

# WHO REPRESENTS WHO? A CRITICAL APPROACH TO CURRENT LITHUANIAN IDENTITY DISCOURSE

**Ida Harboe Knudsen**

## ABSTRACT

In this article I look at popular forms of self-representation in Lithuania, which are born out of a period of time where Europe, Europeanization and modernization are getting increasingly important. I argue that such discourses tend to exclude certain parts of the population and thus show a limited part of a complex picture. As I argue with an example from rural Lithuania, all Lithuanian citizens still respond to the many changes which came about with the EU and incorporate new features in their everyday life. They are, sadly enough, not the ones who get to formulate what it means to be Lithuanian in present day society.

KEY WORDS: identity, Europeanization, new Lithuanians, rural change.

## ANOTACIJA

Straipsnyje aptariamos populiaros šiuolaikinėje Lietuvoje kaimo gyventojų saviraiškos formos, atsiradusios tuo metu, kai Europos Sąjungos modelio bei kitos vakarietiškos gyvenimo apraiškos tapo visuotinai populiaros ir madingos. Autorės tyrimai leidžia teigti, kad tokie diskursai liudija galimybę išskirti atskiras vietinės bendruomenės gyventojų grupes ir bandyti suvokti būtent jų, o ne visos visuomenės gyvenimo ypatumus. Autorė dėmesį koncentruoja į šiuolaikinės Lietuvos kaimo žmonių kasdienio gyvenimo bruožus ir stengiasi rasti bei paaiškinti tas naujoves, kurias lėmė naujosios gyvenimo galimybės atviros Europos kontekste. Autorė bando išnagrinėti, ką periferijos gyventojui (o tokių yra gana daug) reiškia nebėgti nuo savo kasdienybės į atviras užsienio šalis, o pasilikti savo suvargusioje tėviškėje ir toliau vadinti save Lietuviu iš didžiosios raidės.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: tapatybė, europeizacija, naujieji lietuviai, kaimo kaita.

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In the summer of 2008 I attended a workshop in Barcelona. On this occasion I had taken a poster along about my research in the Lithuanian countryside. On the poster was a picture showing two men cleaning the body of a dead pig. As I returned to Germany I received an email from a Lithuanian who was obtaining a degree in London School of Economics. He had attended the workshop as well, but since there had been several hundred people, we had not met. He now took the opportunity to express his concern about the implications of showing such pictures, leading people to get wrong impressions of Lithuania. Pig slaughtering no longer takes place in Lithuania, he argued, the picture was very “Soviet.” What was shown, he wrote, had to be an exception found in Dzūkija – the region where I had conducted my fieldwork.

It was not the first time I had such encounters. One time as I addressed the subject of envelope payments and bribery, I was likewise politely corrected by a young man, who thought I should know that this no longer happened in Lithuania. As I told that I had witnessed it several times he chose to dismiss it as a “Soviet left-over in the countryside”. Using your network to obtain special goods and favours was likewise seen as an outdated phenomenon in the outskirts. Furthermore, I faced severe critique when I presented the case of a political party in Lithuania which obtained popularity through drinking- and extra-marital-feasts in the forest. It was argued that it had to be an exceptional case on the borderland to Poland and not a general Lithuanian feature.

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The comments to me reflect a concern about showing the “correct” picture of the Lithuanians in an era where ideas about modernity and European-ness dominate public discourse. Indeed, the many counter reactions to my, from my point of view, non-controversial findings in the countryside came from the so-called *new Lithuanians* who have been thoroughly described in an article by Victor de Munck. The concept *new Lithuanians* refers to the well educated and transnational minded young people who are capable of engaging in and benefiting from the increasingly European-fixated Lithuanian society<sup>1</sup>, that I fully understood why I got so many counter reactions to my, from my point of view, non-controversial findings in the countryside. Indeed, without exception all attempts to redirect my “false” impressions of Lithuania came from such Euro-minded young people (*new Lithuanians*) as we find in de Munck’s study. Their comments to me reflect a concern about showing the “correct” picture of the Lithuanians in an era where ideas about modernity and European-ness dominate public discourse. Such euro-images are seemingly upheld by classifying less fitting features as marginal and rural, disregarding that urban relatives hurry to the countryside every time a pig is slaughtered in order to get their share of the meat, disregarding that briberies, network exchanges and drunken politicians are also found in the Lithuanian cities, and to be just, not only in Lithuania – all over Europe.



