

Ontological Conditions Underlying Lithuanian Intolerance Toward Refugees

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The examination of public perception and local attitudes in the refugee integration process as an object of this research should cover necessary considerations regarding legal and the specifics of personal inclusion, that is, as to become full participants in the nation's economic, political, and social lives. Key roles in this process are played by both the refugees and the welcoming society. In this paper, I will use primarily ethnographic methods to describe this process of participation and how it affects the everyday life of asylum seekers who have emigrated to Lithuania. I will address the question of the public perception of refugees in Lithuania, its impact on their integration and while paying particular attention to some of the main hurdles that refugees have to surmount to integrate into society fully. Finally, I will consider the impact of locals' attitudes toward refugees and will attempt to elucidate the pressing question of why there appears to be resistance to accepting refugees within the Lithuanian government officials and among citizens. In this article, the attitude of the individual locals refers to the local community's value orientation and perspectives, accordingly to the attitude of permanent residents of Lithuania.

Keywords: perception, attitude, refugees, integration, local, resistance, intolerance, media.

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on public attitude towards refugees and immigration in general. Authors such as Blažytė and Žibas et al. have been at the forefront of conducting researches on immigration, refugees and integration. The findings presented by Blažytė and Žibas in 2019¹ revealed the importance of the receiving society's role in the refugee integration process. Furthermore, their study suggests that societal attitude towards refugees is a strong

indicator of whether the environment created by local communities is inclusive². Even though Lithuania does not receive large numbers of refugees, it still confronts difficulties in integrating refugees into society. I investigated the matter further by conducting brief case studies of both the perceptions of locals towards refugees in Lithuania and refugees' perceptions of Lithuania. By exploring the resistance towards refugees expressed by government officials and among citizens toward

1 Blažytė, Žibas, 2019.

2 *Ibid.*

the refugees, I uncovered critical cultural features that hinder the process of cultural integration of refugees. Furthermore, in presenting a case study of how refugee experiences difficulties during the integration process, I shall highlight how expressions of resistance existing within the Lithuanian society affect refugee perceptions of their new homeland.

To better understand this issue, I began working at the organisation responsible for integrating refugees. At the same time, I knew that my employment would be an excellent opportunity and would offer the best in-depth fieldwork experience to gather data for the current research project. It was a great chance to observe and gain first-hand experience and information regarding refugees and their integration into Lithuanian society. Thus, I was able to see how governmental institutions work regarding the social and cultural integration of refugees.

I conducted fieldwork and participant observation for a year. Apart from participant observation, I also used several other methods to collect data. I used the free-list method with a sample from the Lithuanian population (aged 17–45, 25 females, eight males) to gather basic information on key terms (or concepts) that reflect Lithuanian attitudes to refugees. I also had about 60 informal conversations with locals and refugees and conducted 33 online surveys (25 females and eight males) with a set of structured questionnaires sent out to Lithuanians between 17 and 45 years old. The data on public attitudes is derived mainly from two demographic groups located in Vilnius and Kaunas. While the sample is

not representative enough of all Lithuanians, the sample meets basic requirements for establishing that it represents a cultural pattern of thought³. Besides, I conducted a media content analysis consisting of 117 comments extracted from various news media articles; further analysed and interpreted different new media articles and sources such as news web portals. There were selected 12 articles relevant to refugees from news web portals such as delfi.lt, ve.lt, diena.lt for the media content analyses in 2019. The data were analysed with NVivo software, a QDA program that allows looking for keywords in context, frequency lists, and word association analysis. The outlined set of analyses allowed me to obtain a broad view of local perceptions towards refugees. In addition to identifying locals' perceptions of refugees, the mass media plays an important role in shaping them. The research has led to identifying what appear to be the key perceived cultural elements that determine local resistance to and other perceptions of refugees. I believe these findings can indicate important cultural vectors that hinder the process of integrating refugees into Lithuanian society. The key findings of this study revealed that in the absence of direct contact between locals and refugees, mass media acts as the key agent in shaping the local's perceptions and attitudes towards refugees.

