (1999). *The Formation of Labour Market in Russia*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Coffey, A. (1999). *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*. London: SAGE.

Cortazzi, M. (2001). Narrative Analyses in Ethnography. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland & L. Lofland (eds) *Handbook of Ethnography* (pp. 384-393). London: SAGE.

Davies, C. A. (2002). *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. London: Routledge.

de Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

de Montesquiou, E. (2010). *Narva/Ivangorod*. Berlin: Argo.

Denisova, L. & Mukhina, I. (2010). *Rural Women in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*. Abington: Routledge.

DePoy, E. & Gitlin, L. N. (2015). *Introduction to Research: Understanding and Applying Multiple Strategies*. 5th edition. St Louis: Elsevier.

Dobson, R. B. (1977). Mobility and Stratification in the Soviet Union. *Annual Review of Sociology* 3: 297-329. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.so.03.080177.001501.

Douglas, M. (1991). The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space. *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 58(1): 51-62. DOI: jstor.org/stable/40970644.

Dunn, E. (2008). Postsocialist Spores: Disease, Bodies and the State in the Republic of Georgia. *American Ethnologist* 35(2): 243-58. DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1425.2008.00032.x.

Dzenovska, D. (2014). Bordering Encounters, Sociality, and Distribution of the Ability to Live a Normal Life. *Social Anthropology* 22(3): 271-287. DOI: 10.1111/1469-8676.12075.

Dzenovska, D. (2018). Emptiness and Its Futures: Staying and Leaving as Tactics of life in Latvia. *Focaal: Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 80(1): 16-29. DOI: 10.3167/fcl.2018.800102.

Dzenovska, D. (2020). Emptiness: Capitalism without People in the Latvian Countryside. *American Ethnologist* 47(1): 10-26. DOI: 10.1111/amet.12867.

Ehala, M. (2009). The Bronze Soldier: Identity Threat and Maintenance in Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies* 40(1): 139–158. DOI: 10.1080/01629770902722294.

Ehn, B. & Löfgren, O. (2009). Routines, Made and Unmade. In E. Shove, F. Trentmann & R. Wilk (eds) *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life: Practice, Materiality and Culture* (pp. 99–112). Oxford: Berg.

Ehrenpreis, K. (2004). Lingvistilised venelased uue identiteedi otsingul [Linguistic Russians in search of their new identity]. Tallinn: Riigikogu Toimetised 10.

ERR News. (2021). *Estonia, Russia discuss Ukraine, regional cooperation, border ratification*. April, 10. Available at https://news.err.ee/1608172915/estonia-russia-discuss-ukraine-regional-cooperation-border-ratification [last accessed 2 August 2021].

Fehérváry, K. (2002). American Kitchens, Luxury Bathrooms, and the Search for a "Normal" Life in Postsocialist Hungary. *Ethnos* 67(3): 369-400. DOI: 10.1080/0014184022000031211.

Fehérváry, K. (2013). *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Fein, L. C. (2005). Symbolic Boundaries and National Borders: The Construction of an Estonian Russian Identity. *Nationalities Papers* 33(3): 333-344. DOI: 10.1080/00905990500193196.

Feldman, G. (2005). Culture, State, and Security in Europe. The Case of Citizenship and Integration policy in Estonia. *Americal Ethnologist* 32(4): 676-694. DOI: 10.1525/ae.2005.32.4.676.

Fortier, A-M. (2000). *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*. London: Routledge.

Fox O'Mahony, L. (2012). Meanings of Home. In S. J. Smith, M. Elsinga, L. Fox O'Mahony, S. E. Ong & S. Wachter (eds) *The International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home* (pp. 231-239). Amsterdam: Elsevier.

French, R. A. & Hamilton, I. F. E. (1979). *The Socialist City: Spatial Structure and Urban Policy*. Chichester: Wiley.

Gabot, H. (2012). The Governance of Things: Documenting Limbo in the Greek Asylum Procedure. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 35(1): 11-29. DOI: 10.1111/j.1555-2934.2012.01177.x.

Galbraith, M. (2003). "We Just Want to Live Normally": Intersecting Discourses of Public, Private, Poland, and the West. *Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe* 3(1): 2-13. DOI: 10.1525/jsae.2003.3.1.2.

Gang, I. N. & Stuart, R. C. (1998). Mobility Where Mobility is Illegal: Internal Migration and City Growth in the Soviet Union. *Journal of Population Economics* 12(1): 117-134. DOI: jstor.org/stable/20007617.

Garcelon, M. (2001). Colonizing the Subject: The Genealogy and Legacy of the Soviet Internal Passport. In J. Caplan & J. Torpey (eds) *Documenting Individual Identity. The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* (pp. 83-100). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Castoriadis, C. (1987). *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. London: Polity Press.

Ghodsee, K. (2011). *Lost in Transition. Ethnographies of Everyday Life after Communism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Gibson, J. R. (1991). Interregional Migration in the USSR, 1981-1985 and 1971-1975. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien* 35(2): 142-156. DOI: 10.1111/j.1541-0064.1991.tb01282.x.

Gille, Z. (2010). Is there a Global Postsocialist Condition? *Global Society* 24(1): 9-30. DOI: 10.1080/13600820903431953.

Giraud, C. (2007). *De l'espoir; Sociologie d'une catégorie de l'action*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Gorsuch, A. E. (2011). *All this is your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Greenberg, J. (2011). On the Road to Normal: Negotiating Agency and State Sovereignty in Postsocialist Serbia. *American Anthropologist* 113(1): 88-100. DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1433.2010.01308.x.

Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. (eds) (1997). *Anthropological Locations. Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hage, G. (1997). At Home in the Entrails of the West: Multiculturalism, "Ethnic Food", and Migrant Home-building. In H. Grace, G. Hage, L. Johnson, J. Langsworth & M. Symonds (eds) *Home/worlds: Space, Community, and Marginality in Sydney's West* (pp. 99-153). Annandale: Pluto Press.

Hage, G. (2003). *Against Paranoid Nationalism. Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society*. Annandale: Pluto Press and Merlin.

Hage, G. (2009). Waiting Out the Crisis: On Stuckedness and Governmentality. In G. Hage (ed) *Waiting* (pp. 97-106). Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Hage, G. & Papadopoulos, D. (2004). Ghassan Hage in Conversation with Dimitris Papadopoulos: Migration, Hope and the Making of Subjectivity in Transnational Capitalism. *International Journal for Critical Psychology* 12: 95-117. DOI: 10.1017/S0001972016000966.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2019). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. 4th edition. Milton: Routledge.