Pic. 1. Two villagers cleaning the body of a dead pig. Photo: I. H. Knudsen, 2007

The fact that I am a foreigner has no doubt stimulated an urge to guide my understanding, but this only made me more intrigued about *which* images they wanted to convey and which images they dismissed as misleading. It came out as a distinction between those who are capable of responding to the current changes, and those who can not. Although I had been happy to broaden my understanding by reading De Munck’s analysis about *the new Lithuanians*, I still could not come

<sup>1</sup> See: MUNCK, Victor C. de. *Millenarian Dreams: The Objects and Subjects of Money in New Lithuania*, SUNY New Paltz & Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, 2008.

to terms with the fact, that also he made use of such distinctions between those who are capable of responding to the changes, and those who are not. Indeed, while the thoughts and ideas of the new Lithuanians are thoroughly analyzed in his article, the ideas he has about the not-so-new Lithuanian are in comparison simplifying.

My concern with this overall tendency is that Lithuania is getting increasingly Janus-faced. One part thus represents the modern and transnational Lithuania where we find, to quote the call for papers for this conference: “those new Europeans who have (or can claim, when they wish) hyphenated or multiple identities”. The other is the not-so-modern Lithuania, dominated by the Lithuanians who, to quote the call for papers again: “continue to retain their own ‘us-ness’ and turn to ‘weapons of the weak’ to resist changes to their group identities”. What furthermore concerns me is that such unhelpful dichotomies seemingly are produced by those who were supposed to criticize them.

In this article I will make two points about current Lithuanian discourse: the first is that the critical reactions I got from young and educated Lithuanians regarding “correct” representations of the Lithuanians reflect the over all tendency to promote a European-Lithuanian national identity. The second point is that disqualifying certain parts of the population as “Soviet” and resisting – or incapable of responding to – (European) change is incorrect; everybody responds to – and has to respond to – the many changes which have come about with the EU. In order to illustrate this point I will provide an elaborate case story about from rural Lithuania about adjustment to change.

### **Re-conceptualizations of the past**

The EU had from political side been advertised as a way back to the geo-political roots and was thus promoted as a “return” to the Europe where Lithuania rightfully belonged. At the same time it was seen as the way forward, away from the *Soviet* past, towards modernity, towards more influence, towards more welfare. In this way the EU-membership played an important role in defining and redefining Lithuania. (Western) Europe in general and the EU especially became the images of wealth and overabundance in Lithuania and linked with visions of a better future<sup>2</sup>, whereas the Soviet past more than ever was depicted as “archaic” resembling a repressive system and re-conceptualized as the “evil force”<sup>3</sup>.

What is interesting in this respect is not only how the image of Europe was formed and promoted, but also how it affected conceptualizations of the past. Giordano and Kostova have referred to this as “actualized history”, by which they understand that the past is intentionally or unintentionally mobilized in the light of the present<sup>4</sup>. This is not linked to chronological timeframes, as different parts of the past may be used to serve specific goals. The image of the past had for example varied from the early 90’s where people by first given chance elected the former communists back into power. However, with the years passing by, images changed again and even the former communist made a point out of distancing from their past and talking about the repressive structures of communism. The national image of Lithuania was consciously sought changed during the presidencies

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See: VONDERAU, Asta. Yet Another Europe? Constructing and Representing Identities in Lithuania Two Years after EU Accession. In: Darieva Tsypylma and Kaschuba Wolfgang (eds.). *Representations on the Margins of Europe, Politics and Identities in the Baltic and South Caucasian States*. Campus Verlag Frankfurt / New York, 2007, p. 220–242.

<sup>4</sup> See: GIORDANO, Christian & KOSTOVA, Dobrinka. The social production of mistrust. In: Hann, C.M. (ed.). *Post-socialism. Ideals, ideologies and practices in Eurasia*. London: Routledge, 2002.