Since 1990, the number of residents living in Lithuania has dropped by 23%⁴. Several sources⁵ showed that compared to other European countries, the immigration

3 De Munck, 2009; Weller, Romney, 1998.

4 Statistics Lithuania, 2018.

5 UNHCR 2015; Statistics Lithuania, 2018.

rates to Lithuania are low – the permanent inflow of foreigners in 2017 was around 10,000, making only 0,4 % share the total population⁶. The vast majority of people immigrating to Lithuania are returning Lithuanian citizens. Lithuania is at the bottom of the list of countries sought after by asylum applicants in the EU – there were 295 foreigners granted asylum in 2017 and merely 154 in 2018⁷. The number of asylum applications in Lithuania has always been low compared with the numbers in Western European and the Nordic countries⁸. Although the number of third-country nationals, including refugees and immigrants, arriving and staying in Lithuania has been growing (compared with 2014) for the first time, Lithuania has been facing integration problems, as evidenced not only by surveys or case studies but also by the Migration Integration Index. Key findings of the Migrant Integration Policy Index showed that Lithuania is ranked 34th out of 38 countries with an index score of 37. Countries with index scores of 21 to 40 are considered less favourable to immigrants⁹. As noted by Blažytė and Žibas¹⁰, a recent public opinion poll¹¹ showed that Lithuanian residents remain culturally closed and tend to see the threats rather than the opportunities that granting refugees asylum might bring. The difficulty of integration for refugees is not only due to the lack of clear state positions, but also political decisions directly

aimed at making it harder to acquire official papers necessary to obtain long term residence permits in Lithuania¹², low financial support, low involvement of universities, governmental or other institutions, a lack of societal support which is not helped by the pervasive negative attitude – all the listed factors act as barriers to integration and stand as chief reasons why Lithuania ranks so low in immigration indexes.

When the refugees first arrive in Lithuania

When the refugees first arrive in Lithuania, they are taken to a remote location near a military base where they stay for a few months. It is the primary institution providing temporary stay and social services for asylum seekers in Lithuania, where the staff members coordinate their efforts with social workers to assist refugees in various ways for up to three months¹³. Meanwhile, in a pretty straightforward way, the location already symbolises to refugees that Lithuania is not a very welcoming place. The overall impression was one of dismay and concern over how refugees could manage to navigate their way through this system in a removed location that means at a considerable distance from any urban area. I came to see one of the integrated refugee families after their family reunification. Fifteen minutes later, I heard a bomb exploding near the building. For me, it was shocking and disturbing. This refugee centre is located next door to a NATO

6 OECD, 2017.

7 Institute for Ethnic Studies, 2018.

8 Blažytė, Žibas, 2019.

9 MIPEX, 2015.

10 Blažytė, Žibas, 2019.

11 LSRC, 2017.

12 Blažytė, et al., 2020.

13 Blažytė, Žibas, 2019.

military base. It is a place where refugees seek asylum primarily to escape warfare in their homelands. Constantly being exposed to the sound of bombs and being kept next to a military base must be unnerving and sends a message to them, perpetually reminding them of their displaced and undesirable status. It is difficult to imagine that people, who need to start a new life, first come to a place where they are forced to hear the sounds of aeroplanes, choppers, and bombs. Refugees are compelled to stay here for their first three months in Lithuania. This sort of treatment may be traumatic as it constantly calls back the imagery they desperately tried to escape in the first place.

To illustrate this point, I will relay a story about a frustrated Syrian man who arrived in Lithuania with his family at this refugee centre. He said that he was the head of a family of seven – his wife and five small children. Even if he were about to receive a permit to live in Lithuania, he would not remain, stating that he could not survive here. Literally, he saw no future in the country for his family. After all, Lithuania is the only country in the EU that completely denies asylum seekers access to the labour market for asylum-seekers during the asylum procedure¹⁴, making another obstacle to staying in Lithuania. The refugees appear to understand that the majority of Lithuanians openly do not want refugees around them. Survey data seems to corroborate the following point: the majority of Lithuanians are against refugees coming to Lithuania. Moreover, a cursory glance at research

conducted between 2010 and 2018 shows no significant change in the attitudes of Lithuanian society towards newcomers. Thus, even though the number of foreigners, especially asylum seekers, has hardly increased, the hostility of Lithuanian society has not decreased either. A public attitude survey conducted in 2016 and 2017 by the Institute for Ethnic Studies (2017), with 2172 Lithuanian residents aged 15 and up throughout all Lithuania, showed that 70% of Lithuanians would agree with the statement that the number of incoming refugees should be strictly limited. In 2019, around 60% of surveyed Lithuanians indicated that Lithuania should not accept refugees from non-EU countries. All individual stories by refugees and surveys conducted over ten years indicate little material or socio-moral support for refugees. Instead, they are, by and large, perceived as a threat to Lithuania's economy, security and national culture. Considering the fact that Lithuania is an emigration country – one of the few migrant-sending countries in the EU with low immigration rates, and the fact that Lithuania has not been a destination for refugees, unlike Germany or Sweden, the question I want to explore in this article is why there is a resistance expressed toward refugees within the Lithuanian government officials and among citizens.