Hann, C. (ed) (2002). *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*. London: Routledge.

Hann, C., Humphrey, C. & Verdery, K. (2002). Introduction. Postsocialism as a Topic of Anthropological Investigation. In C. Hann (ed) *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia* (pp. 1-28). London: Routledge.

Hannerz, U. (1992). *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organisation of Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hannerz, U. (1996). *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge.

Hansen, T. & Stepputat, F. (eds) (2001). *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hanson, P. (2003). *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy: An Economic History of the USSR from 1945*. London: Routledge.

Hareven, T. K. (1991). The Home and a Family in Historical Perspective. *Social Research* 58(1): 253-285. DOI: jstor.org/stable/40970643.

Harris, E. (2006). "I know all the Secrets of my Neighbours": The Quest for Privacy in the Era of the Separate Apartment. In L. H. Siegelbaum (ed) *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (pp. 171-190). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Heidegger, M. (2013)[1971]). *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

Hervouet, R. (2003). Dachas and Vegetable Gardens in Belarus: Economic and Subjective Stakes of an "Ordinary Passion". *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 21(1): 159-168.

Hess, D. B. & Tammaru, T. (eds) (2019). *Housing Estates in the Baltic Countries: The Legacy of Central Planning in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Hessel, S. (2010). *Indignez-Vous!* Monpellier: Native Editions.

Hirsch, F. (2005). *Empire of the Nations. Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Howell, S. (1997). *The Ethnography of Moralities*. London: Routledge.

Humphrey, C. (2002). *The Unmaking of Soviet Life: Everyday Economies after Socialism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Humphrey, C. & Mandel, R. (2002). The Market in Everyday Life: Ethnographies of Postsocialism. In R. Mandel & C. Humphrey (eds) *Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism* (pp. 1-16). Oxford: Berg.

Huttunen, L. (2009). Undoing and Redoing Home. The Bosnian War and Diasporic Home-Making. In H. Johansson & K. Saarikangas (eds) *Homes in Transformation. Dwelling, Moving, Belonging* (pp. 216-236). Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Huttunen, L. (2010). Emplacement through Family Life: Transformation of Intimate Relations. In T. Faist (ed) *Transnationalisation and Institutional Transformations* (pp. 236-255). Collected Working Papers from the TRANS-NET Project, No. 87/2010. Available at http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/tdrc/ag_comcad/downloads/workingpaper_87_TRANS-NET.pdf [last accessed 2 August 2021].

Jackson, M. (1995). *At Home in the World*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Jansen, S. 1998. Homeless at Home: Narrations of Post-Yugoslav Identity. In N. Rapport & A. Dawson (eds) *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* (pp. 85-109). Oxford: Berg.

Jansen, S. (2006). The Privatisation of Hope and Home: Return, Reforms and the Foreign Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Dialectical Anthropology* 30(3-4): 177-199. DOI: 10.1007/s10624-007-9005-x.

Jansen, S. (2007). Troubled Locations: Return, the Life Course and Transformations of Home in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 49: 15-30. DOI: 10.3167/foc.2007.490103.

Jansen, S. (2009). After the Red Passport: Towards an Anthropology of the Everyday Geopolitics of Entrapment in the EU's "Immediate Outside". *Journal of The Royal Anthropological Institute* 15(1): 815-832. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9655.2009.01586.x.

Jansen, S. (2014). Hope For/Against the State: Gridding in a Besieged Sarajevo Suburb. *Ethnos* 79(2): 238-260. DOI: 10.1080/00141844.2012.743469.

Jansen, S. (2015). *Yearnings in the Meantime: "Normal Lives" and the State in a Sarajevo Apartment Complex*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Jansen, S. (2020). The Ethnography of Home-making. In P. Boccagni, M. Belloni & L. Pérez Murcia (eds) *Thinking Home on the Move: A Conversation across Disciplines* (pp. 86-90). Bingley: Emerald Publishing.

Jansen, S. & Löfving, S. (2009). Introduction: Towards and Anthropology of Violence, Hope, and the Movement of Peoples. In S. Jansen & S. Löfving (eds) *Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope and the Movement of People* (pp. 1-24). Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Janušauskaitė, V. (2019). Living in a Large Housing Estate: Insider Perspective from Lithuania. In D. B. Hess & T. Tammaru (eds) *Housing Estates in the Baltic Countries: The Legacy of Central Planning in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (pp. 181-199). Cham: Springer.

Jašina-Schäfer, A. & Cheskin, A. (2020). Horizontal Citizenship in Estonia: Russian Speakers in the Borderland City of Narva. *Citizenship Studies* 24(1): 93-110. DOI: 10.1080/13621025.2019.1691150.

Jašina-Schäfer, A. (2021). *Everyday Belonging in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: Russian Speakers in Estonia and Kazakhstan*. London: Lexington Books.

Jefferson, A., Turner, S. & Jensen, S. (2019). Introduction: On Stuckness and Sites of Confinement. *Ethnos* 84(1): 1-13. DOI: 10.1080/00141844.2018.1544917.

Jessop, B. (2016). *The State: Past, Present, Future*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Johansson, H. & Saarikangas, K. (2009). Introduction. Ambivalent Home. In H. Johansson & K. Saarikangas (eds) *Homes in Transformation. Dwelling, Moving, Belonging* (pp. 9-35). Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Jørgensen, C. J. (2016). The Space of the Family: Emotions, Economy and Materiality in Homeownership. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 33(1): 98-113. DOI: 10.1080/14036096.2015.1083052.

Jõesaar, A. (2015). One Country, Two Polarised Audiences: Estonia and the Deficiency of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. *Media and Communication* 3(4): 45-51. DOI: 10.17645/mac.v3i4.383.

Kaiser, R. & Nikiforova, E. (2008). The Performativity of Scale: The Social Construction of Scale Effects in Narva, Estonia. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26(3): 537-562. DOI: 10.1068/d3307.

Kalemeneva, E. (2019). From New Socialist Cities to Thaw Experimentation in Arctic Townscapes: Leningrad Architects Attempt to Modernise the Soviet North. *Europe-Asia Studies* 71(3): 426-449. DOI: 10.1080/09668136.2019.1589423.