of Adamkus (1998-2003, 2004-2009)<sup>5</sup>, where popular self-victimization, based on historical interpretations of the Soviet regime, was replaced with an image of Lithuania as a modern, self-governing and self-conscious nation, ready to enter the EU and to teach the existing member countries a lesson about European-ness<sup>6</sup>. Along with the geo-political re-conceptualization of Lithuania, a hip expression popped up: *new Lithuania*, and in companion with that: *new Lithuanians*. “New” with regard to persons is referring to the modern and cosmopolitan citizen who can easily navigate in Europe and succeed and gain from the EUropeanization<sup>7</sup>. These new Lithuanians became central in the project of re-defining Lithuanian identity and showing a new outer face of the country. Indeed, with a slight re-writing of George Orwell it seemed like “all are European, but some are more European than others”<sup>8</sup>, since the European identity and the imaginations surrounding it were assumed to be more easily embodied by some than by others. In this sense the ideas of generations played into national attempts to restructure history, as young people were supposed to “embody” Europe, as opposed to the older generations which embodied the “archaic past”.

This discursive form of communication was not so new in Lithuania; many features appeared to be similar to approaches made under the Soviet regime. During Soviet times the key concepts had also been the establishment of a “new society” and a “new man,” both of which should contrast what was viewed as the archaic capitalistic societies in the west. The “new man” at that time was the “homo Sovieticus” – the man who worked for the common good and set aside individual wishes and gains for the sake of the society<sup>9</sup>. In this process of change the goal was to do away with the pre-Soviet past as quickly as possible, in order to make space for the new history<sup>10</sup>. Today the content of this debate has changed, but it appears to me that the discourse remains more or less the same. The previous image of the (modern) “homo Sovieticus” contrasting (archaic) capitalism is today used the other way around. Now it is the (capitalistic) “new Lithuanian” who contrasts the (archaic) Soviet man, while the Soviet past is what people should do away with as quickly as possible. The difference may be that whereas the homo Sovieticus was sought applied to all citizens, the “new” Lithuanian is only applied to a certain part of the citizens. By making such comparisons we can observe how similar discourses are used intentionally in actualized history in order to serve specific goals at specific times, and thus the past can be selected, modified and circumvented according to the current discourse in society.

Taking into consideration how the Soviet past has become a hot potato in present day Lithuania, taking into consideration the attempts to create a new national identity it is not that strange that I time and again was being corrected when I gave voice to practices, ideas and images from rural Lithuania which were in direct contrast to “modern Lithuania”. However, although I can understand it, I find it hard to accept since such ideas about new Lithuania are only brought to life and nurtured by a minority: the people I conducted research among did not recognize themselves in the

<sup>5</sup> From February 2003 – April 2004 Rolandas Paksas was the president of Lithuania. However, soon after his presidency had begun, he was dismissed from office as he was found guilty of having illegal relations with the Russians (see chapter 4). After Paksas had been dismissed, Adamkus was reelected as president of the Republic of Lithuania, and served until July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009, where Dalia Grybauskaitė went into office, being the first female president in Lithuanian history.

<sup>6</sup> See: KLUMBYTĖ, Neringa. *Ethnography of Voting: Nostalgia, Subjectivity and Popular Politics in Post-socialist Lithuania*. PhD dissertation. University of Pittsburgh, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> See: MUNCK, V. C. de (...) 2008.

<sup>8</sup> See: ORWELL, George. *Animal Farm*. Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics, 1989 [1945].

<sup>9</sup> See: ČIUBRINSKAS, Vytis. Identity and Revival of Tradition in Lithuania. *Folk. Journal of Danish Ethnographic Society*, Vol. 42, 2000, p. 19–40.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

EUropean-Lithuanian mirror held up in front of them. This does not mean that they were not busy incorporating and reacting to change but they did it within their scope of options, and not the least, limitations. In this light I will now take a closer look at the concept of new Lithuanians and what is perceived to be their counterparts, the “not so new” Lithuanians.

### European engagement

Victor De Munck, in an article about the EUropeanization of the Lithuanian youth, works with the concept of *new Lithuanians*: young people who feel competent as cosmopolitan actors on a global stage<sup>11</sup>. The new Lithuanians emerge from Lithuania’s recent history of a sudden turn to the West and the rejection of the immediate past, which creates an expectation of wealth and access to a utopian world in the immediate future. Through the access to Europe the young people, so De Munck writes, aim at transforming themselves into Western Europeans by means of acquisition of wealth, the consumption of Western goods, and the development of a certain hybrid Lithuanian-western mind. However, not all young people are capable of participating in, what he conceptualizes as the millenarian dream, as it requires education, skills, and language competences. Far from all posses these qualifications and, therefore, there also are the “non-participants” (in the fulfilment of the millenarian dream.)