Local stories about refugees in media and reality

Recently, I was travelling with a person from the Middle East who has friends with refugee status in other European countries. We had some time to talk about the refugee

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

crisis, integration, and present-day situation in Lithuania and Europe overall. This person required to remain anonymous and explained:

“You know, the refugee status – some are really honest, but others really do not need this status. Some have really lost their business, families, lost everything, then I understand that he had really suffered from war and is in a difficult situation. Then I agree and respect that he is looking for a better life. But we are again on the same topic, about the one who is going to Europe just because of money, that they can rip off the money like easy pick from the trees; these people have got the idea that all are torturing us, we are refugees, all the world financially lives from us, all the organisations, government¹⁵.”

Hearing this made me stop and reconsider the effects of local resistance against the refugees and their integration into Lithuanian society and the ignorance of Lithuanians regarding refugees' personal and collective histories. Perhaps people may start to think differently if they heard these private refugees accounts. When they are perceived as faceless, ahistorical masses invading one's country and creating moral panic¹⁶, there is no fissure in refugees' shared cultural hegemonic model. Instead, I was given access to this man's story and his expression of fear of locals and the negative portrayals of refugees spread by the mass media. This interaction led me to reconsider how the media portrays reality and what reality even is. After all, it is impor-

tant to note that the public debate on the refugee crisis has been strongly influenced by the negative media coverage and anti-immigration rhetoric espoused by some politicians in recent years. Following these reflections, I conducted a media analysis on the Internet and collected data on the attitudes of Lithuanians towards refugees. One of the articles in the major news outlet introduced refugees as “Arab-looking men (police confirmed that most of them had refugee documents) [that] rushed, robbed and even raped women in the middle of the city”¹⁷. Another news website wrote that “as it turned out refugees planned an act of terrorist revenge plot against for the British person who saved and sheltered them from the war”¹⁸. Headings like “the Euro will not be spared to refugees: enviable benefits will be provided”¹⁹ naturally arouse anger throughout society and create engagement rather than merely passive resistance in the process. Media content only helps to strengthen the problem, show it unresolvable and bring about a negative attitude to the society, with the refugees being presented primarily as burdens and threats. The results surprised me: in addition to the mentioned data above (almost 70% had a negative response), there were also numerous sarcastic comments about refugees, like: “Right! Why f*ck up pensions, scholarships, payments to mothers and people with disabilities? Better give this money to these cattle”. Another person expressed anger that “my mother, who has worked for 32 years for the good of the

15 In the text, I will refer to my source informant as a SA. From the personal communication with SA, 2019.

16 As investigated by Cohen, 1972.

17 Mazuronis, 2016.

18 Navickas, 2017.

19 Spurytė, 2015.

country, receives a pension of 174 euros. Bravo!!!”²⁰.

These facts made me think about the role of mass media in shaping reality. Examined data revealed that the stereotypes, negative perceptions, considerable resistance within the society of Lithuania and locals’ fear about refugees taking their jobs are being constructed by the information espoused by mass media. Nevertheless, considering my anonymous respondent SA’s story, I started to think that there are many Lithuanians who are confronting economic difficulties, and it makes them feel angry that funds are being diverted to newcomers. One Lithuanian said: “retirees will continue to be destitute, kopecks will be paid to everyone, Muslims (he used the Lithuanian jargon “babajus”, which is a contemptuous word for Muslims) will be brought in, they will not work, and our money will be handed out to them...”. What is more, there are many people who ask, – “did those officials who decided to accept “refugees” even listen to Lithuanian taxpayers?”²¹.