Kalinkin, V. (2014). Narva, kotoruyu my poteryali [The Narva that we lost]. *Viru Prospekt*, October 1. Available at http://prospekt.ee/impressions/649-narva-kotoruyu-my-poteryali.html [last accessed 2 August 2021].

Kallas, K. (2016). Claiming the Diaspora: Russia's Compatriot Policy and its Reception by Estonian-Russian Population. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 15(3): 1-25.

Kalmus, V. (2003). Is Interethnic Integration Possible in Estonia?: Ethno-political Discourse of Two Ethnic Groups. *Discourse & Society* 14(6): 667-697. DOI: 10.1177/09579265030146001.

Kannike, A. (2002). *Kodukujundus kui kultuuriloomine: etnoloogiline Tartu-uurimus* [Home Design as a Cultural Creation: An Ethnological Study of Tartu]. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum.

Kapajeva, M. (2020). *Dream is Wonderful, Yet Unclear*. Jelgava: Milda Books.

Katus, K. (1990). Demographic Trends in Estonia throughout the Centuries. *Finnish Yearbook of Population Research* 28: 50-66. DOI: 10.23979/fypr.44841.

Katus, K. & Puur, A. (2006). Rahvastikuteadus ja Eesti rahvastikuarengu pöördepunktid [Demography and turning points in Estonian population development]. *Akadeemia* 3: 491-522.

Katus, K. & Sakkeus, L. (1993). *Foreign-Born Population in Estonia*. Tallinn: Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre, Population Studies B 19.

Keightley, E. & Pickering, M. (2012). *The Mnemonic Imagination: Remembering as Creative Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Keller, M. (2005). Needs, Desires and the Experience of Scarcity. Representations of Recreational Shopping in Post-Soviet Estonia. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5(1): 65-85. DOI: 10.1177/1469540505049844.

Kesküla, E. (2012). *Mining Postsocialism: Work, Class and Ethnicity in an Estonian Mine*. PhD thesis. University of London.

Kesküla, E. (2015). Reverse, Restore, Repeat! Class and Ethnicity Dynamics and the Russian-speaking Miners of Estonia. *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 72: 95-108. DOI: 10.3167/fcl.2015.720108.

Kesküla, E. (2021). Ida-Virumaa nakkav kultuur? Kultuurilise "teise" süüdistamise asemel otsigem põhjust majanduslikust ebavõrdsusest [The contagious culture of Ida-Virumaa? Instead of blaming the cultural "other", let's seek for the causes in economic inequalities]. *Eesti Päevaleht*, January 27. Available at epl.delfi.ee/artikkel/92386575 [last accessed 16 December 2021].

Kessler, G. (2013). Migration and Family Systems in Russia and the Soviet Union, Nineteenth to Twentieth Centuries. In D. Hoerder & A. Kaur (eds) *Proletarian and Gendered Mass Migrations: A Global Perspective on Continuities and Discontinuities from the 19th to the 21st Centuries* (pp. 133-150). Leiden: Brill.

King, R. & Lulle, A. (2016). Grandmothers Migrating, Working and Caring: Latvian Women between Survival and Self-realisation. *Population Horizons* 13(2): 43-53. DOI: 10.1515/pophzn-2016-0003.

Kish, G. (1963). Railroad Passenger Transport in the Soviet Union. *Geographical Review* 53(3): 363-376.

Kleist, N. & Jansen, S. (2016). Introduction: Hope over Time-Crises, Immobility and Future-Making. *History and Anthropology* 27(4): 373-392. DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2016.1207636.

Kojanic, O. (2020). Theory from the Peripheries: What Can the Anthropology of Postsocialism Offer to European Anthropology? *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 29(2): 49-66. DOI: 10.3167/ajec.2020.290204.

Knight, D. M. & Stewart, C. (2016). Ethnographies of Austerity: Temporality, Crisis and Affect in Southern Europe. *History and Anthropology* 27(1): 1-18. DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2015.1114480.

Kofman, M., Migacheva, K., Nichiporuk, B., Radin, A., Tkacheva, O. & Oberholtzer, J. (2017). *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

Koleva, D. (ed) (2017). *Negotiating Normality: Everyday Lives in Socialist Institutions*. Oxon: Routledge.

Korobkov, A. V. (2008). Post-Soviet Migration: A New Trends at the Beginning of Twenty-First Century. In C. J. Buckley, B. A. Ruble & E. T. Hofmann (eds) *Migration,*

Homeland, and Belonging in Eurasia (pp. 69-98). Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Kozyreva, P. M. (2013). Mezhpokolennaja social'no-professional'naja mobil'nost' v postsovetskoj Rossii [Intergenerational socio-occupational mobility in post-Soviet Russia]. *Sociologicheskaja nauka i social'naja praktika* 1: 60-73. Available at https://www.jour.fnisc.ru/index.php/snsp/article/view/2946 [last accessed March 10, 2021].

Krivošejev, J. (1960). *Narva ekskursioonijuht* [Narva Guide]. Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus.

Krumm, K. (2019). *Tööturu etnilise ebavõrdsuse taastootmise ja ümberkujundamise strateegiad Eestis* [Strategies for the reproduction and transformation of ethnic inequality in Estonian labor market]. Master's thesis. Tallinn University. Available at https://kristokrumm.ee/mina/minu-sulest-2/ [last accessed 13 March 2021].

Kruusvall, J., Vetik, R. & Berry, J. W. (2009). The Strategies of Inter-Ethnic Adaptation of Estonian Russians. *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 1(1): 3-24.

Krzyżowski, Ł. (2011). In the Trap of Intergenerational Solidarity: Family Care in Poland's Ageing Society. *Polish Sociological Review* 173(1): 55-78. DOI: jstor.org/stable/41275186.

Kulu, H. (2004). Determinants of Residence and Migration in the Soviet Union after World War 2: The Immigrant Population in Estonia. *Environment and Planning A*: *Economy and Space* 36: 305-325. DOI: 10.1068/a35261.

Kährik, A. (2000). Housing Privatisation in the Transformation of the Housing System – the Case of Tartu, Estonia. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift*, 54(1): 2-11. DOI: 10.1080/002919500423537.

Lagerspetz, M. (1999). Postsocialism as a Return: Notes on a Discursive Strategy. *East European Politics and Societies* 13(2): 377–390. DOI: 10.1177/0888325499013002019.

