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Anthropology

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**Work hard and love will follow: refugees, employment, and integration in
Estonia**

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I hereby confirm that I am the sole author of the thesis submitted. All the works and conceptual viewpoints by other authors that I have used, as well as data deriving from sources have been appropriately attributed.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between employment and integration from the point of view of refugees in Estonia. In the past decade, immigration to Estonia has increased significantly, raising concerns about social integration amongst policy as well as public discourse. Despite the small proportion in the migrant population, in 2015-2016 asylum-seekers and refugees became the focus of public controversy, framed as an issue for state security and budget. A core aspect of migrant support services is concerned with finding employment. In this thesis, I explore the meaning of work and employment from the point of view of five refugees, who have lived in Estonia for two to three years. Through ethnographic interviews and participant observation, I follow their life trajectories, narratives and everyday life to explore the role of work and working in integration and in crafting a sense of belonging. I draw on the literature of economic anthropology of work and labour, with a nod to refugee and migration studies. With this thesis, I offer an insight into the lived experience of integration through work by way of conversations and stories shared with me. In my analysis, I show how the meaning of work for refugees in Estonia includes more complex personal motivations, emotions, and practices than public discourse and integration policy considers.

Chapter 1. Introduction

In 2015-2016 refugee migration became a divisive social issue in politics and public discourse in Estonia. Articles in media detailed concerns of local citizens, which framed refugees as a burden to state finances and a danger to society. The controversy around refugees peaked in the summer of 2015 with multiple displays of hate: anti-immigration protests around Estonia (organised by Right Conservatives) and an arson attempt that set part of Vao asylum centre on fire (Teder, 2015). The number of adult refugee migrants who arrived in Estonia at the time was only slightly over 200.

The politics of belonging to the Estonian state are managed, monitored, and implemented by integration policy. The context where the refugees arrive and are expected to integrate is situated in historical trajectory of transition from post-Soviet to neoliberal economic structure. As characteristic to Western neoliberal economies, the past decade has seen changes in forms of work and employment relations. According to Estonian statistics, in the past three years, the amount of people in the labour market has increased, while the employment relations have become shorter in duration and the numbers of short-term contracts as well as freelancers are increasing (Rootalu, 2021). While the forms and organization of work is changing, it can be observed the impact of the Soviet ideal of work still maintains a strong influence on the perceptions of work.

In my perspective, the field of this ethnographic research at hand, the space in which these topics of work and migration become animated, started revealing itself to me in 2019, when I first got involved with a non-governmental organisation that aims to support integration. I worked on different projects aimed at providing support for learning language and job search for refugees as well as contributed to a social enterprise, a cafe and catering company that hires refugees and offers Middle Eastern cuisine. My colleagues had close contacts with refugees and had worked on community-based projects for years, organising events for locals and migrants to meet, language learning, etc. In the process of applying for project grants, discussing about issues migrants face in Estonia with my colleagues here as well as in Norway and Finland and other interactions in the arena of integration, I developed an impression that employment is considered one of the most important aspects of integration and

finding long-term sustained

employment a central struggle in the lives of refugees. But what does that mean? Why is work so important? Why is it a struggle?

In the first chapter, I will address the social and economic environment of where the belonging is taking place. I discuss the politics of belonging in immigration and integration policy and unpack some defining characteristics of the Estonian economy and society and explore underlying ideas of what work means.

In the second chapter I will dive deeper into the stories and experiences of the participants in this research, refugees from Turkey, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. The way humans navigate their lives, in our relationships at work and otherwise, is informed by our upbringing and background. In this chapter, highlight the tensions between expectations and reality of work and employment as well as the ways in which individuals experience integration, and work to craft a sense of social belonging through or despite employment.

Employment can take on many different forms and involve a range of practices. One theme in anthropology of work is studying the use of time in industrialised and deindustrialised forms of work. In the third chapter, I analyse the use and perception of time to further understand relations between work, employment, and integration. My argument is based on participant observation in driving along with a Bolt delivery driver. By focusing on the perception and use of time, I explore the ways in which driving can be an arena for constructing belonging.

“Work hard and love will follow” is a quote by Anton Hansen Tammsaare, author of the series “Truth and Justice”, a classic piece of Estonian literature. The quote may be interpreted to characterise a value system where love is a reward for hard work and effort. At the same time, the wording has an instructional quality, suggesting that in order to have love, one must work hard. In this thesis, I explore the relations between work and love by unpacking these terms in policy as well as individual context of employment and belonging. I consider the relations between employment and integration through exploring what work means for refugees who live and work in Estonia. I turn to the individuals in the centre of the policy, support systems, public discourse, who work in this context. In the conversations with my research participants, my assumptions, doubts and contradictions encounter the stories of hope, grief and value. This dynamic brings to light the richness and nuance of what we mean when we talk about

work, as well as the highlights the richness of ways in which belonging is crafted. Throughout my thesis, I argue that work is more than an employment contract, a labelled position or a means towards an end of integration — constructing a sense of belonging through employment includes the work of imagination and hope.

Work, labour and employment

In order to discuss theories work, labour and employment, it is important to contextualise them in the current economic landscape. Estonian economy is characterised by a low unemployment rate. According to Statistics Estonia, in 2021 6,2% of 15-74-year-olds were currently not officially employed. The unemployment rate of other nationals is slightly higher, 7.9% than in Estonians (4.9%) but less than among Russian Estonians (9.8%). Unemployment rates are highest in Eastern Estonia among Russian Estonians, illustrating a segregation at the labour market. Estonian labour market also faces other structural challenges. One of the challenges is the ageing and shrinking of the population, which means that the labour-power is decreasing. The shortage of labour-power is to some extent expected to be remedied by immigration, in both highly paid IT and communication fields as well as low-paid technical jobs. Another challenge is the skills mismatch in the labour market which causes job shortages in some industries and labour shortages in others (for instance, social work and information and communication technologies industries are predicted to need twice as much labour-power in the coming decade (OSKA, 2017). Yet another challenge is the high risk of poverty amongst the Estonian unemployed due to a very limited unemployment benefit coverage.

Work has been discussed as central to the way of being in the world and to the construction of the self (for example Rose, 1990; Gini, 2001; Budd, 2011). Employment is a technical term to describe time-based, waged labour in industrial societies, while work can be defined as a ‘purposeful, goal-oriented physical or mental activity that requires energy expenditure’ that ‘transforms physical matter, ideas, or social relationships’ (Kesküla, 2018). Work is therefore a wider concept than employment and the two are not necessarily synonymous. Work can be paid or unpaid and it occurs in the context of an employment relation or in other spheres, such as home. For example, Rajkovic (2018) introduced the term ‘mock labour’ to describe the everyday activities of employees in a Serbian firm selling spare car parts, subject to a policy that finances unprofitable employment. Unable to meaningfully exert goal-oriented effort, work, employees conducted ‘ritualized performances of productivity’ (ibid, p. 47). A

contrasting example would be unpaid housework in the domestic sphere such as kin work – the unpaid work of the conception, maintenance, and ritual celebration of cross-household kin (di Leonardo, 1987). Feminist scholarship on gendered division of labour has brought to light the value of non-market work and role of women’s unpaid labour in production.

Zygmunt Bauman (2013) has introduced the metaphor of ‘liquid modernity’ to describe the contemporary condition of increased mobility, fast-paced change and never-ending efforts of progress he observes in relationships, identities, and global economics. In liquid modernity, where short-term contracts and ethos of flexibility are replacing life-long commitment to an occupation, Bauman describes work as “defined by uncertainty” and argues that “work can no longer offer the secure axis around which to wrap and fix self-definitions, identities and life projects” (p. 139). Jeremy Rifkin (1998) in his influential book ‘End of work’ suggests ‘the edge of a near workerless world’. The so-called end of work prophecies have been criticised as simplifying complex issues (Strangleman, 2007) and debates around importance of work are ongoing.

Robberman’s (2014) has written about a paradox that describes end of work in neoliberal economies. While institutions and the public discourse are founded on the work ethic, where work is seen as the pillar of morality for an individual, societies are unable to provide secure, meaningful, full-time work for everyone. Thus, the demand ‘to work’ in the old, prevailing sense remains, but due to the structures of neoliberal economies, it is difficult to fulfil. Grey (1994), drawing on the work of Giddens (1981), has theorized that in contemporary times, individuals construe themselves as projects, which they hold individual responsibility for regulating and managing. The self becomes a process of maximising, optimising, improving and regulating different fields of life. In the work of construing the ‘project of the self’ ‘career’ is a powerful technology, ‘a vehicle for the self to become’ (p. 481). Most importantly, the work on the project of the self is not confined to a set tasks or labour hours in the workplace, instead it is pervasive to the entire being that operates on the underlying assumption: ‘we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves’ (Giddens, 1991). Individualised notions of progress together with narratives of being flexible become internalised in our narratives of ourselves.

Another understanding of work relies on existentialist philosophy and emphasises individuality and individual agency. Rapport (2003) in his book ‘I am Dynamite’ uses the concept of a life

project – a destination or a direction in life according to which one takes action and forms relations, or works. The idea of an individual working on their life-project refers to the power resided within an individual to engage in relations and actions and to interpret them, a power that according to Rapport is not accounted for in the context of structures such as institutions. This approach sees work as individual effort rather than in relation to economy.

In this thesis, I explore what work means for refugees themselves. I address the relations and tensions between work and employment, and discuss how in the changing organisations and forms of fluid and precarious work relations inform individual's sense of self and belonging.

Refugees and work

Refugee, like migrant, asylum-seeker, is a socially constructed category that relies on the nationalist conceptualisation of the world, as upheld by borders. Anthropological literature has discussed the institutions, practices and discourses that construct these categories and produce refugees, for instance borders (Koshravi, 2009). Refugees have been conceptualized as being in a state of instability, it is a transitive experience.