Statistics Lithuania surveyed Lithuanians in 2010 with a similar question to the Institute for Ethnic Studies study: “do you think immigration to Lithuania is a positive or negative phenomenon?”. In 2017, the study was followed up with the question: “what policy should the Lithuanian government adopt towards refugees coming to Lithuania?”. Nearly 60% of those surveyed

in 2010 reported negatively, and in 2017 there was no difference, as the overall responses also showed a predominantly negative attitude towards refugees. Research data also showed a negative perception of refugees and a close resemblance between what people say on social media and the negative survey responses toward refugees. The negative perceptions are not necessarily direct attacks on the refugees themselves but indirect reactions to and expressions of many Lithuanians’ economic troubles. Many also seem to doubt the authenticity of the “refugee” status of refugees. It is made clear with statements such as: “They are looking for handouts from rich countries”; “they do not feel responsible for their own lives”; “some of them do not want to work”; “impatient, aggressive”; “I do not like refugees who use the refugee status despite not being actual refugees’ themselves”²².

These are some of the negative expressions towards refugees extracted from my free list²³ questions on refugees. It showed that locals do not maintain a positive attitude mainly because they are perceived as benefitting from unfairly given privileges by the government, which seems unfair to local people. Thus, they have an exceedingly negative opinion of refugees as being disrespectful to our country, “unwilling to

²² Dapkūnaitė, 2018.

²³ The free list technique is used to define all of the items in a cognitive domain. As a cognitive anthropological technique, the free list enables the extraction of items or lists that exist in a cultural domain. It helped me in representing how individuals interpret the world. To understand how Lithuanians think about and interpret refugees in their culture, I combined it with participant observation and other methods.

²⁰ Anonymous comment on: BNS, *Pabėgėliams bus mokama papildoma kompensacija*. Ve.lt, 2017.

²¹ Anonymous comment on: Jačasukas, I. *Pabėgėlių agentūra sveikina Lietuvos sprendimą priimti pabėgėlius iš laivo Italijoje*. Delfi.lt [Online]. 2019.

integrate,”²⁴ and probably not genuine refugees at all. While other responses revealed other dimensions of resistance toward refugees, the main dimensions that stood out was a so-called zero-sum game or an “image of limited goods”²⁵. In other words, the prevalent view runs like this: refugees drained the finite amount of tax money, financial spending, and jobs that could be slated for “us” (i.e. Lithuanians). Also, in part to rationalise the above perception, refugees were likely to “create a climate of terror” or become “criminals”.

Recently, an interesting study with 1029 Lithuanian residents aged 15 and up all across Lithuania was carried out by Institute for Ethnic Studies²⁶. The study was concerned with locals’ communication with migrants from the non-EU Member States during the last 12 months preceding the study. The result showed that more than 50% of Lithuanians have not heard/seen or communicated with foreigners who were granted asylum (refugees or beneficiaries of international protection), and more than 50% of Lithuanians knew asylum seekers only from mass media (TV, radio, newspaper, Internet). Interestingly, just around 2% of Lithuanians had actually met a refugee. It is evident that media plays a significant role in how they are portrayed. Being a refugee advisor and repeatedly visiting the migration department or other related institutions, I noticed that quite often that officers from different institutions who have had even slight contact with refugees start to communicate in a nicer, more polite way,

like trying to help etc. Even though it may look like a part of their job performance, it could be explained that locals’ resistance depends on the direct connection they may have had with refugees – if there has been a direct connection, the resistance tends to decrease. Otherwise, it seems that locals are afraid of refugees, and they feel a kind of anger, mainly because of the financial support refugees obtain.

Nevertheless, the debate surrounding the portrayal of refugees still rages on in the mass media. When forming a judgment on the immigration and refugee issues, and the primary, and often, the most important source of information for the average person (especially those who lack personal experiences of mobility), as noted by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur²⁷, is the media. “As much as I would like to think positively of them, the media portrays them as something almost ‘horrible’ and ‘unwelcome’. It does cloud the judgment” – that was the answer of a young Lithuanian lady to my question about what comes to her mind first when she thinks of refugees. There have been many stories about why respondents believe other people do not like refugees. Mainly, the respondents said that the “negative opinion about refugees is largely related to the news from the mass media. We mostly hear that they are dangerous and a burden for the social security system”²⁸.

On the other hand, it could be argued that this is another case of one person being a tiny element of a bigger group of people.

24 Dapkūnaitė, 2018.

25 Foster, 1965.

26 Institute for Ethnic Studies, 2019.

27 Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976.