Laitin, D. D. (1998). *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the New Abroad.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Laszczkowski, M. & Reeves, M. (2017). Introduction: Affective States – Entanglements, Suspensions, Suspicions. In M. Laszczkowski & M. Reeves (eds) *Affective States: Entanglements, Suspensions, Suspicions* (pp. 1-14). New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Lauristin, M. & Vihalemm, P. (2009). The Political Agenda During Different Periods of Estonian Transformation: External and Internal Factors. *Journal of Baltic Studies* 40(1): 1-28. DOI: 10.1080/01629770902722237.

Lavrentjev, I. (2018a). 1993. aasta Narva autonoomia referendumi unustamisest ja ellu tärkamisest [About forgetting and resurrection of 1993 Narva Autonomy Referendum]. In M. Ivask (ed) *Murrangud. Uurimusi Narva pürkonna ajaloost* (pp. 116-134). Narva: Sihtasutus Narva Muuseumi toimetised 19.

Lavrentjev, I. (2018b). Lahing Narva pärast [The battle for Narva]. *Vikerkaar*: 38-47.

Lawrence, R. J. (1995). Deciphering Home: An Integrative Historical Perspective. In D. N. Benjamin, D. Stea, E. Arén & D. Stea (eds) *The home: words, interpretations, meanings and environments* (pp. 53-68). Aldershot: Avebury.

Lefebvre, H. (1991[1974]). *Production of Space*. Trans. Nicholson-Smith, D. Malden: Blackwell.

Lehmann, S. & Ruble, B. (1997). From "Soviet" to "European" Yaroslavl: Changing Neighbourhood Structure in Post-Soviet Russian Cities. *Urban Studies* 34(7): 1085-1107. DOI: 10.1080/0042098975745.

Lember, U. (2014). *Silenced Ethnicity: Russian-Estonian Intermarriages in Soviet Estonia (Oral History)*. PhD thesis. Central European University.

Leppik, M. & Vihalemm, T. (2015). The Paradox of National Language Acquisition: Russian Speakers' Labor Market Positions in Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies* 46(4): 471-496. DOI: 10.1080/01629778.2015.1105833.

Light, M. (2012). What Does It Mean to Control Migration? Soviet Mobility Policies in Comparative Perspective. *Law & Social Inquiry* 37(2): 395-429. DOI: 10.1111/j.1747-4469.2012.01308.x.

Light, M. (2016). *Fragile Migration Rights: Freedom of movement in post-Soviet Russia*. London: Routledge.

Lohr, E. (2008). Population Policy and Emigration Policy in Imperial Russia. In C. J. Buckley, B. A. Ruble & E. T. Hofmann (eds) *Migration, Homeland and Belonging in Eurasia* (pp. 165-181). Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Lokk, R. (2014). Post-kommunistliku Eesti Vabariigi rändepoliitika rahvuskujunduse komponendina [The post-communist migration policy of the Republic of Estonia as a component of nation's design]. *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 2/3 (189/149): 207-236.

Lokk, R. (2015). *Sepistades natsiooni: taasiseseisvunud Eesti etnopoliitilised konfliktid* [Forging a nation: ethno-political conflicts in re-independent Estonia]. PhD thesis. Tartu University.

Lonkila, M. & Salmi, A. (2005). The Russian Work Collective and Migration. *Europe-Asia Studies* 57(5): 681-703. DOI: 10.1080/09668130500126452.

Lovell, S. (2003). *Summerfolk. A History of the Dacha, 1710-2000*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Lulle, A. (2014). *Time-Space of Possibilities: Translocal Geographies of Latvians in Guernsey*. PhD thesis. University of Latvia.

Lumsden, K., Bradford, J. & Goode, J. (2019). Emotions and Reflexivity in Social Research. In K. Lumsden, J. Bradford & J. Goode (eds) *Reflexivity: Theory, Method, and Practice* (pp. 83-104). London: Routledge.

Löfving, S. (2009). Liberal Emplacement: Violence, Home and the Transforming Space of Popular Protest in Central America. In S. Jansen & S. Löfving (eds) *Struggles for home: Violence, Hope, and the Movement of People* (pp. 149-171). Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Lynch, C. & Danely J. (eds) (2015). *Transitions and Transformations: Cultural Perspectives on Aging and the Life Course*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Malkki, L. (1992). National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees. *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1): 24-44. DOI: 10.1525/can.1992.7.1.02a00030.

Mallett, S. (2004). Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature. *The Sociological Review* 52: 62-89. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00442.x.

Marcus, G. (1998). *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Markham, A. (2017). *Reflexivity: Some techniques for interpretive researchers*. Personal website, February 28. Available at https://annettemarkham.com/2017/02/reflexivity-for-interpretive-researchers/ [last accessed 10 May 2021].

Markowitz, F. & Stefansson, A. H. (eds) (2004). *Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Martinez, F. (2018). *The Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia. An Anthropology of Forgetting, Repair and Urban Traces*. London: UCL Press.

Matthews, M. (1993). *The Passport Society. Controlling Movement in Russia and the USSR*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Matyska, A. (2013). *Transnational Families in the Making. The Polish Experience of Living between Poland and Finland during and after the Cold War.* PhD thesis. University of Tampere.

McQueeney, K. & Lavelle, K. M. (2017). Emotional Labor in Critical Ethnographic Work: In the Field and Behind the Desk. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 46(1): 1-27. DOI: 10.1177/0891241615602310.

Melchior, I. (2015). *Guardians of Living History: The Persistence of the Past in Post-Soviet Estonia.* PhD thesis. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Melchior, I. & Visser, O. (2011). Voicing Past and Present Uncertainties: The Relocation of a Soviet World War II Memorial and the Politics of Memory in Estonia. *Focaal: Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 59: 33-50. DOI: 10.3167/fcl.2011.590103.

Melvin, N. (1995). *Russians beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity.* London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Mepschen, P. J. H. (2016). *Everyday Autochthony: Difference, Discontent and the Politics of Home in Amsterdam.* PhD thesis. University of Amsterdam.

Mertelsmann, O. (2007). Ida-Virumaale sisserändamise põhjused pärast Teist maailmasõda [The reasons for immigration in the Ida-Virumaa region after the Second World War]. *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 1(119): 51-74.

Misiunas, R. J. & Taagepera, R. (1993). *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence, 1940–1990.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mitchell, T. (2006). Society, Economy, and the State Effect. In A. Sharma & A. Gupta (eds) *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader* (pp. 169-186). Malden: Blackwell.