Malkki (1995), describes as *refugeeness* “as a way of understanding the particular subjective experience in relation to existing refugee policies” (p. 163).” I align with the anthropological aim to focus on the subjective, lived experience, reflections and practices associated with refugeeness. Refugees in Estonia have been studied in the context of asylum centres. For context, processing asylum applications takes about six months, during which migrants live in Vao centre that offers counselling opportunities, Estonian language classes, social activities as well as culture and integration courses, including seminars about finding employment etc. Although technically Vao is a transitional, temporary place, Anderson (working paper, n.d.) argues that rather than a ‘non-place’, as these centres are often portrayed as in anthropological literature, refugees in Vao asylum centre have a variety of unique home making practices and spend their time in a planned, productive way, resulting in new skills, friendships, etc. Islam (2017; 2020) has studied the importance of story-telling amongst asylum-seekers and Astapova (2020) the self-reflexive metaphors Russian speaking refugees in Estonia use (Astapova, 2020). The analysis of this thesis is grounded in conversations with refugees, who had at the time lived in Estonia for 2-3 years and were already involved in some type of employment.

Emerging class of the precariat. Standing (2012), conceptualises three branches of the

precariat as the emergent socioeconomic class - the ex-proletariat, the over-qualified professionals working underpaid flexi-jobs, and the vagrants: the migrants, the criminals, and others whose status denies them full rights of citizens. Lewis et al (2015) discuss the power relations in markets at the global North that place migrants and refugees to the bottom of social guarantees and exacerbate a hyper-precarity. Skvirskaja (2020) argues that we 'should not conflate the precariat with ideas about vulnerability' or necessarily associate it with 'victimhood', and acknowledge the strategic consideration involved in preferred choices of livelihood (p. 786).

One ethnography I found particularly inspiring was Roberman's (2013) research of Russian Jewish refugees in Germany. Roberman (2013) argues, that in the lives of these migrants, the 'search for meaningful and sustained employment is likely the most acute and problematic experience' in their relocation to the host country (p. 1). Individuals from diverse social and professional backgrounds, such as musical education or technical field professionals, were all observed to remain somewhat unsettled years after their arrival, fluctuating between a variety of part-time and temporary positions and alternative work schemes. Often, the migrants viewed these jobs as substitutes to real, full-time secure employment, *erzats* rather than of real value. One of the migrants explained her participation in this type of projects by saying: 'we have to work in order to realize ourselves, to feel that we are part of the society' (p. 9), emphasising the importance that having secure employment and advancing in one's employment positions have in creating the sense of belonging to one's community. These accounts of migration illustrate that the arena of work plays 'a formative role' in self-perception especially in the context of relocation (p. 2). The Jewish migrants in Germany operate at the margin of local labour markets, job-creation programmes, due to being 'foreigners' and are thus embedded in a cycle of not perceive themselves as fully part of the German society and not being able to gain employment due to not being 'German enough'. They are employed but in a way that accentuates otherness rather than belonging.

De Jong (2018) focuses on refugees' success rather than failure in the labour market and discusses the migrant support service sector (large NGOs (partly) contracted by the state, semi governmental institutions, autonomous grassroots NGOs and migrant self-organisations), particularly in the UK, Austria and the Netherlands. The author argues that 'refugeeness', is perceived as capital and enables individuals access to employment in refugee service sector, but simultaneously limits career mobility and results in devalued labour. The role of work and employment in social belonging depends on the socio-economic context of the arrival, as well

as the departure location. My thesis will address the ways in which individuals' background informs how they see the role of work and employment in the context of constructing belonging in Estonia.

Hope and future visualisations

Meaning-making and constructing social belonging are relational and contextual processes that involve intimate practices of reflecting on the past and imagining a future. According to Yuval Davis (2006), belonging is "always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity" of which politics of belonging is concerned with "a naturalized construction of a particular hegemonic form of power relations". According to this analytical framework, the study of politics of belonging and belonging, therefore, should not be conflated. In this thesis, I discuss both. In my discussions of belonging, I view it as a personal and complex experience that can be described with the help of concepts of hope, and imagination.

Berlant (2011) has written about optimism and how it can become cruel – when the object that draws our attachment, 'a cluster of promises we expect someone or something to fulfil', actively impedes our flourishing. the affective structures of optimistic attachments. Appadurai (1991) in the context of globalised mobility of people and images, imagination has become an important and peculiar social force. Appadurai suggests that "these complex, partly imagined lives must now form the bedrock of ethnography, at least of the sort of ethnography that wishes to retain a special voice in a transnational, deterritorialized world" (p. 199). Narotzky and Beznier (2014) have written about the nexus of crisis, value, and hope as analytical tools to describe the ordinary and everyday lives and practices of individuals as opposed to abstract economic models. In order to understand how individuals make life worth living in pursuit of livelihood and to explore the relationships between abstract economic models and ordinary people.

Methodological approaches and participants

This thesis is by no means an exhaustive study of the life-worlds of my informants. Rather, it is pointed at the specific intersection of employment and integration for refugees, who have already lived here for some time. Based on our conversations, I believe my informants'

experiences of feelings of belonging, working, or looking for work may have been quite different having just arrived, and are quite different in the present moment.

At the beginning of my research project, I contacted the refugees I had met as well as those who I hadn't met and were referred to by my colleagues. Quite a few of my attempts at recruiting participants were left unanswered and in the end, most of the individuals in this paper are people I had already met by the time of the beginning of my research. Most of my informants can be

generally described as coming from white-collar backgrounds. I spent the most time with Khalid, a Pakistani man in his early thirties who at the time worked as a delivery driver at Bolt. He grew up in the very wealthy elite of Lahore and had had an established career. Every Tuesday, from 11 am to around 21 pm, I would drive along while he delivered food orders around Tallinn. I didn't conduct structured or semi-structured interviews with him, most of the analysis is based on our conversations, which on some occasions were dialogues and other cases me offering a prompt and him thinking out loud. Other than the distinct field of time and space of Khalid's car, there was little to mark the boundaries between the fieldwork and my ordinary life.

I also spent time and recorded an interview with Osman (a taxi driver for Bolt at the time) and his wife Dilara, both Turkish nationals, at their home. Osman used to work as an official in a school. Serkan and Leyla are another Turkish couple, former teachers, who live in Pärnu with their nine-year-old daughter. They invited me to their home where I spent an afternoon hanging out and conducting an interview. I met up with Aziz, a young man from Tajikistan to record an interview. In addition to that I also met up with Aziz and Khalid on evenings off from work, for a walk or a drink and I became good friends with them.

Although I had a questionnaire, I deliberately approached my research participants directly with my research questions (before turning to detailed interview questions), in order to have space for reflection and intellectualization of one's own experiences. I adhere to a school of thought where emotional involvement, emotional reflexivity and friendship with participants consolidate a rich resource rather than a 'problem' to be managed with distance and formality. While cultivating friendship was not a goal in itself, nor a methodological tool, I view friendship as a philosophical leaning in my approach that attempts to challenge and disrupt a potential power imbalance between researcher and participant (Owton and Allen-Collinson, 2014). By harnessing the outcomes of features of friendship as an "ongoing communicative

management of dialectical tensions” such as judgement and acceptance or instrumentality and affection, the research participants can be acknowledged as coproducers of the research (Rawlins, 1992). I believe the friendship stance and supported an environment where my interlocutors brought up themes that were important to them personally.

A key issue I encountered while transcribing and writing was the language barrier. Except for Khalid, who speaks English, me and my informants often spoke in a blend of English and Estonian. While in face to face contact the body language, looks, expressions and showing

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photos to illustrate stories made up for the lack of linguistic vocabulary, in writing the meaning may seem less clear and lack the depth of direct communication in the moment. I was faced with the dilemma of whether it would be more accurate to heavily edit vocabulary, syntax and grammar or to retell the story in my own words, both of which would include considerable intervention of my own judgement and analysis. At the same time, I appreciated the shared practice of stumbling over words and creatively constructing new expressions as a fun way of building rapport.

Chapter 2. Work and immigration in Estonia

In this chapter, I address the politics of belonging in Estonia. I will demonstrate that employment is seen as central to local integration policy as well as in the public discourse around migration and social belonging. In order to contextualise integration I will discuss public discourse and the social relations in Estonia. I argue that the practice and discourse of integration policies conceptualise work and integration in technical ways that overlook the complexity, variety and richness of meanings that occur in Estonian context.

We need to be choosy about immigrants

The politics of belonging involves managing of the boundaries of a political community, a boundary that divides people into ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006). In 2017, The Estonian Human Development report titled Estonia at the Age of Migration and includes the following paragraph:

“The experience of European countries with mass immigration of skilled and unskilled workers has shown that while immigrants can do the necessary jobs that often require lower skills, it comes at a price: long-standing problems related to a decline in social cohesion. After phasing out the current passive migration policy, Estonia could consider an active migration policy that is based on labour market needs and the country’s integration capacity.”

Here, in the phrasing that includes potential decline in social cohesion as a ‘price’ to pay for ‘low skilled immigrants’ there are a few assumptions worth noticing: immigrants are either skilled or low skilled; immigration is a matter of cost-benefit analysis that puts social cohesion and labour into an equation; there is an anxiety about social cohesion and integration capacity. On the state and institutional level, constructing social cohesion is imagined and conceptualised within the policy of integration. The integration policy, discourse and institutions in Estonia have its roots in the 1990s, when first efforts of addressing the conflict and distance between Estonians and Estonian Russians were being made. In an ethnography of integration in 1999- 2001 Estonia, Feldman (2008) researched the attitudes of policy-makers in charge of the State Programme of integration and the NGOs appointed to

implement the programmes with the aim to transform “non-Estonians into citizens who can “competently” function in Estonian society”. The author argues that Estonian integration policy is based on the European laws and regulations, which are rooted in a territorialist imaginary, in which ethnicity, culture and nation are isomorphic with the state territory. In European and Estonian integration policy at the time, citizenship and culture, and therefore ethnic minorities, were rendered as matters of (inter)national security, something to address with policy interventions. The Human Development Report concludes that ‘we need to be choosy about immigrants’, suggesting that there are clear markers of who is and isn’t welcome in Estonia. Integration is therefore the system that remedies the potential decline in social cohesion. In the context of refugee migration, Malkki (1992) has critiqued the concept of integration for over-problematizing refugees, and relying on a territorialized notions of nationality, in which refugeeness is considered a moral and spiritual problem, a deviation of the norm of being rooted in one geographical location. In 2015, the discourse that conceives of refugees as an issue for safety could still be recognised in some cases of mainstream media. For instance, an article published in one of the most read newspapers, *Äripäev*, titled “9 dangers of refugees to Estonia”, lists potential hazards as well as methods to alleviate them, e.g. a solution for “danger to political stability” was listed simply as “training the refugees” (*Äripäev*, 2015). Indeed, in 2016, it became compulsory of each refugee to complete an integration course *Settle in Estonia* that included seminars on basics such as finding a place to live, transport and laws, as well as employment and Estonian culture.