28 Dapkūnaitė, 2018.

Furthermore, awful negative news, representing a threat, often leaves more extensive traces in the minds of far more frequently than positive ones. Some studies show a relation between negative and appalling images and stronger conservative reactions, which may lay the groundwork for further shifting blaming on the media that acts as a source for the negative attitude of people towards refugees. Informants often told stories about how people get their negative portrayals of refugees: “They get their negative information from the media, so it is why people do not like refugees. People think that refugees use tax money, they can do terroristic acts, and they can be criminals”²⁹. I have also often heard that “Lithuanians are afraid of “different” people” and that it is the “fear of the unknown”³⁰. Given that the major ethnic group in Lithuania is Lithuanians, who make up 85.08% of the population, seeing a darker-skin, African or Asian face has been an infrequent experience even in the largest cities of Lithuania in the years up to 2000. The same mostly rings true even nowadays, especially in smaller towns or villages, or even some districts in bigger cities. Locals react to ethnic minorities and newcomers with different skin colour in a notably negative way. The almost exclusively negative coverage by the media should be thoroughly considered a barrier for refugee integration and assimilation. It prevents building an understanding of the interaction between citizens and refugees. Musaro and Parmiggiani³¹ have emphasised that if to oppose such negative narratives,

there is a need for innovative approaches that construct a positive public image of migrants and refugees.

Media and political stance

There have been several studies involving governmental and labour market integration measures, regarding which, for instance, authors Blažytė and Žibas³² pointed out that “to reduce the likelihood of refugees leaving Lithuania, the government initiated a number of legislative developments related to refugees’ social and economic rights, including labour market integration measures”. Further, authors³³ have reported that some positive changes for refugees were indeed brought on by these legislative developments, but “economic incentives are unlikely to create more socially responsible businesses”. Despite the more positive integration attempts through government policies, the resistance of governmental officers towards the refugees, and more broadly – immigrants, is remarkable.

Two years ago, I participated in a scientific forum to consider and put forth recommendations based on scientific knowledge to the “strategy for demography, migration and integration in Lithuania 2018–2030”³⁴. More information on the government attitudes and approach to refugees was

29 Dapkūnaitė, 2018.

30 *Ibid.*

31 Musaro and Parmiggiani, 2017.

32 Blažytė and Žibas, 2019, p.117.

33 *Ibid.*, p.118.

34 See in EC, *Strategy for demography, migration and integration 2018–2030*, unofficial translation: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/strategy-for-demography-migration-and-integration-2018-2030>.

presented during the event. Strangely, the event was highly lacking in information on governmental attitudes, and refugee integration approaches. The strategy presented was already developed, but one could barely find a few sentences about immigration – within the whole strategy document, there was no single word, idea or plan related to refugees and their integration. One scientist asked government officials representatives the following question: “I could not see any of the strategy related to the immigration and integration on this action plan for 2018–2030. Are you planning to include that part, keeping in mind that this strategy will last for the next 12 years?”³⁵. It seemed that the question produced a wave of indignation among representatives, and their answers only increased personal anxiety. They said that we have to take care of our returning Lithuanian migrants, only then about these “others”. Some of them became perplexed and nearly refused to speak about the refugees; you could easily feel the resistance. It seemed that they had no clue how to incorporate the refugee integration part into their more extensive immigration program. In the end, they just said that it is “important to attract the re-emigrants back home to Lithuania and that the main efforts and resources should be devoted to these returning Lithuanians”. At that moment, it looked like institutional resistance against immigrants and mainly refugees exist. Interestingly, numerous people mentioned politicians as a reason why Lithuanians are resistant to refugees in general: “Lithu-

35 From the scientist forum – discussion between the government officials and scientists. Lithuanian Social Research Centre, November 2018.

anian media and politicians have formed a negative picture” and “some politicians and media construct their opinion based on nationalism and fear”³⁶.

From the free list and NVivo data in media content, around 30% of respondents declared that their opinion on refugees was constructed by media content and statements from political officials. Given that, it might be considered that there is a relation between created media content and political stances and actions. “During the election, I will vote for the presidential candidate, who will speak against the refugees and their acceptance” – this was an answer given by a middle-aged male during our discussion on the then-upcoming presidential election (2019 spring). At that time, there were many news reports about the “refugee crisis” with different candidates presenting their position. In 2015, Goktuna and Karakus wrote that newspapers present and construct the news according to their ideological and political standpoint as well as the global views of their target readers³⁷.