Mnogonatsional'naya Narva: yest' o chem rasskazat'. (2019). *Narvskaja Gazeta*, June 27. Available at https://prospekt.ee/society/neighbors/13064-mnogonacionalnaja-narva-est-o-chem-rasskazat.html [last accessed 4 August 2021].

Moch, L. P. (2003). *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe Since 1650.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Moon, D. (1997). Peasant Migration and the Settlement of Russia's Frontiers, 1550-1897. *The Historical Journal* 40(4): 859-893. DOI: jstor.org/stable/2640127.

Müller, M. (2019). Goodbye, Postsocialism! *Europe-Asia Studies* 71(1): 1-18. DOI: 10.1080/09668136.2019.1578337.

Nagar, R., Lawson, V., McDowell, L. & Hanson, S. (2002). Locating Globalisation: Feminist (Re)readings of the Subjects and Spaces of Globalisation. *Economic Geography* 78(3): 257-284. DOI: 10.2307/4140810.

Narva arvudes 2011 [Narva in figures 2011]. Narva: Narva Linna Arenduse ja Ökonoomika Amet. Available at http://www.narva.ee/ee/vasakpoolsed/narva_arvudes/page:3295 [last accessed 2 August 2021].

Narva arvudes 2017 [Narva in figures 2017]. Narva: Narva Linna Arenduse ja Ökonoomika Amet. Available at http://www.narva.ee/ee/vasakpoolsed/narva_arvudes/page:3295 [last accessed 2 August 2021].

Narva linna üldplaneering 2000-2012. Ülevaade olemasolevast olukorrast [General plan of the town of Narva 2000-2012. Overview of the current situation]. (2000). Narva: Narva Arhitektuuri ja Linna Planeerimise Amet. Available at http://www.narvaplan.ee/docs/koideI.pdf [last accessed 2 August 2021].

Narva munitsipaalelamufondi arengukava aastateks 2008-2011 [Narva municipal housing fund development plan for 2008-2011]. *(2008).* Narva: Narva Linnavalitsuse Linnavara- ja

Majandusamet. Available at http://www.narva.ee/files/1241.pdf [last accessed 2 August 2021].

Narva rahva kasv ja kahanemine [The growth and decline of the population of Narva]. (2020). Statistics Estonia web site. Available at https://www.stat.ee/et/uudised/2020/02/07/narva-rahva-kasv-ja-kahanemine [last accessed 3 August 2021].

Nikiforova, E. (2004). The Disruption of Social and Geographical Space in Narva. In R. Alapuro, I. Liikanen & M. Lonkila (eds) *Beyond Post-Soviet Transition: Micro Perspectives on Civic Culture and Nationality in Estonia and Russia* (pp. 148-164). Helsinki: Kikimora Publications.

Nikula, J. (1997). *From State-Dependency to Genuine Worker Movement? The Working Class in Socialism and Post-Socialism*. PhD thesis. University of Tampere.

Nimmerfeldt, G. (2010). Sense of Belonging to Estonia. In R. Vetik & J. Helemäe (eds) *The Russian Second Generation in Tallinn and Kohtla-Järve: The TIES Study in Estonia* (pp. 201–224). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Nimmerfeldt, G. (2011). *Identificational Integration: Conceptualisation and Operationalisation on the Example of Second Generation Russians in Estonia*. PhD thesis. Tallinn University.

Nimmerfeldt, G., Schulze, J. & Taru, M. (2011). The Relationship between Integration Dimensions among Second Generation Russians in Estonia. *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 1: 76–91.

Olwig, K. F. (1998). Epilogue: Contested Homes: Home-making and the Making of Anthropology. In N. Rapport & A. Dawson (eds) *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* (pp. 225-236). Oxford: Berg.

Olwig, K. F. (2007). *Caribbean Journeys: An Ethnography of Migration and Home in Three Family Networks*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Olwig, K. F. & Hastrup, K. (eds) (1997). *Siting Culture: The Shifting Anthropological Object*. London: Routledge.

Ottens, N. (2014). Estonian Border City Putin's Likeliest Next Target. *Atlantic Sentinel*, March 25. Available at https://atlanticsentinel.com/2014/03/estonian-border-city-putins-likeliest-next-target/ [last accessed 10 April 2021].

Paklar, V. & Hinrikus, R. (2009). *Mu kodu on Eestis. Eestimaa rahvaste elulood* [My home is Estonia. Life stories of Estonia]. Tallinn: Tänapäev.

Palgainfo [Salary information] web site. (2021). Available at https://www.palgainfo.ee/kasulikku/alampalk-statistika [last accessed 28 July 2021].

Pesmen, D. (2000). *Russia and Soul: An Exploration*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Petersoo, P. & Tamm, M. (eds) (2008). *Monumentaalne konflikt. Mälu, poliitika ja identiteet tänapäeva Eestis* [Monumental conflict. Memory, politics and identity in contemporary Estonia]. Tallinn: Varrak.

Péteri, G. (2010). *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Pfoser, A. (2014). *Borderland memories. The Remaking of the Russian-Estonian Frontier*. PhD thesis. Loughborough University.

Pfoser, A. (2015). Between Security and Mobility: Negotiating a Hardening Border Regime in the Russian-Estonian Borderland. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41(10): 1684-1702. DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2015.1015408.

Pfoser, A. (2017). Nested Peripherialisation: Remaking the East–West Border in the Russian–Estonian Borderland. *East European Politics and Societies* 31(1): 26–43. DOI: 10.1177/0888325416665157.

Pikner, T., Metsar, M. & Palang, H. (2014). Hajutatud linnamaastik: aiamaaga seonduvad praktikad Narvas [Scattered urban landscape: allotment plot -related practices in Narva]. In M. Ivask (ed) *Piir ja jõgi - piirijõgi. Uurimusi Narva piirkonna ajaloost* (pp. 219−254). Narva: Sihtasutus Narva Muuseumi toimetised 15.

Pilkington, H. (1998). *Migration, Displacement and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia*. London: Routledge.

Pohl, M. (2007). The "Planet of One Hundred Languages". In A. M. Schrader, W. Sunderland & N. B. Breyfogle (eds) *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History* (pp. 238–257). London: Routledge.

Pohl, O. J. (2008). The Loss, Retention, and Reacquisition of Social Capital by Special Settlers in the USSR, 1941-1960. In C. J. Buckley, B. A. Ruble & E. T. Hofmann (eds) *Migration, Homeland and Belonging in Eurasia* (pp. 203-222). Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Polese, A., Morris, J., Pawłusz, E. & Seliverstova, O. (2017). *Identity and Nation Building in Everyday Post-Socialist Life*. London: Routledge.