The general strategy for migrant integration in Estonia is that rather than build new interventions and institutions to support integration, the existing support and institutions available should be accommodated to be accessible to migrants (Roots, 2020). Actors in the field of integration include local non-governmental organisations (such as Estonian Refugee Council, Johannes Mihkelsoni keskus, International House Tartu) and foundations (*Integratsiooni Sihtasutus* - Estonian Foundation for Integration, *Work in Estonia*). Supporting migrants and refugees in search of employment is one of the main activities of each of these organisations. They offer refugees and migrants educational courses about the Estonian culture and labour market in the form of seminars and workshops about the Estonian culture and labour market. The head of the Refugee Council, Anu Viltrop argues that in their experience, work is a good site for integration and that unemployment leads to disappointment and isolation (2019). There are also two social enterprises, restaurant and catering companies

offering Middle Eastern and other ethnic cuisines, that are based on the principle that being employed is a priority. They offer refugees jobs or occasional shifts as cooks or chefs also if they do not fit the standard educational or language requirements for similar jobs in the local job market. The schedules are flexible in order to accommodate caring commitments, studies, and reduced ability to work. There is a prevailing discourse of ‘getting used to Estonian work culture’ in these programmes.

Integration as conceptualised by the state is monitored with mainly technical measures. A research project called RITA-RÄNNE was carried out from 2017 to 2021 by a network of local policy research centres and Estonian Research Council. The main methodology in monitoring integration included an integration index. The integration index comprises three sub-indexes: relationships with Estonians (amount of Estonians in an individual’s network and frequency of interaction), connections with institutions (measures the connections with labour market, educational institutions and others) and connections with Estonia (measures how well the migrant has adapted, how good they feel and for how long and in what way they wish to be connected to Estonia in the future) (Roots, 2020). The integration monitoring cites as main sites of integration have been studied to be a ‘sufficient amount of time spent in contact with locals’, ‘geographical contact’ and ‘social contact’ (Danzer ja Ulku, 2011), as well as the national/ethnic composition of the workplace, school and home area (meaning whether there is contact with the majority nationality). In this methodology, integration is divided into series of technical processes that can be measured separately. But what do these social and geographical contacts actually look like and what do they mean? In the policy documents, monitoring, articles and NGO programmes, there is little reference to the differences in the type of work and no explanations of how particular jobs or workplaces contribute to social belonging, or integration. Besides the indices, there seems to be little scientific attention on the process of forging connections and learning about Estonian culture takes place in different workplaces and ways of labouring. The personal meaning of work for the individuals looking to attain employment is left unaddressed, as well as the sociality of the labour market that the supposed integration is supposed to take place.

Work, labour and public discourse around refugees in Estonia

“Estonia is not happy about refugees: people fear vehicle fires, street riots and rape” was the title of one of many media articles citing local citizens. Another theme was misinformation

and rumours spreading about the amount of financial support for refugees (Põld, 2015). Article about an anti-refugee rally featured comments from participants, such as “I think we have better places to put money” (Õhtuleht, 2015). Concerns about money reflect the imagination of the political right in Europe as well as globally, asylum-seeking individuals as economic actors are often seen as liabilities and constitute a burden to the society (Koshravi, 2010). The xenophobic acts and media coverage of the refugee crisis of 2015-2016 was focused on refugees from third countries. ‘Hybrid media systems’ (Chadwick, 2013) characterized by a complex interdependence between old and new media logics, significantly shaped the structure and dynamics of current public debates. Ojala et al. (2019) in their analysis of presidential speeches and reactions of public media to the speeches, Ojala et al. (2019) compare the affective discursive positions towards refugees in Finland and Estonia, and find that while official speeches expressed sympathy and solidarity with refugees, tabloid media reactions and comments express ‘deep anger and distrust of the political elites’. Pöyhtäri et al. (2015), using big data analytics in Finnish old and new media, showed how the hybrid media system created a space for the polarization of the refugee debate in 2015-2016. According to their research, this polarization was particularly enforced by an active group of politically motivated anti-immigrant users. Similar patterns can be noticed in Estonian hybrid media representations on the issues surrounding refugees. A media analysis of Estonia’s most prominent news channels of 2015-2018 showed almost half of the news stories of migrants represented migration in the framework of a conflict, suggesting a narrative of problematic or dangerous phenomenon, while stories of human interest were in the background (Kaal and Renser, 2019). These mechanisms were reflected in the public discourse and attitudes towards refugees, characterised by suspicion and controversy.

One way to unpack the social context in which this discourse occurs is by exploring what is considered acceptable, the concept of normality. The word ‘normal’ (*normaalne*) in Estonian is frequently used in everyday language to describe the surrounding world, people, moods, situations, culturally acceptable lifestyles etc. In her analysis of Estonian’s consumption habits in mid-nineties, Rausing (2002) explored what the term ‘normal’ means for Estonians in the context nationality and what kind of behaviours and characteristics constitute ‘normal’. The author found that ‘normal’ was often used to highlight and differentiate from the Soviet, often derogatorily referred to as ‘not normal’. Therefore, for many Soviet Estonians, the Sovietic

way of doing things were considered ‘not normal’, a deviation from the normality, where Estonians actually belong to the cultural and geographical realm of the West. The personal characteristics described by post-Soviet Estonians as ‘normal’ by her research participants were associated with being quiet, stubbornness and individualism, while the Russians were in contrast associated with disorder, emotionality, and a tendency towards collectivity and brutality (Rausig, 2002). The Soviet occupation and systems were and are seen as a deviation and in sharp contrast with a perceived and accepted ‘Estonian way’. However, in the context of refugee migration (during the time of my research), the language and familiarity seemed to position Russian migrants in closer proximity to Estonians and normality. In a media interview with the head of the Estonian Refugee Council (Rup, 2020), Anu Viltrop said:

“The Ukrainian or Russian refugee is considered more like ‘one of our own’ because we already have these communities here and because their names are not so unusual. In addition to that, Russian is widely spoken in Estonia so information is more accessible, which makes it easier for them than for others.” /my translation/

This comment points out the selective, racializing Othering of migrants that are perceived to deviate from the normal. In addition to that, the ways in which ‘us’ and ‘them’ categories are constructed can be traced back interactions in everyday life as shaped by the economic context. Ray (2009) has suggested, that the particular combination of post-socialist class formation and integration into global institutions generates a variety of local effects and conflicts. For Ray, one characteristic of post-Soviet societies and economic relations is informality, a situation where ‘a (large) number of processes, procedures and habits are shaped according to and within practices that resist formalisation or regulation from above’ and things are achieved through ‘connections’ (in Estonian *tutvuste kaudu*) (Morris and Polese 2015). The importance of informal practices arises from the particularities of the Soviet collectivised economic system. Firstly, central planning resulted in shortages of food and products which needed to be remedied; secondly, the monopoly of state property where everything was essentially public blurred the boundaries between public and private, and thirdly, the centralised, future-oriented and closed nature of the economy enhanced the ‘us and them’ mentality at all levels (Watts, 2002). Also, Watts (2002) emphasises the role of informality in transitional economies, where the defects of the emerging market system are compensated for by informal networks and the low trust in state systems shifts the burden of trust onto interpersonal relationships. A study of the Estonian labour market in 1998 found that more than half of the participants found their current position through acquaintances (Hansson, 2000). The study

emphasised the differences in the social networks of Estonians and non-Estonians – while locals' social networks and friendship groups are mostly their university friends, non-Estonians mostly constructed their friendship groups at the workplace (since most likely they attended universities outside of Estonia) (Hansson, 2000). Annist (2013) has described in her research of rural Estonian villages, that since the restructuring to market economy, people rely less on informal relations. This is because previously, in the Soviet times, informal networks were built around access to information and services, getting something through acquaintances was a strategy to cope with deficit. However, with market economy, transactions and market relationships became the main ways of acquiring things and services and thus former social relationships and trust disintegrated. In addition to that, the Estonian economy has been described as 'classless but highly unequal' meaning that there is no widespread discourse or acceptance of where one is positioned in the social stratification, and instead of class solidarity and inequality is internalised (Helemäe et al. 2012). Therefore, the forms and pathways of interaction informed by the past may be shaped in ways that favour a strong sense of the 'other' and exclusion.

Forced displacement involves a disruption of a feeling of belonging – an affective attachment, feeling safe and at home. In the discourse that represents refugees negatively, the immorality of being dependent on the state and not working becomes associated with being a foreigner. In my view, the sense of belonging through reciprocity, and value contribution also appeared in my conversations with my informants, for instance in this line of thinking:

“I like to give money, instead of taking money. Back in my home country my family would always donate to charities and give money to the poor. I don't like to get money from Töötukassa [Unemployment Insurance Fund] because getting money is like...it's like now I am the poor.”

Another one of my interlocutors, upon my asking for advice to whom else I could ask to participate in my research project, recommended his friend who 'speaks Estonian the best of all refugees in Estonia' and who recently got a new job as a teacher in a local school: “Call him, he's Estonia's best refugee!” /my translation/

There are some tensions in the ways in which work is seen as central importance in the context of refugee migration in policy, economist analysis and public discourse. Work seems to be associated with technical economic contribution: migrants are seen as a financial liability, but

also as a tool for Estonian labour market. Simultaneously, migrants constitute a danger to social cohesion, an issue that should be managed and monitored. It seems that the notions of work and employment are viewed as synonymous and while centralised in integration discourse, simultaneously concealed abstraction.

Chapter 3: Hard work and love

The so-called end of work describes a condition where work, because it is becoming precarious, does not occupy a central role in life, in social relationships or sense of identity. Insecurity that underlies neoliberalism is evident in short-term labour relations, loss of attachment to profession, a general sense of temporality of work relations that form and dissolve quickly in comparison to previous decades. The rejection of work as meaningful is also echoed in the politics of belonging of refugees in Estonia, which seems to conceptualise migrants as either 'labour power' or liability.