If the media is the primary information source for citizens, then the media conveys the ideology and opinions of politicians who represent governmental institutions and thus shape the perceptions of the citizens. It is an important implication regarding the relationship between politics and the media; it mainly extracts the negative images of refugees that are magnified through the mutual manufacturing of consent. As reported by Goktuna and Karakus³⁸, another possible implication is that

36 Dapkūnaitė, 2018.

37 Goktuna, Karakus, 2015.

38 Goktuna, Karakus, 2015.

of the media's impact – media influences its audience by acting as both a reflector and a supporter of the hegemonic public opinion. In contrast, the relation between the media and the public effectively designates the government and public decisions on the subject.

One Lithuanian politician and a member of the European Parliament expressed his opinion in an authored newspaper column: “At the very beginning of the refugee crisis, I said that we would not deal with such an influx of refugees; we were not prepared for that. Not only Lithuania but also the whole EU is not ready. I have repeatedly stated that the quota system imposed by the community is flawed and divides society, the unity of the members of the community”³⁹.

Considering that, at that time, the number of refugees by any measure was particularly low (especially when compared to the Lithuanians' migration out of Lithuania): only 181 people had been granted refugee status; 316 foreigners participated in the social integration program at the Refugee Reception Centre, and 174 foreigners attended the social integration program in municipalities⁴⁰. The above newspaper article written by a political figure expresses explicitly the extreme resistance to refugees entering not just Lithuania but Europe as a whole. Furthermore, it indicates a mutual support loop between the media and the government officials in resisting the entrance and integration of refugees. Similarly, statements like “it is only for solidarity

without thinking about the consequences” with negative attitude implications already rampant in Lithuanian society can also be found. Moreover, the prevalence of negative refugee perceptions also can be seen in the business environment. The social worker who works with immigrants and refugees once have said: “we use migrants and treat them in a bad way”⁴¹. This sort of treatment is very telling of the miserable situation that refugees constantly find themselves in, as some of the Lithuanian government officials are doing nothing to tackle the integration problem, yet they are able to instill a negative attitude nonetheless. In general, the media supports the government's decisions and can influence local society and act as a reflector, building up the dominant ideology and bringing down the attitudes toward refugees to the Lithuanian public. Although the governmental policies are being slowly improved, as suggested by Blažytė and Žibas⁴², there exists a pressing “need to implement diversity and inclusion policies at the workplace to create a more welcoming environment”. I would take it a step further and claim that this is needed not only in the workplace but also at the governmental level, which, in turn, would positively affect the news media's and, thus, the population's attitudes towards refugees.

Conclusions

While the receiving society, in this case, Lithuanian citizens, plays an important role in integrating refugees, societal at-

39 Mazuronis, 2016.

40 Statistics Lithuania, 2017.

41 From the private conversation. The social worker required to remain anonymous.

42 Blažytė and Žibas, 2019.

titude towards the refugees occurs as a strong indicator of an inclusive environment in local communities⁴³. Once again, I would like to highlight the fact that the vast majority of Lithuanians do not have any direct contact with refugees, indicating the vital role of the mass media in shaping local people's perception of refugees. The analysed news media sites frame refugees mainly in terms of negative stereotypes and take no account of the bigger picture, neither highlighting the difficulties that they face, nor informing the public on how the integration system works, the obstacles refugees must overcome, or why integration is necessary and ultimately beneficial to Lithuanian society. The perceived cultural resistance towards refugees and the role of locals' attitudes could be considered as critical cultural vectors in the process of integrating refugees into Lithuanian society. Despite the attempts of more favourable government policies on refugees and their integration, significant resistance to refugees still persists among governmental

officers. As such, governmental policies should tackle the problem of refugees' integration at a much larger scale. That way, mass media could reflect a more positive attitude to the Lithuanian citizens and be encouraged to post positive stories of refugees during the process of cultural integration to alleviate a sense of "moral panic"⁴⁴. Finally, ethnographic methods, free-list method, informal conversations, online surveys, media content analysis are important not only in describing the effects and process of participation of refugees in everyday life but together with demographic trends, refugee numbers and immigration rates, it can also help to understand the interaction between citizens and refugees, how they are being perceived and how it may lead to integration. These used methods helped to reflect Lithuanian attitudes to refugees and represent a cultural pattern of thought. However, further studies are needed to reach any conclusive results and to indicate important cultural vectors better.

43 Blažytė, Žibas, 2019.

44 Cohen, 1972.

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