Polian, P. (2004). *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*. New York: Central European University Press.

Ponniah, J. (2020). *Culture Religion and Home-making in and Beyond South Asia*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Purju, A. (1996). *The Political Economy of Privatisation in Estonia*. CERT Discussion Papers.

Rahmonova-Schwarz, D. (2010). Migrations during the Soviet Period and in the Early Years of USSR's Dissolution: A Focus on Central Asia. *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 26(3): 9-30. DOI: 10.4000/remi.5196.

Rahvaarv. (2021). Statistics Estonia web page. Available at https://www.stat.ee/et/avasta-statistikat/valdkonnad/rahvastik/rahvaarv [last accessed 3 August 2021].

Raik, K. (2013). *Minu Narva. Kahe maailma vahel* [My Narva. Between the two worlds]. Tartu: Petrone Print.

Ramsay K. (1996). Emotional Labour and Qualitative Research: How I Learned Not to Laugh or Cry in the Field. In E. S. Lyon & J. Busfield (eds) *Methodological Imaginations. Explorations in Sociology* (pp. 131-146). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Randolph, J. & Avrutin, E. M. (2012). *Russia in Motion: Cultures of Human Mobility since 1850*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Rapoport, A. (1995). A Critical Look at the Concept "Home". In D. N. Benjamin, D. Stea, E. Arén & D. Saile (eds) *The Home: Words, Interpretations, Meanings, and Environments* (pp. 25-52). Aldershot: Avebury.

Rasanayagam, J. (2010). *The Morality of Experience: Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rausing, S. (1998). Signs of the New Nation: Gift Exchange, Consumption and Aid on a Former Collective Farm in North-west Estonia. In E. Miller (ed) *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter* (pp. 189-214). London: Routledge.

Reid, S. E. (2006a). Khrushchev Modern: Agency and Modernization in the Soviet Home. *Cahiers du monde russe* 47(1-2): 227-268. DOI: 10.4000/monderusse.3800.

Reid, S. E. (2006b). The Meaning of Home: "The Only Bit of the World You Can Have to Yourself". In L. H. Siegelbaum (ed) *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (pp. 145-170). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Reid, S. E. (2010). Communist Comfort: Socialist Modernism and the Making of Cosy Homes in the Khruschchev Era. In K. Adler & C. Hamilton (eds) *Homes and Homecomings: Gendered Histories of Domesticity and Return* (pp. 11-44). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ries, N. (1997). *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Ries, N. (2002). "Honest Bandits" and "Warped People": Russian Narratives About Money, Corruption, and Moral Decay. In C. Greenhouse, E. Mertz & K. Warren (eds) *Ethnography in Unstable Places: Everyday Life in Contexts of Dramatic Political Change* (pp. 276-315). Durham: Duke University Press.

Ries, N. (2009). Potato Ontology: Surviving Postsocialism in Russia. *Cultural Anthropology* 24(2): 181-212. DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1360.2009.01129.x.

Risch, W. J. (2011). *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rosenblad, Y. (2013). Tööhõive ja töötus [Unemployment and employment]. In T. Rosenberg (ed) *Pilte rahvaloendusest* [Census snapshots] (pp. 105-128). Tallinn: Statistics Estonia.

Rudensky, N. (1994). Russian Minorities in the Newly Independent States: An International Problem in the Domestic Context of Russia Today. In R. Szporluk (ed) *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (pp. 58-77). New York: M. E. Sharpe.

Saar, E., Krusell, S. & Helemäe, J. (2017). Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Post-Soviet Estonia: Towards Generation Fragmentation or Integration in Estonian Society. *Sociological Research Online* 22(2). DOI: 10.5153/sro.4228.

Saarikangas, K. (2009). "Life in the Suburbs is mere Residing". Home, Moving and Belonging in the Suburbs of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area from the 1950s to the 1970s. In H. Johansson & K. Saarikangas (eds) *Homes in Transformation. Dwelling, Moving, Belonging* (pp. 129-161). Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Sakkeus, L. (1991). *Post-war Migration Trends in Estonia*. Tallinn: Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre, Population Studies B 15.

Salmi, A. (2006). Housing, Networks and Money: A Study of Workers in St. Petersburg. *Επιθεώρηση Κοινωνικών Ερευνών* 121: 39-70. DOI: 10.12681/grsr.9568.

Saunders, P. (1990). *A Nation of Homeowners*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Seliverstova, O. (2017). Keeping Alive the "Imaginary West" in Post-Soviet countries. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 25(1): 117-134. DOI: 10.1080/0965156X.2017.1345439.

Seljamaa, E-H. (2012). *A Home for 121 Nationalities or Less: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Integration in Post-Soviet Estonia*. PhD thesis. The Ohio State University.

Sharma, A. & Gupta, A. (eds) (2006). *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*. Malden: Blackwell.

Shlapentokh, V., Sendich, M. & Payin, E. (1994). *The New Russian Diaspora: Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Republics*. London: Routledge.

Shulman, E. (2007). "Those Who Hurry to the Far East": Readers, Dreamers, and Volunteers. In A. M. Schrader, W. Sunderland & N. B. Breyfogle (eds) *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History* (pp. 213-237). London: Routledge.

Siegelbaum, L. H. & Moch, L. P. (2014). *Broad Is My Native Land: Repertoires and Regimes of Migration in Russia's Twentieth Century.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Siegelbaum, L. H. & Moch, L. P. (2016). Transnationalism in One Country? Seeing and Not Seeing Cross-Border Migration within the Soviet Union. *Slavic Review* 75(4): 970-986. DOI: 10.5612/slavicreview.75.4.0970.

Siim, P. M. (2020). Ylirajaista yhteenkuuluvuutta ja hoivaa: sukupolvien väliset suhteet Suomessa asuvissa virolaisissa perheissä [Cross-border belonging and care: intergenerational relations in Estonian families living in Finland]. In R. Alho & K. Kumer-Haukanõmm (eds) Liikkuvuus, muuttoliike ja ylirajaiset suhteet Suomen ja Viron välillä [Mobility, migration and cross-border relations between Finland and Estonia] (pp. 141−156). Turku: Siirtolaisuusinstituutti.

Sliwinski, A. (2016). The Value of Promising Hope Spaces: Hope and Everyday Utopia in a Salvadoran Town. *History and Anthropology* 27(4): 430-446. DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2016.1207638.