In this chapter I will present the stories of Serkan and Leyla, Khalid and Aziz and offer theoretical frameworks in which their experiences can be interpreted. I demonstrate how despite the structure of neoliberal economy, work still holds complex meanings and motivations for individuals, including a sense of identity and social belonging. I will also show

how an individual's background contexts inform the ways in which we think, dream and reflect about belonging.

The first thing is always love

I visited Leyla and Serkan, a married Turkish couple in their early thirties, in early autumn when sun was still high but the streets were windy and the air was getting crisp. They live in a quiet neighbourhood and I was welcomed in their home with hot tea and lunch, warm pastries straight from the oven, and a sofa with plenty of pillows and blankets. Serkan worked as a cook and baker in a local Turkish restaurant and together, they occasionally volunteered in a local after-school club to do arts and crafts with middle-school children.

Leyla, a soft-spoken woman, had always wanted to become a teacher since high school and before leaving, had spent a few years teaching primary, secondary and high school students in a renowned private school. When I asked her about working as a teacher, she emphasised the significance of the relationships involved in school life and teaching:

“The first thing is always to love. Before teaching them, you should love them. You need strength and patience to struggle with them because they do not want to learn. [...] Sometimes, the students used to ask me: ‘Teacher, why do we have to learn English?’ Now, when I look them up on Facebook, I see that some of them have moved to America. I want to write to them: that’s the reason why you had to learn English! I’m very happy when I see them in Europe or in America – they have good jobs, they have studied in good universities. It’s very beautiful. I feel proud.’

Leyla and her husband Serkan also told me about their own weekly after-school club they organised in addition to teaching classes. The after school club had been a non-formal discussion group about ‘being a good person’ and the importance of ‘kindness and love in interactions with others and the environment’. According to Leyla, it is important that her students ‘will be ready for the bad side of life’ and she said it was the ‘best part of being a teacher’. In addition to that, she told me about how a mother of one of her students had called her in the evening to ask them for advice on how to get her child to eat their dinner.

In Leyla’s and Serkan’s intertwined narratives I recognise that work of teaching extended beyond the workplace, beyond the classroom environment and teaching curriculums, to more

personal spheres. The teaching methodology that embraces an ‘authentically caring ideology and practice in teaching’ (Valenzuela 1999, p. 263). The strong emphasis on care in Serkan’s and Leyla’s ethos of teaching coincides with a view that teaching is at once productive and reproductive work and requires an analysis of both material and symbolic value, which exist simultaneously rather than as opposites (Kesküla and Loogma 2016). This serves as an example of the blurring of boundaries between wage-labour and reproductive labour. The rewards of the work went beyond salaries and include a sense of pride and meaningful contribution. Serkan had also been a teacher of social sciences and later headmaster of a school and a kindergarten:

‘It was a good job. A good job brings you a good life: good car, good house, good social life and friends.’

‘We had so many friends in Turkey, but now we are alone, especially in Pärnu. The only Turkish family.’

‘I used to be the headmaster of a school! And now – I am a cook...’ Serkan shrugged with a sorrowful smile. ‘We miss these days. We miss it a lot,’ Leyla affirmed.

To me, Serkan and Leyla was a sense of loss and rupture upon mobility. It was not finding employment to sustain a livelihood that was a problem. Rather it is the lack of sense of social connectedness and value that work used to provide and fails to provide here. Contribution to the community through work seems to be the main theme in the subtle grief of a socially fulfilling life. It seems that in the schools and surrounding communities, Serkan and Leyla were the nodes in the web of relationships between students, teachers and parents align with the teaching methodology that values trust and close relationships as a cornerstone for effective teaching and learning. As evident from Leyla’s stories, schools can be characterised as composed of ‘dynamic and complex connections, rather than considered as bounded and isolated institutions’ (Jewett 2009, p.204). While Leyla was employed as a teacher, for her the meaning of work was in the social embeddedness, contribution and fulfilment of personal values of care and kindness that extend beyond the obligations and remuneration outlined in her employment contract. For both Serkan and Leyla, their work as teachers seems meaningful in terms of personal identity. Strangleman (2007) has emphasised the amount of time and sense of continuity that is central for the feeling of work being part of oneself. For Serkan, this continuity and therefore the ‘ongoing project’ of work identity was disrupted, being forced to unexpectedly migrate from his home (ibid., p. 417). In my view, Serkan and Leyla seemed to

see themselves as teachers, a sense of self that is ‘produced, discovered and experienced’ through work (Rose, 1990). Having to part with work meant having to part with a certain sense of self, sense of belonging as well as a host of meaningful relationships.

Future in hazelnuts

As the afternoon advanced with Turkish tea and Serkan’s carrot cake, my hosts became more talkative and made use of the opportunity to practice Estonian. After a few hours, we had switched almost completely to Estonian. Serkan, carefully choosing his vocabulary (with occasional corrections from Leyla), took his time to pronounce his sentences clearly, as he let me in on his dream for the future – establishing Estonia’s first hazelnut farm.

Turkey is the world’s leading hazelnut producer and exporter and Serkan’s father, grandfather and a large portion of their family are hazelnut farmers in a small town in northern Turkey. Luckily for me, I visited their home during hazelnut harvesting season and Serkan video called his father, who was enthusiastic to show us around their farm and the plentiful harvest from the hazelnut trees. Serkan also gave me a little bowl of hazelnuts that his father had sent last year. For him, establishing a hazelnut farm, a novel attraction and economic opportunity in Estonia, is a way of giving back, it is ‘a gift’ in exchange for safety for him and his family. However, so far, his ideas have been received quite coldly and Serkan emphasises the passiveness and scepticism of local organisations to help him find possibilities for growing hazelnut in Estonia.

It is also interesting that Serkan chose the Estonian word *kingitus* – gift – to describe his dream of the hazelnut farm and emphasised the notion of *giving back*. Serkan’s dreams and aspirations can be interpreted through the concepts of the core of gift-giving: reciprocity. Here, Serkan’s potential gift seems yet to be accepted and therefore his pursuits of belonging are at a standstill. He sees the hazelnut farm as a gift to Estonia, a way to give back for what he has received, an aspiration to fulfil an unfulfilled social obligation and to contribute in a meaningful, as well as material way. The hazelnut farming is in some ways rooted in his kinship ties, his culture, his knowledge, it is a part of his past and himself that he aspires to share, and through that sharing to reciprocate, create value for his new home to reaffirm the relationship. It is symbolic as well as it is economic – a way to contribute and thus, a way to belong to the community. The continuation of his family’s work in Estonia is a way of dreaming of social relations and pathways of belonging through work in Estonia.

Birds of a feather flock together

It had been a long exhausting day of driving. It was hot outside and the stale air conditioner air was irritating my eyes. My neck was stiff from sitting and my mind was fuzzy, tired of observing the traffic and staying alert. Khalid was telling me about his grandfather who had taught him that ‘‘experience is wealth’’ as he explained the importance of money and wealth in living a life of fulfilling experiences, such as travel. I remember arguing that you don’t need money to have fulfilling experiences. At some point, Khalid brought up an example of flying a helicopter as an experience that money can buy. I argued that you can rent an hour on a helicopter even if you’re not extremely wealthy. Khalid smirked: ‘‘No...I want to buy a helicopter. My goal is that I will own a personal helicopter. ‘‘ To my careful mind, Khalid’s grandiose dreams often seemed unattainable in the Estonian context. In an attempt to ground him in reality, I tried explaining that in Estonia the proportions of wealth are likely very different from Pakistan:

‘‘It’s not really a thing here, having a private helicopter. There’s probably only like 3 or 4 people in Estonia who actually have their own helicopters.’’

‘‘Okay, then I will be the fifth!’’ he replied.

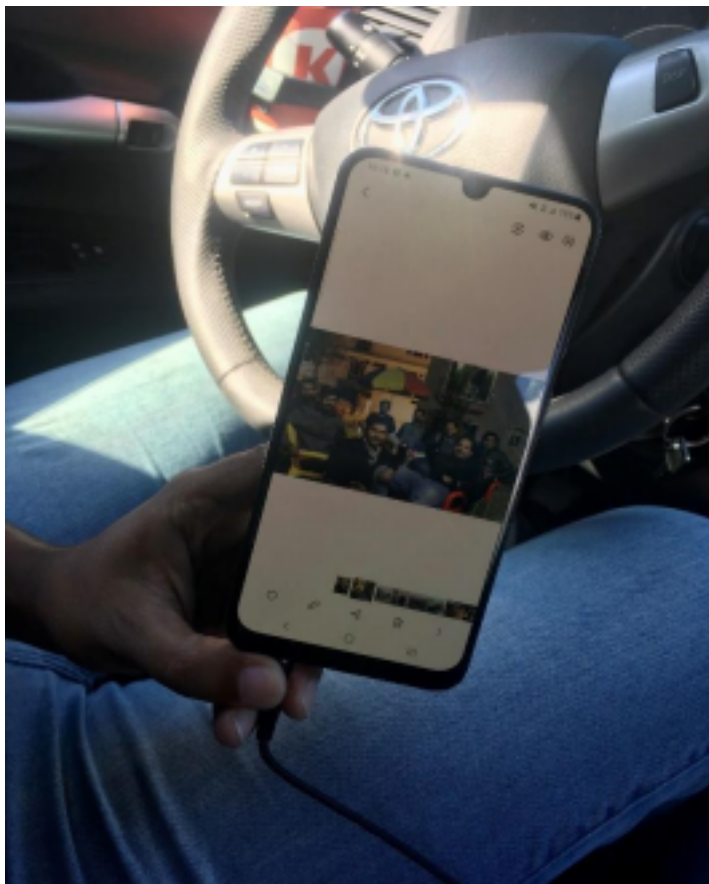
Reaching a stalemate like this was common in our interactions. Me, convinced that these fantasies are unattainable, him attempting to convince me to not be ‘too careful’ and ‘to always reach for 100%’. Khalid offered an explanation to my scepticism: I don’t understand because unlike him, I didn’t grow up in a luxury lifestyle. Looking back on these conversations, I’m reminded of Laurent Berlant (2011) concept of cruel optimism, that describes an attachment to fantasies of the good life, that are no longer sustainable in the current situation. The attachment to the object of desire, in this case a life defined by wealth, is so intimately and profoundly connected to the way he perceived and negotiates the world, that another way seems unimaginable. I perceived this desire for a certain type of good life in this context as be an obstacle to achieving goals here, because of the significant discrepancy with the potential of the current context.