Smirnova, G. (2001). *Narva: kul'turno-istoritcheshki spravotschnik.* Narva: Narva Museum.

Smith, D. J. (2008). "Woe from Stones": Commemoration, Identity Politics and Estonia's "War of Monuments". *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39(4): 419-430. DOI: 10.1080/01629770802461191.

Smith, D. J. & Burch, S. (2012). Enacting Identities in the EU-Russia Borderland. An Ethnography of Place and Public Monuments. *East European Politics and Societies* 26(2): 400-424. DOI: 10.1177/0888325411415403.

Smith, D. M. (1996). The Socialist City. In G. Andrusz, M. Harloe & I. Szelenyi (eds) *Cities after Socialism: Urban and Regional Change and Conflict in Post-socialist Societies* (pp. 70-99). Oxford: Blackwell.

Smith, G. (ed) (1996). *The Baltic States. The National Self-Determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.* Houndsmill: MacMillan Press.

Smith, G. & Wilson, A. (1997). Rethinking Russia's Post-Soviet Diaspora: The Potential for Political Mobilisation in Eastern Ukraine and North-east Estonia. *Europe-Asia Studies* 49(5): 845-864. DOI: 10.1080/09668139708412476.

Smith, M. P. (2001). *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalisation.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Steinberg, M. D. & Wanner, C. (2008). *Religion, Morality, and Community in Post-Soviet Societies.* Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Stepputat, F. (2009). Postscript. Home, Fragility and Irregulation: Reflections on Ethnographies of Im/mobility. In S. Jansen & S. Löfving (eds) *Struggles for home: Violence, Hope, and the Movement of People* (pp. 173-182). Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Stoetzler, M. & Yuval-Davis, N. (2002). Standpoint Theory, Situated Knowledge and the Situated Imagination. *Feminist Theory* 3(3): 315-334. DOI: 10.1177/146470002762492024.

Suopajärvi, T., Koskinen-Koivisto, E., Korjonen-Kuusipuro, K., Hytönen, K-M. & Hämeenaho, P. (2019). Tunteilla on väliä: tutkijan tunteet etnografisessa tutkimusprosessissa [Feelings matter. Researcher's feeling in ethnographic research process]. *Elore* 26(2): 44-67. DOI: 10.30666/elore.77809.

Svašek, M. (2006). *Postsocialism: Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Swader, C. (2010). Homo Soveticus in Interpersonal Relationships before and after the Collapse of Communism. In H. Best & A. Wenninger (eds) *Landmark 1989: Central and Eastern European Societies Twenty Years After the System Change* (pp. 62-79). Berlin: LIT Verlag.

Šliavaite, K. (2005). *From Pioneers to Target Group: Social Change, Ethnicity and Memory in Lithuanian Nuclear Power Plant Community*. PhD thesis. Lund University.

Šliavaite, K. (2017). "Homeland is Where Everything is for the People": The Rationale of Belonging and Citizenship in the Context of Social Uncertainty. In I. H. Knudsen & M. D. Frederiksen (eds) *Ethnographies of Grey Zones in Eastern Europe: Relations, Borders and Invisibilities* (pp. 107-122). London: Anthem Press.

Tamm, M. (2013). In Search of Lost Time: Memory Politics in Estonia, 1991-2011. *Nationalities Papers* 41(4): 651-674. DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2012.747504.

Tammaru, T. (1999). *Venelased Eestis. Ränne ja kohanemine* [Russians in Estonia. Migration and adaptation]. Tallinn: Sisekaitseakadeemia.

Tammaru, T. (2001). *Linnastumine ja linnade kasv Eestis Nõukogude aastatel* [Urbanization and urban growth in Estonia during the Soviet era]. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.

Tarvel, E. (2018). *Eesti rahva lugu*. [The story of the Estonian nation.] Tallinn: Varrak.

Taubman, W. (2003). *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Telve, K. (2019). Family Involved or Left behind in Migration? A Family-centred Perspective towards Estonia-Finland Cross-border Commuting. *Mobilities* 14(5): 715-729. DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2019.1600885.

Temkina, A. & Rotkirch, A. (1997). Soviet Gender Contracts and Their Shift in Contemporary Russia. In A. Temkina (ed) *Russia in Transition: The Case of New Collective Actors and New Collective Actions* (pp. 183-207). Jyväskylä: Kikimora Publications.

The Economist (2015). Estonia's Election: On the Border. March 7. Available at https://www.economist.com/europe/2015/03/05/on-the-border [last accessed 10 April 2021].

Thiranagama, S. (2009). A New Morning? Reoccupying Home in the Aftermath of Violence in Sri Lanka. In S. Jansen & S. Löfving (eds) *Struggles for home: Violence, Hope, and the Movement of People* (pp. 129-148). Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Thiranagama, S. & Kelly, T. (eds) (2010). *Traitors: Suspicion, Intimacy, and the Ethics of State-Building*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Tiaynen, T. (2013). *Babushka in Flux: Grandmothers and Family-making between Russian Karelia and Finland*. PhD thesis. University of Tampere.

Tikva, P. & Arnik, K. (eds) (2012). Leibkonna eelarve uuring 2010. Metoodika ülevaade [Household budget survey 2010. Overview of the methodology]. Tallinn: Statistikaamet.

Todorova, M. (2009). Daring to Remember Bulgaria, Pre-1989. *Guardian.co.uk*, November 9. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/nov/09/1989-communism-bulgaria [last accessed 8 June 2021].

Todorova, M. & Gille, Z. (eds) (2010). *Post-Communist Nostalgia*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Toode, A. (2015). Kes lõhkus Narva? [Who destroyed Narva?] In M. Ivask (ed) *Sõda ja sõjajärgne Narva linnamaastikus* [War and the post-war Narva in urban landscape] (pp. 108-157). Narva: Sihtasutus Narva Muuseumi toimetised 16.

Toode, A. (2018). Uraanitehas Narvat taastamas. Näide sõjajärgsest (linna) juhtimispraktikast ja selle tagajärgedest, sealhulgas Narva vanalinnale [Uranium plant restoring Narva. An example of post-war (urban) management practices and their consequences, including for the Old Town of Narva]. In M. Ivask (ed) *Murrangud. Uurimusi Narva piirkonna ajaloost* (pp. 154-187). Narva: Sihtasutus Narva Muuseumi toimetised 19.