He emphasised the extent of his connectedness and positioning in the local engineering networks by showing me a photo of him holding a smartphone to either of his ears. He explained that he used to have so many business calls and so many people wanting to talk to

him, that he mastered the art of being on two calls at once.

“In Pakistan, I was the guy who knew everyone and had all the connections. If you need anyone, anything, I can connect you to them. Here, it is the opposite – I don’t know anyone.”

Being constantly needed and the manic life in a city of 11 million people stands in stark contrast to his long solitary hours of driving to deliver food orders here in Tallinn. Social networks of work were a significant aspect of the good life as imagined by Khalid. Another time, he showed me a photo of him and a group of young men hiking on the Golden Peak in the Himalayas. In the photo, Khalid is actively explaining something to his companions as they walk in nature against a scenic background. He showed me the photo to illustrate what he meant by saying ‘birds of a feather flock together’: *‘Work was fun for us. We worked anytime. Every time.’* The men in the photo are his colleagues and best friends – the photo was taken on one of their many spontaneous weekend trips out of town. *‘Even then, we were working.’*



In his description of his career in Pakistan, Khalid often showed me their Facebook profiles and gave me detailed descriptions of each of his friends or business partners’ personalities, how they met and how they were connected to his network, as well as what their relationship was like.

Khalid identified the main issue with finding work in his area of expertise (sales, business) as the lack of local references. Having actively searched and attended dozens of job interviews for more than 2 years, he is convinced that getting a job in Estonia depends on who you know, Estonian labour market is exclusive and given equal experience and skillsets, an employer will always hire someone they have a personal connection with over a foreigner. In one case of rejection, he was also explicitly told that his foreignness would be a disadvantage at this particular job. He seems to have observed the 'us' vs 'them' mentality as well as the importance of informality in economic relations, where aims are achieved through 'connections' (Morris and Polese 2015). It is however also possible that informality is only assumed and in reality, people shy away from informal economic relations. Annist (2006) has written about a 'deliberate indifference' as an important part of social relations. For Annist (2006), rejecting informality in favour of formality, reflecting 'solidarity in demanding a society that is organized and arranged, not through face-to-face contact that may bring humiliation or allow smugness' (p. 109).

Estonian economic relations and values can also be characterised as neoliberalism. Gershon (2013) describes networking as the 'magic elixir' of the neoliberal subject looking for work because of the so-called 'black hole of recruiting'. This refers to the phenomena where online recruitment results in an excess of applicants, which has to be sorted by computer programmes. This mechanism makes it difficult for applicants to be noticed by employers, an obstacle that is expected to be overcome by networking. Knowing the recruiters personally or approaching them personally (e.g messaging them on LinkedIn) or having someone from your network to recommend you is supposed to make the recruiter more likely to notice your application. Although Gershon (2013) has written about the American job market, this logic can be observed to apply to the recruitment processes of the kind of companies that Khalid is applying for here: IT startups that have become successful, branches of large international corporations and so on.

But Khalid was tackling this obstacle with rigour – each time we met, Khalid asked me to look for work opportunities for him, whether I had any ideas or news and if I could connect him with people working in sales and start-ups. Discussing potential people I knew, companies, strategies and programmes to get a foot in the door was one of the main themes during our drives. Although at times frustrated by the lack of replies from potential employers or acquaintances,

he was persistent to ‘find connections’ and build a ‘network’, not only to find a job but to find like-minded people excited by the same ideas, friends, potential business partners, colleagues. Both in his retellings of the past and visions for the future, networks seem to be ‘strategic social interactions that are intentionally instrumental, but often ambiguously so’ (Gershon, 2020, p. 95). Here I am not alluding to a hidden instrumental agenda of some sort, but genuine synchronicity of both – in some moments during our later meetings, I noticed that the term ‘friends’ came to replace the word ‘network’. For Khalid, the meaning of work is derived from relationships with like-minded people and the status of being well-connected. His way of making a living here, being self-employed as a delivery driver doing platform work, does not fulfil this meaning and does not create a sense of belonging. Khalid’s way of looking for alternative ways of working and creating a sense of social belonging are driven by ambition and determination, but nevertheless experiences what I sensed to be a frustrating collide with the local context when 1) applying for other jobs, or 2) when discussing his visions of a future created through work with a local (myself). While his background seems to at times be at odds with the ways in which Estonian economic relations are constructed, restoring a sense of meaning, belonging and status through work is also a source of imagination and hope. For Khalid, the nostalgia that colours his long stories of work feats is not simply the selective emphasis on what was positive in the past. Instead, the nostalgia highlights the structures in his work life that inform and guide his goals and actions in building a career in Estonia in the present and he is aiming to rebuild a successful career and life here.

The Story of Aziz

I met Aziz, a 30-year-old man from Tajikistan in 2020 through my job at the NGO, at the time he was learning Estonian in order to study at the vocational school to become a hairdresser. Aziz’ energetic chattiness and a charming ready laugh made me feel like we were good friends within the first minutes we met. His passion for hair became evident to me in his detailed accounts of technicalities of the balayage, chemical curls and hairdos he educated me about over cups of coffee. When we first met to talk about my research project, Aziz said: ‘I had a lot of problems before. All my problems ended 3 years ago when I got to Estonia’. Taking caution in accepting an attractive image of Estonia, I expressed my own opinions of homophobia in Estonia – the black-and-white view of people being perceived only either gay or straight, the way gay relationships are discussed less and in a concealed way.

“In Tajikistan, people won’t even shake your hand because they are worried they will get HIV” responded Aziz, pointing a finger gun to his temple and rolling his eyes.

It was not that he was idealizing Estonia, it was that I was ignorant of the context of Tajikistan that he came from, which stands in stark contrast with here.

When I first told Aziz about my research project, he asked to see a list of questions in advance. When we met to record an interview, he asked for confirmation: “But these questions...they were all about work?”. I had indeed intentionally avoided asking questions about why he had left Tajikistan or about his migration journey in an attempt to respect the space and distance someone with trauma might need and avoid unnecessary hurt caused by second-hand trauma. However, as the descriptions of traumatic events took a central focus in his narrative, I understood this approach may have been dismissive of the significance of the tension between grief and hope of the experience of forced migration. It is my interpretation that Aziz told me his story on his own terms, which I will present here slightly summarised in my translation. In the second half of the chapter, I will discuss what insights his narrative can offer us about work, employment and integration in Estonia.

Aziz grew up in a small rural village near the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border as the younger of two children to a couple of Afghan migrants. Aziz went to school at seven years old and according to him, did quite well. After 9th year of school, instead of going to school, he started taking computer classes in a nearby town to learn to use Word programme.

30

“The headmaster gave me the documents and a diploma as if I had graduated because I was ahead of others anyway and generally a good student. After the two-year course would be over, I’d get a job as the secretary of the headmaster of the school. But when I did come back, I didn’t start working. Because my situation at home was so bad that I couldn’t, and I didn’t want to work.

“It was when I was going to the computer classes in the small town that I first saw beauty salons. In the salons, there were no men working there, only women. These women didn’t wear hijabs, they were a bit more democratic [in comparison to the village where he lived]. I thought the salon was so beautiful. So, one day, I went in to talk to the woman working there. I was just a little-little boy! [16 or 17 years old]. And I had beautiful hair back then...”

Aziz recounted the first meeting and chatting with the woman, who had complimented his

looks and recognising his Afghan accent, complimented his Tajik language skills. “And then I said to her: I want to work here in the salon. She said they don’t need male hairdressers. “Do you even know how to do formal hair or makeup?” she asked me. I said “Yes of course!”, but I didn’t know! I just really really like it!” Aziz laughed. In the end, the woman working at the salon allowed him to stay there in case she needs help and on the occasion a client agrees to have a man do their hair.

“I went there for a week, but no one agreed to have me do their hair. But then the hair salon lady offered, that I could help her clean and fix things around the salon, and she could give me a little salary in return. Oh! How great! I was so happy! I said to her: “Tell me everything you need, I will do anything! I want to work here!” I worked there for 8 months. But I didn’t have a chance to do anything to anyone’s hair. But I observed everything. I observed and wrote down how the hairdressers work, what and how they did.”

Simultaneously and in relation to working in the salon, rumours started spreading around the village about him. According to Aziz, the people in the village said he was “girly” and “sick”. This finally reached his father, who became very upset and started taking him to conversion rituals and different doctors to “cure” him. Aziz recalled painful memories of violence.

“I still kept going to work and all the money I earned I gave to my parents. Then one day the lady at work – I think she had heard something around the town – she pointed out the injuries on my face and asked “Hey, Aziz, do you really need this kind of life?” I said no. “Listen, take your passport and get a ticket to Russia. With a Tajik passport you don’t even need a visa to go to Russia, so just go. Right now you’re like this [referring to the swollen face], but in a few years, I think you’ll be [moves finger across the throat].”

“But I didn’t have any money. I don’t speak Russian. So I kept working at the salon.”

“Then one day some time later I went to the salon and asked the woman working there if she had any connections for work in Russia. She said “no, but I know you”, “I know your character: you’re a positive person, so everything will be okay.””

According to Aziz, he took a plastic bag of clothes, a little money he had earned and a little extra the lady from the salon gave her and flew from Duchambe to St Petersburg. Aziz mentioned in passing the odd jobs of cleaning and fixing things at the market and in a

supermarket that allowed him to earn enough money to get his documents in order and eat. He did not stay on this time period for long: “It was all so difficult. Really, you could write a book about this.”

The story as narrated by Aziz ended in Estonia. In my view, Aziz’s story is a powerful tool and a resource for making sense of his suffering, ‘managing the imbalance between contingency and necessity’ (Jackson 2002). As Hannah Arendt has written: ‘*Who* somebody is or was we can know only by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero – his biography’ (1958). In his biography is reflected the poignant agency in choosing to leave a violent environment, as well as his disposition characterised by persistence and positive attitude. The essential drive in this story is the self-actualisation as a hairdresser/hairstylist. Rapport (2003) has written about the concept of an individual’s life-project – the “intention and practice” of seeing his life in terms of a certain “directionality, velocity and destination”. The directionality and destination – being a hairdresser or a hairstylist – was instrumental to his continuing capability to be responsible for the relations he enters into and the actions he takes, as well as how he interprets these (Rapport, 2003, p. 6). Aziz narrated the leaving the social context as a liberating experience of actualizing an individual life project, marked by grief of rejection and not belonging. About half a year later I visited Aziz at his workplace in a barbershop to help him with Estonian grammar on some of his documents for his final portfolio for a hairdresser and beautician professional diploma – which he successfully passed.

Luibheid (2005) has described the discourse surrounding sexual minority refugees as “a narrative of movement from repression to freedom, or a heroic journey undertaken in search of liberation” in North American context (p. xxv). A simplistic framing of a complicated migratory experience may contribute to the erasure of contradicting experiences and frame the arrival country as an idealized *safe haven* in contrast with a homophobic *Other* (ibid). A cynical interpretation of Aziz’s retelling of his life history would be one that sees his story as an internalisation of this discourse. Taking into account that prior to meeting me he had some experience with participating in research, in TV shows, and doing media interviews, we might even speculate that Aziz had practised the story numerous times to the asylum centre caseworkers, media representatives and to the audience at events aimed at raising awareness of refugees. In addition to that, Aziz may have retold the story to me in such a manner to maintain a distance and in line with the potential power hierarchy where he views me as a local, as a person who has worked in refugee organisation, as a researcher.

The way in which being a hairdresser is central to Aziz’s drive and working in supermarkets is

dismissed emphasises the difference in life-project and in precarious temporary employment is also intimately tied to a sense of social belonging. Estonia is the context where the life project can be realised and social belonging constructed. Drive to be a hairdresser is central to his narrative, the realization of a work identity he had imagined and dreamed for himself was a driving force. The philosophical interpretation is anchored to everyday reality by a simple contrast Aziz reports in his life – the social life in Tajikistan was characterised by isolation and violence, while he speaks of getting along very well with his colleagues and teachers here. This is testified by his phone often buzzing and ringing during our meetings as well as us having friends in common who are not related to refugee organisations.

The migration to Estonia and the way he navigates here was informed by his particular social and economic positionality and the barriers – or the lack thereof – that he experienced or at least thought relevant to discuss with me are informed by his previous experiences.

Conclusion

Leyla, Serkan, Khalid and Aziz all emphasised the difference between meaningful and meaningless work. Although each of the people were employed and according to integration policy, tick at least one box of ‘participating in Estonian society’, lack of social belonging was a key theme in our discussions. For Leyla, Serkan and Khalid, the loss of meaningful social relationships, status and a sense of contribution highlight the difference between being employed out of necessity for livelihood and the work that gives meaning to life. Here, I found the visualisations of the future which show how imagination and orientation towards the future, hope, is what structures economic life (Narotzky and Beznier, 2014).

In these visualisations of the future, work for my interlocutors, seems to be an “arena in which otherness and foreignness can be broken and moulded into ties of belonging” (Roberman, 2013). But it is work that is personally meaningful and includes consideration for social status, moral contribution as well as individual talent, preference and ambition. An ethnographic view on the dreams and visualisations of a future in Estonia where they belong through work points out how the participants in my research are informed by previous professional environments, practices and wider economic context. These future visualisations offer an insight into the structures of motivation and hope that guide the constructions of belonging.

In my view, following closely the details of work and the motivations or barriers to working allow for the emotionality and sociality of work to come to the foreground and shows that deindustrialization does not necessarily result in decreased importance of work identity. These aspects allow us to reflect on the quote of Tammsaare: if we were to define *love* as a sense of belonging, it seems that working hard does not necessarily result in love, if it lacks the essential features of meaning for the worker themselves.

Chapter 4. Building futures in mobility

This chapter explores the particularities of driving taxi or delivery as work, as an arena where migrants forge their paths to belonging in their host society. In this chapter I explore the materiality and the meaning and reasoning behind choosing to engage in driving work. I will argue that the particular tempo and nature of this line of work is fertile ground for bringing about unique ways of constructing a sense of meaning and belonging in individuals who have recently migrated.

Like many migrant workers across the world and across Tallinn, two of my informants, Osman and Khalid, work as drivers for Bolt, a taxi and food delivery service operated on a digital

platform. Bolt is an Estonian mobility company that offers vehicle for hire, micromobility, car sharing, and food delivery services based on an app platform service. Bolt is one of most well known ‘unicorns’, successful startups of Estonia and as stated on their website, they are ‘building the future of mobility’¹. The amount of drivers for Bolt in Estonia is around 56 000 in 2021, with most of the people working part-time and about 2500 having Bolt as their primary occupation and source of income.

When I first ask Khalid, a thirty-year-old refugee from Pakistan about being a courier for a food delivery, he replied:

“It’s tough. You work like a machine. There’s nothing for the mind”

Although my role was to observe rather than actively deliver orders, I become accustomed to a working day my interlocutor had aptly warned me about: ‘*The first 2-3 hours are easy, but from there on, you need to push*’. While the tasks and activities themselves are uncomplicated, it is the changing pace and repetitive cycle of actions that becomes draining after the first few hours. Like other platform delivery companies such as Deliveroo and Uber, Bolt relies on the ‘free login’ app as a workforce management system, which means that workers can log in whenever, wherever and how much they choose to. This means that in theory, as a driver, you have personal control and responsibility for your working hours. In practice, Khalid’s working day is structured around ‘peak times’ for orders, which are right around the three meal times of the day: around 11am, around 2pm and around 6pm. During the peak hours, the salary rate per delivery is increased by a coefficient of 1.2 to 2, while non-peak hours the delivery rate is

decreased as the coefficients drop to 0.8. This also means that while peak times are busy driving between restaurants and clients, the non-peak hours contain a lot of waiting. The delivery driving day is thus filled with rushed movements of running up and down the stairs of apartment buildings, carrying and opening or closing an awkwardly sized and shaped delivery bag. In the meantime, the mind is busy paying attention to traffic, react and read the notification on the Bolt app, follow the GPS navigation app, and every now and again, look for parking spots. In parallel with the rushed hustle runs a sticky, drawn out exasperation, particular to waiting for orders in dusty parking lots, loitering in restaurant hallways, sitting crouched in the car for extended periods of time and being stuck in traffic that seems to drag for eternity. After the 2- 3 easy hours, the workday constitutes a disorienting mix of dragging

¹ <https://careers.bolt.eu/about-bolt>

and darting, waiting and rushing, the thoughts and movements become fragmented with no stable rhythm.

Khalid makes it explicit in the beginning that he is driving delivery ‘just to do something’ – it is a temporary substitute and a way to earn money while looking for job opportunities and building a side-business. His experience of platform work is a quintessential example of Bauman’s (2000) ‘liquid modernity’ where employment of labour is short-term and precarious and ties are fluid and subject to rapid change. This uncertainty that is characteristic to modern free-market economies is especially salient to refugees, whose migration trajectories have imposed drastic changes and uncertainties on their lives already: geographically, emotionally, professionally and otherwise. Most mornings in the car Khalid recounts in great detail the efforts he has undertaken to find a better job: he lists the people he has contacted and what they have replied together with an analytical overview of his chances, progress and potential next steps. The rest of the day he is often pitching business ideas, coming up with ways to develop his online store; he is thinking out loud, planning, strategizing and dreaming about a future of professional success and monetary wealth, with the ultimate goal of financial freedom.

One of Khalid’s role models is Jack Ma, a Chinese mogul businessman and founder of the e-commerce company AliBaba Group. Khalid believes that our reality is created by our thoughts and brings examples of successful business meetings which he attributes to exercising ‘the power of the mind’. In addition to that, an aspect that he emphasises is that he is not working under an employment contract, but as a business – his personal OÜ is partnering with Bolt to provide driving service. This is an important distinction for him as instead of an employee, a worker, he is a business owner and a business partner, suggesting equality rather than hierarchy. Khalid’s thinking and modes of working remind me of Gershon’s (2010) ideas of the self-as-

business model. According to Gershon, in neoliberal economies individuals are construed as businesses rather than as workers. In order to find work, an individual person takes oneself as a collection of ‘skills, traits or marketable capacities’, a flexible and always improvable entity (*ibid.*). From this neoliberal perspective, Khalid as a business, a set of skills, forms an alliance with another such set of capacities, Bolt. Here it is important to note the evident asymmetry and consequent inequality in this alliance, a critical dynamic that will be discussed in the second half of the chapter.

Grey (1994), drawing on the work of Giddens (1981), has theorized that in contemporary times, individuals construe themselves as projects, which they hold individual responsibility for regulating and managing. The self becomes a process of maximising, optimising, improving and regulating different fields of life. In the work of construing the ‘project of the self’ ‘career’ is a powerful technology, ‘a vehicle for the self to become’ (p. 481). Most importantly, the work on the project of the self is not confined to a set tasks or labour hours in the workplace, instead it is pervasive to the entire being that operates on the underlying assumption: ‘we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves’ (Giddens, 1991). Individualised notions of progress together with narratives of being flexible become internalised in our narratives of ourselves (elaborate/reference). I have appreciated how the self-regulated process of becoming is constantly reflected in Khalid’s narratives of himself, his past, his future and how he sees the world, extending from the physicality of labour hours to more personal dimensions of hope and imagination.

One evening on the non-peak times, Khalid decided to drive towards Viimsi and Pirita, because these are his favourite areas of Tallinn. We deliver a few orders from high-end restaurants to the big modern private houses and apartment buildings with garages and nice cars, large gardens and elaborate security systems. As we drive along the seafront, Khalid draws my attention to a large private house:

‘Look! This! Seeing this is the motivation to get rich. Right? Isn’t it for you?’ In my imagination, the house with clean white designs and automated appliances is associated with expensive hotels, their hollow anonymity and lack of character.

‘No. Not for me,’ I answer, staying honest about my indifference.

Khalid looks puzzled for a moment and concludes thoughtfully:

‘People are different in the way they think. Success, hard work and money is a way for me to think. It’s something for the mental health.’