Treadgold, D. (1957). *Great Siberian Migration: Government and Peasant in Resettlement from Emancipation to The First World War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Trimbach, D. & O'Lear, S. (2015). Russians in Estonia: Is Narva the Next Crimea? *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 56(5):1-12. DOI: 10.1080/15387216.2015.1110040.

Tuedio, J. (2009). Ambiguities in the Locus of Home. Exilic Life and the Space of Belonging. In H. Johansson & K. Saarikangas (eds) *Homes in Transformation. Dwelling, Moving, Belongig* (pp. 284-310). Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Turner, S. (2015). "We Wait for Miracles": Ideas of Hope and Future among Clandestine Burundian Refugees in Nairobi. In E. Cooper & D. Pratten (eds) *Ethnographies of Uncertainty in Africa* (pp. 173-191). Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillian.

United Nations. (2019). *World Population Prospects, Volume II: Demographic Profiles* (ST/ESA/SER.A/427). Available at https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/1_Demographic%20Profiles/Estonia.pdf [last accessed 4 August 2021].

Uusihakala, K. (2016). Totuuksia Afrikasta: Kitkaisia kenttäkohtaamisia valkoisten zimbabwelaisten siirtolaisyhteisössä [Truths about Africa: Field encounters in the communities of white Zimbabweans]. In J. Gould & K. Uusihakala (eds) *Tutkija peilin edessä: Refleksiivisyys ja etnografinen tieto* [Researcher in front of a mirror: Reflexivity and ethnographic knowledge] (pp. 88–112). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

Valge, J. (2006). *Kohtla-Järve hilis-sotsialistlik segregatsioon* [Late-socialist segregation of Kohtla-Järve]. Master's thesis. Tartu University.

Varga-Harris, C. (2015). *Stories of House and Home: Soviet Apartment Life during the Khrushchev Years.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Verdery, K. (1996). *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Verdery, K. (2004). Theoretical Afterward: Property Regime of Socialism. *Conservation & Society* 2(1): 189-197. DOI: jstor.org/stable/26396571.

Verschik, A. (2005). The Language Situation in Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies* 36(3): 283-316. DOI: 10.1080/01629770500000111.

Vihalemm, T. (1999). Estonian Language Competence, Performance, and Beliefs on Acquisition among the Russian-speaking Inhabitants of Estonia, 1989-1997. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 139: 69-86. DOI: 10.1515/ijsl.1999.139.69.

Vihalemm, T. & Masso, A. (2002). The Formation of Imagined Borders in Post-Soviet Estonia: Diaspora or Local Community? *Journal of Borderland Studies* 17(2): 35-51. DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2002.9695589.

Vihalemm, T. & Masso, A. (2007). (Re)Construction of Collective Identities after the Dissolution of the Soviet Union: The Case of Estonia. *Nationalities Papers* 35(1): 71-91. DOI: 10.1080/00905990601124496.

Vseviov, D. (2001). *Nõukogudeaegne Narva. Elanikkonna kujunemine 1944-1970* [Soviet-era Narva. Population development between 1944-1970]. Tartu: Okupatsioonide Repressiivpoliitika Uurimise Riiklik Komisjon 15.

Vseviov, D. (2002). *Kirde-Eesti urbaanse anomaalia kujunemine ning struktuur pärast Teist maailmasõda* [The development and structure of the urban anomaly in North-Eastern Estonia after the Second World War]. Tallinn: Tallinna Pedagoogikaülikooli Kirjastus.

Wanner, C. (1998). *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Wanner, C. (2005). Money, Morality and New Forms of Exchange in Postsocialist Ukraine. *Ethnos* 70(4): 515-537. DOI: 10.1080/00141840500419782.

Wedel, J. (1986). *The Private Poland*. New York: Facts on File.

Weiss-Wendt, A. (1997). *Must-valge linn. Vana Narva fotoajalugu* [Black and white town. Photo history of old Narva]. Tallinn: A. Weiss-Wendt.

Weitz, E. D. (2003). *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

White, A. (2007). Internal Migration Trends in Soviet and Post-Soviet European Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies* 59(6): 887-911. DOI: 10.1080/09668130701489105.

Wierzbicka, A. (2002). Russian Cultural Scripts: The Theory of Cultural Scripts and Its Applications. *Ethos* 30(4): 401-432. DOI: 10.1525/eth.2002.30.4.401.

Wright Mills, C. (2000[1959]). *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zaionchkovskaya, Z. A. (1996). Migration Patterns in the Former Soviet Union. In J. Azael & E. Payin (eds) *Cooperation and Conflict in the Former Soviet Union: Implications for Migration* (pp. 15-48). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Zakharova, L. (2014). Communication, Mobility and Control in the Soviet Union after World War II. In K. Burrell & K. Hörschelmann (eds) *Mobilities in Socialist and Post-Socialist States: Societies in the Move* (pp. 23-44). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Zavisca, J. (2003). Contesting Capitalism at the Post-Soviet Dacha: The Meaning of Food Cultivation for Urban Russians. *Slavic Review* 62(4): 786-810. DOI: 10.2307/3185655.

Zevelev, I. (2008). Russia's Policy Toward Compatriots in the Former Soviet Union. *Russia in Global Affairs* 6(1): 49-62.

Zigon, J. (2009). Within a Range of Possibilities: Morality and Ethics in Social Life. *Ethnos* 74(2): 251-276. DOI: 10.1080/00141840902940492.

Zigon, J. (2010a). *Making the New Post-Soviet Person*. Leiden: Brill.

Zigon, J. (2010b). *HIV is God's Blessing: Rehabilitating Morality in Neoliberal Russia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Zubkova, E. (1998). *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments, 1945-1957*. Abington: Routledge.

Yanowitch, M. & Dodge, N. T. (1969). The Social Evaluation of Occupations in the Soviet Union. *Slavic Review* 28(4): 619-643. DOI: 10.2307/2493965.

Yasterbov, G. (2016). Intergenerational Social Mobility in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia. *Higher School of Economics Research Paper* No. WP BRP 69/SOC/2016. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.2727134.

Young, I. M. (1997). *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Yurchak, A. (2005). *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the Politics of Belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice* 40(3): 197-214. DOI: 10.1080/00313220600769331.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*. London: SAGE.

Yuval-Davis, N. & Stoetzler, M. (2002). Imagined Boundaries and Borders. A Gendered Gaze. *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 9(3): 329-344. DOI: 10.1177/1350506802009003378.