Because the repetitive and simple driving job has ‘nothing for the mind’, it compels him to keep his mind occupied. At the same time, the rhythm of the work, and the autonomy (although limited) over choosing the locations and hours of work is what allows him the time and space for thinking, reflecting and dreaming. The planning, dreaming, brainstorming and analysing are at the forefront, they become the main theme that is then occasionally interrupted by pickups, drop-offs and technical difficulties. The current tasks and timeframes may be dictated by the Bolt app, but in Khalid’s own perception of time, the future is clearly

of higher importance. In this way, the delivery job functions as a preparation for his future both practically and mentally, he is always “*thinking about the bigger picture*”: a proportion of the financial resource he earns is invested into his business in order to grow it, and similarly, the time in the car is used for thinking out loud and ironing out the problems and bottlenecks of job search and entrepreneurship. There is a very direct relationship between the strategy of time, how it is allocated to tasks and the monetary remuneration since the driver gets paid for the deliveries, not by the hour, so the hours of waiting are unpaid.

Appadurai (1991) argues that with increasing mobility of mass media and people, fantasy has become a social practice – more people are able to imagine more possible futures for themselves. This is especially true for migrants for whom the practice of fantasy is informed by a host of transnational images and other media across different cultural landscapes. The main themes in Khalid’s fantasies are returning to his previous status and lifestyle that entails fulfilling work, meaningful relationship with colleagues; travelling and experiencing new things and wealth: ‘financial freedom’ and control over his time (e.g taking spontaneous trips). Narotzky and Besnier (2014) explain the people’s individual economic strategies through the concept of hope, a component of imagination, that ‘constitutes an important asset when material resources are lacking in the present’, while in complete financial hardship invoking hope is difficult. The temporary courier job can be considered a particular condition of enough material resource, mobility and comfort from which the possibilities and hope of a particular future can emerge.

Osman’s perspective

Osman, a Turkish national in his early thirties, also works as a driver but for taxi instead of food delivery. Osman left his home country, Turkey, in 2018 due to political persecution and after living for some months in Greece arrived in Estonia together with his Syrian wife Dilara. Dilara, Osman’s wife, brought each of us a large plate with a towering pile of home-made sarma – spicy tomato sauce and rice mix wrapped in grape leaves with a bowl of home-made yoghurt on the side. I forgot myself enjoying the food and listening the details of the time consuming way they are made. When I took a moment to breathe between shoving the sarma in my mouth with my fingers, Osman loudly exclaims “*Edasi! Please!*”. Noticing my startled face, he quickly followed with an explanation: “*For Turkish people, food is joy. For Estonians, it’s alcohol. Estonians drink a lot. But for us, it’s food. We don’t drink alcohol, but*

we like to eat.” Osman says that the street-food is the only thing he misses about Turkey as he continues to critique Erdogan’s authoritarian politics. Estonia is *‘so much better than Turkey, because it is safe and people are free’*. His and Dilara’s journey, a perilous, stressful, life-threatening escape from Turkey to Estonia as refugee is rooted in government persecution, as an administrative official in a school, in being affiliated with a “terrorist organisation” – a foundation that supports higher education.

Osman has a degree in electric engineering and in addition to the school, has worked as a logistics manager in a transport company. He also sees driving as a temporary substitute for professional employment and he seemed hopeful about finding a job that matches his aspirations: *‘I only need English language and programming language’*, both of which he was learning independently online.

When I asked about the driving work, Osman responds with a dismissive shrug: *‘it’s an easy job’* and continued to emphasize the positive aspects: having the freedom to choose his own working hours (*‘I am free when I want. You open it when you want and when you close it, it’s closed. It’s in your hands’*) and an opportunity to interact with Estonian clients and practice Estonian language. Friday and Saturday evenings are especially potent times for Osman to get to know locals because this is when he drives his clients to or from social events and parties – they are tipsy and more talkative than usual.

‘Drunk people talk a lot. I learn about how people think, about Estonian culture, politics, problems. There are some problems, big problems in Estonia, I think. There is some tension between Russians and Estonians.’

He explains that his clients have often praised him for trying to speak in Estonian and compared him in the context of criticism for Russian Estonians: people who have lived here their entire lives and still haven’t learned the language. Osman drew parallels with the discrimination of the Kurds in Turkey and he believes that the problem of segregation and some discrimination

towards the Russian population hadn't been exacerbated due to Estonia having a democratic government.

‘Everything turns to democracy and justice. Everything – job, population peace...everything. I have learned that driving taxi.’

The stories and insights Osman shared that afternoon illuminated to me how his work can be

an entertaining way to learn about the locals and reflect on his own experiences of migration and knowledge on politics. From Osman's positively oriented narratives, himself as a taxi driver can be seen as 'a node in a global transportation system', where the human exchanges that occur in the car provide a 'satisfying sense of engagement, of being at the centre of an increasingly small world' (Leudke, 2010, p. 5). Osman's open and curious disposition recalls a cosmopolitan orientation towards the world: a set of distinct competencies, a *connoisseurship*, that allows him to navigate within cultures and countries (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006). an appreciation of mobility, interpretive and risk-taking skills as well as an ability to consume places and environments (*ibid*). Although as a refugee, his forced migration experience might not be best defined as one of the 'kinetic elite', his 'intellectual and aesthetic openness' toward cultural diversity arises from living in the condition of transnational contact (Hannerz, cited in Vertovec, 2009, p. 6). Without the shock, loss and trauma that accompanied his and his wife's migration experience, it seems to me that Osman's perspectives speak directly against the nationalist discourse that conceptualises migration as moral or cultural 'loss' or a pathological sense of 'uprootedness' (Malkki, 1992). He explicitly rejects Turkey as his homeland and appreciates the different forms of freedom granted to him in Tallinn: being free of the political persecution of a dictatorial regime as well as a being free to discover and forge a sense of belonging in a new city by way of mobility.

Mobility and driving

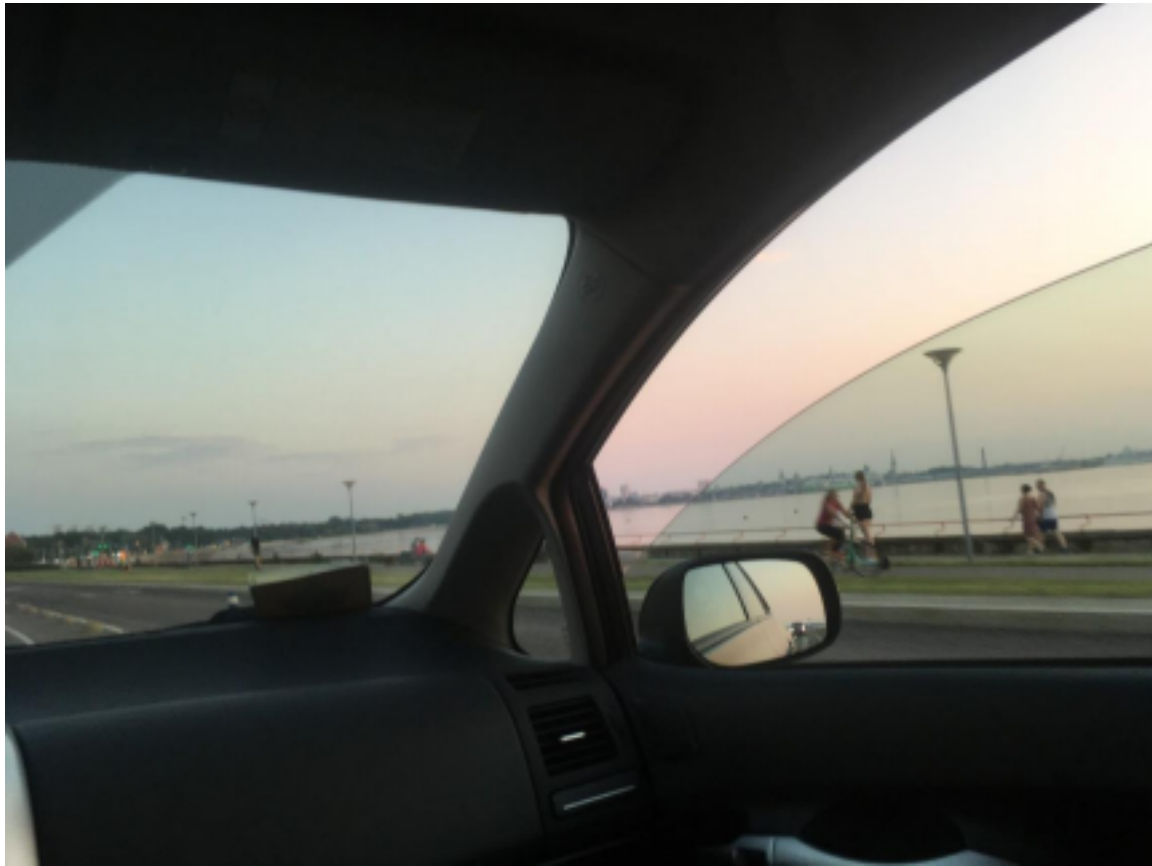
The wider work environment, the city, is defined in urban anthropology as more than a geographical location: a specific 'social institution' with its dynamics and social, economic and political relations (Urry, 2000). Therefore, the city is a fruitful site for examining the 'dynamics of flux and fixity, openness and constraint of a globalized world' (Leudke, 2010 p.2). Osman and Khalid's narratives recall the ethnographies of taxi drivers, who appreciate the lack of typical employment hierarchies and the freedom to choose their own working hours, and also the physical and spatial mobility the job entails (Leudke, 2010). While Osman actively interacts

with his passengers, Khalid appreciates the mobility, being on the move, and the variety of trajectories, because it gives him an opportunity to see and get to know the city of Tallinn. Mobility and autonomy are directly related to the mode of transportation that the work is centred around – the car. Automobility is the dominant means of mobility in an urban environment. In literature about mobility, urban space and driving automobile has been

discussed more than just a functional technology – in addition to carrying a multitude of social and cultural meanings it is also a mutable space or environment (Urry, 2000). During the course of my driving fieldwork, the environment of Khalid's car took on a variety of meanings according to the day, influenced by the weather, mood or the particular routes, different aspects of the car became elucidated. During the busier delivery hours, the car, filled with the smell of food on the back seat, is a productive workplace that moves around according to the robotic directions of the GPS navigation system. In contrast, on gloomier and more vulnerable days, the car becomes more of a safe cocoon, 'a sanctuary' and 'a zone of protection' between the passengers and the outside world (Urry, 2004). On other days, the car resembles more of a 'mobile living room' a 'sonic envelope' where one can relax, and in my case, enjoy beautiful views and listen to loud Bollywood music (Bull, 2001, 2004).

Most days, however, the car feels more constraining, a small and limiting 'iron cage', where I am stuck, 'strapped into a comfortable if constraining armchair' (Wells and Xenias, 2015). I started feeling restless and my neck got painfully stiff quickly during the long days of sitting and very little stretching, something that Khalid says he's gotten used to and doesn't notice anymore. After long hours, the air-conditioned air and lack of sunlight becomes oppressive. On particularly nice days, when the city is bustling with people enjoying the summer breeze or a beautiful sunset, the car feels depressingly isolating – we are nearby or even in the middle of other people, but at the same time separated by the material of the automobile as well as the alternative temporality.

The car and its mobility are thus at once connecting and isolating. On one hand, it is a safe and comfortable mutable office without bosses or schedule that allows for individual motility in contrast with other precarious jobs, such as factory work. On the other hand, the driver is solitary and separated from the rest of the environment by thick walls while the nature of the deliveries keeps social contact with others to a minimum. It can be said that in some ways, delivery work is an arena for forging belonging, but not in terms of the skills or of the job, but a condition that is aided by the practical particularities of the working day. The labour hours of driving become an arena for Osman and Khalid to observe, inquire and then reflect and analyse the local ways of being and living in Estonia. Rather than passively conducting the car, my participants' time in the car becomes a valuable resource used for gathering information and reflecting on it and through comparison and contrast, forging ties through knowing Estonia as a space, on their own terms, relating to their own personal histories.



The autonomous mobility of the car allows for driving wherever you want, sometimes just to nice areas of town to admire the views of the sunset and dream of a better future.

The temporary platform work that my interlocutors engage in is characteristic of hyper-mobility and hyper-flexibility that many migrant workers find themselves in after leaving behind their homeland and careers. Khalid drives 10-11 hours 5 or 6 days a week and then spends most of his late evenings looking for job opportunities in sales and marketing, or working on his e

commerce store. Osman drives 4 days a week, mostly weekends, and during the week attends English and programming courses online. Like for many other platform workers in Estonia, driving is just one of their professional pursuits, which means that 60-80 hour work weeks in which they engage in ‘conscious and temporary overwork’ are not unusual (Holts, 2020). The free login system has been critiqued for exacerbating the precarity of platform work (Cano et al. 2021).

While my interlocutors remain uncritical of their ‘business partner’ or employer, Bolt, they do express concerns over the terms of which the arrangement works. Both men were dismayed to find out that they are not compensated for the money for petrol and after commission and other car-related costs, they are left with only half of the money they thought they had earned. Osman is also critical of the lack of health insurance and the fact that working means that he

loses some health benefits from the state.

Precarity may not be limited to a particular position in the economy or the labour market, but rather a social condition of vulnerability or insecurity that accompanies short term contracts and flexible, temporary employment relations (Tsing, 2015). While for Osman, the job seems to be one of the less emotionally and mentally taxing aspects of his life as a recently migrated refugee, Khalid often expressed grief for the loss of an established career. The contrast with his previous career in Lahore became struck me when on one of the less motivated, less optimistic days, he told me how he had recently had to deliver food to an engineer who worked in a large modern build, to his private office:

'This is when it really hit me. It was really tough for me, I almost started crying, because I was thinking: 'I used to hire guys like this. And now I am his fucking courier!'

The notion of professional work being substituted with a situation of provisionality and temporary tasks, that fail to qualify for the people as meaningful and 'real' work has been written about in context of political change (Rajkovic, 2018), migration (Roberman, 2013).

While for Osman and Khalid, a similar hint of 'at least doing something' attitude is present in their stories and tonality, they both reflect a considerable "freedom" to use the time of driving according to their own will, autonomous from the tasks of Bolt. The fact that the dragging time of the driving, traffic and waiting can be used productively prevents demoralisation or critique of the system or employer.

Conclusion

The driving, therefore, is at once a scene of limiting participation and belonging and enforcing the structure wherein migrants and refugee operate at the margins of the society - at the invisible, temporary, replaceable roles, anonymous atoms bouncing around, their potential, knowledge and skills bounded in the metal shell. The refugees seem to be on the hyper-precarious migrant positions where the marginalization as 'foreigners' is emphasised with insecure employment. Simultaneously, it represents autonomy and opportunity for those who have only recently escaped certain persecution, if not worse. A step forward from unemployment, the driving includes practices of space-making and knowledge-making and a path to forging belonging to the host society. However, the defining aspect is its precarity, it is a temporary substitute. The particular temporalities allow for reflective freedom, which used

according to the moods and atmosphere of the day. The search for a meaningful work and the flexibility of being in many roles at once extend well beyond the car to the social and emotional lives of my participants.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have discussed how in the narrative and lived experiences of refugees in Estonia, work is seen as a central arena to for social belonging, a dynamic, reflective and strategic process that involves nuanced practices of imagination, hope and grief. I have showed how individuals who have experienced forced migration relate to employment and concluded, that meaning and motivation to work is more complex and significant than just a matter of livelihood.

In the first chapter I focused on the state and public discourse surrounding the social belonging of refugees and concluded that while migration and integration policy emphasise employment, the *how* of work contributing to integration is unaddressed. In the second chapter, brought to the foreground the social relations and emotions intertwined with work. I was humbled by encountering the grief and hope that accompany leaving behind a social position. I showed how, rather than employment, refugees are looking for meaningful ways to connect, contribute and actualise their imagination and ambition. The subtle world-view collisions with my

interlocutors illuminate the meaning-making process – the ways in which we move in the world are shaped by what we have perceived and learned to believe in our surroundings. In the final chapter I discussed the example of Bolt delivery driving work as an arena for social belonging with a focus on analysis of time. Illuminating how the practical lived everyday experience of work shapes the ways in which belonging is crafted.

The war in Ukraine started in February 2022, about half a year after concluding my fieldwork. Since then, Estonia has accepted more than 30 000 Ukrainian refugees, an unprecedented number. This time, the response of the public, media and state seems to be different and displays of solidarity are abound. Who is welcome, and who isn't? Whose grief, hopes, dreams and ambitions do we welcome? In what ways do these ideas interact with technical dynamics of the labour market? How will belonging and meaning be constructed in the workplace? As my research has shown, work is more than employment, and the two are intertwined, occasionally overlapping, but also contrasting and contradicting. The individual as well as cultural webs of practices and meanings should be questioned and examined.

In the course of my research I noticed two other areas of potential research and importance. Firstly, the workplace. My findings from the participant observation and interviews about driving Bolt delivery indicate the significance of the space in which the work takes place in the subjective experience of belonging. The constituents of the space: interactions, rhythm of work, effort, ways of relating to time shape the ways in which an individual relates to their surrounding environment, spatially and socially.

I departed on this research project from my own work in the migrant support sector with an observation that employment is seen as central to integration and belonging by policy and refugees alike. As a result of this project I have illuminated the tensions between policy expectations and subjective experiences of working refugees. I believe that the policy or public discourse focus on employment for the sake of it is reductive and overlooks the refugee experience as constituted by personal agency, imagination and potential, and social context characterised by a societal preference for an attitude of indifference.

Summary in Estonian

Tee tööd ja näe vaeva, siis tuleb ka armastus: pagulased, töötamine ja integratsioon Eestis

Alates 2015. aastast saab Eestit pidada väljaränderiigi asemel sisseränderiigiks. Neil Euroopa rändekriisi aastatel tõusis Eestisse saabuvate pagulaste teemal poleemika. Integratsioonipoliitika ning avalike arutelude keskmes on sageli pagulaste tööhõive küsimused ning töötamist nähakse vaieldamatult ühe kõige olulisema osana ühiskonda sisenemisel. Käesolev magistritöö uurib lõimumist läbi töö Eestis elavate ja töötavate pagulaste endi kogemuste ja refleksioonide läbi. Intervjuude, vestluste ja osalusvaatluse analüüs toob esile, milliseid tähendusi annavad inimesed enda tööle ning millist rolli mängivad töö ja töötamine lõimumise kontekstis.

Esimene peatükk käsitleb Eesti majandust ja integratsioonipoliitikat ning toob esile Eesti sotsiaal- ja tööelu iseloomustavad jooned. Kuigi töötamine on sageli avaliku arutelu, poliitika ja tugiprogrammides olulisel kohal, on harva juttu sellest, millised tööd ja ametid ning kuidas täpsemalt need sisserändajate lõimumisele peaks kaasa aitama ning millised väärtushinnangud ja suhtumised valitsevad Eesti töökultuuris.

Teises peatükis analüüsin sügavuti minu uurimuses osalevate pagulaste endi arusaama ühiskondlikust kuuluvusest ja tööst. Näitan, et kuigi minu uurimuses osalevatel pagulastel on olemas töökohad, ei tunne nad kuuluvustunnet ega pea seda tähenduslikuks. Selles peatükis annan ruumi pagulaste lugudele nende minevikust ning visioonidele paremast tulevikust ja näitan, kuidas Eesti ühiskonda kuulumise kujutluses on keskne roll tähenduslikul töö.

Kolmandas peatükis keskendun ühele kindlale ametile — Bolti kullerile. Kirjeldan osalusvaatlusel kogetud kulleritöö praktilist poolt: ajakasutust, füüsilist keskkonda ja vestlusi pagulasest autojuhiga. Läbi analüüsi näitan, kuidas minu uurimuses osalejad loovad võimalusi lõimumiseks ka läbi kulleritöö, mis oma loomult on üksildane töö.

Magistritöö tugineb majanduse ja töö antropoloogial ning suunates tähelepanu osalejate

subjektiivsetele kogemustele ja tähendusloomele, kirjeldab Eestis töötamise ja kuuluvustunde loomise protsessi.

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