Whereas I well recognize the young generation De Munck describes as the new Lithuanians, and very well follow his thoughts about their Europeanization (what I would refer to as EUropeanization), I find that the rough classification of non-participants is based on superficial observations, which suffer from a lack of direct interaction with them. His description goes as follows:

The boys I saw were loud and unruly, with short hair, hard faces, tight shirts that prominently displayed their muscles; they smoked and drank beer daily (so it seemed). Not all of the boys and men were like this, of course, but these were the boys and men I noticed and thought to avoid. The exterior of the complex could be somewhat intimidating, with these little gangs of aimless youth and their ‘I am dangerous, therefore I am’ twist on Descartes. [MUNCK V. C. de (...) 2008, P. 10].

Reading this short but precise description, I immediately thought to myself: these are my informants! However, although vividly descriptive, it appeared to be a very narrow picture that did not show any familiarity with their situation. De Munck points to two interconnected features, the one being their crudely displayed masculinity, obviously intimidating to the innocent observer, and the second, their being young “aimless” men unable to take part in the millenarian dream. I suggest, however, that a more thorough analysis of their general situation would lead to other conclusions.

In an article by Otto Habeck on gender and culture at the Siberian and Northern Russian frontier, he seeks to understand the reason behind displayed masculinity through an approach he frames as “the unsettled social roles of young men”<sup>12</sup>. The article starts out with his concern about perplexing behaviour of young Siberian men, a behaviour which he describes as macho with reference to the performed masculinity, abusive language, and drinking, underlined by the potential or actual use of physical violence, thus, similar features to what both De Munck and I observed during our

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<sup>11</sup> See: MUNCK, V. C. de (...) 2008.

<sup>12</sup> See: HABECK, Joachim Otto. Gender and *Kul'tura* at the Siberian and Northern Russian Frontier. In: Haukanes, Haldis, Pine, Frances (eds.). *Generations, Kinship, Care, Gendered Provisions of Social Security in Central Eastern Europe*. University of Bergen, 2005.

fieldwork in Lithuania. Habeck sees these aspects of the young men's identity as a way to establish a role in the community. He is, however, attentive to the fact that such macho behaviour is not generally displayed and accepted everywhere rather it is confined to certain places. Here, the notion of space becomes crucial. In the case of Habeck's study, the display of macho behaviour is exclusively acceptable in what he defines as uncultured spaces: the tundra, whereas it is not tolerated in the village, which falls under the definition of a cultured space. In the latter setting, very different expectations of behaviour and norms exist, which are to be followed<sup>13</sup>.

If we compare Habeck's study in Siberia with similar phenomena in Lithuania, we could likewise assume that the displayed masculinity is not accepted and well seen everywhere, and furthermore, that it serves as a response to the strict obedience the youth employs when together with their parents. In fact, I know of several young men who would be drinking and most likely fighting in the evening, and the following morning would wake up at 6am and start working in the fields. Likewise, the same men, who made use of abusive language among their friends and used rough behaviour as a way to show their role as "real men", would address their parents with *Jūs*, which is the Lithuanian polite form of address equivalent to the German *Sie*. While it would be masculine to display their strength in front of young women, it would undermine their masculinity if they opposed their mothers (rebellion against fathers would be more common). It would also be the same group of "tough young men" who could be seen following their mothers or grandmothers to town, carrying their grocery shopping around from one shop to the other without a word of complaint.

Contrary to De Munck, I found that the so-called non-participants had an important function in family life with regard to care and social security – the rough masculinity being but one aspect of more complex gender roles. The groups of young men I knew from my two field site villages were, although unruly, loud, drinking, smoking, and occasionally fighting, still in a process of bridging old expectations with a new setting, of finding ways to access new opportunities while being subject to unemployment, restructurings, and difficulties. Without attempting to glorify the kind of gangs De Munck described (at first I was also struck by their unpleasant attitude and not the least their direct and rough language), I do emphasize the need to tell a fuller story of their situation.

### The urban migrant

Donatas<sup>14</sup> was born in a small village close to the Polish borderline. He had four siblings: one older brother and two older sisters who all were in their thirties, a younger brother who was in his late twenties. The two older sisters lived with their husbands and children in other parts of Lithuania. One of the sisters was engaged in small scale farming and milk production, whereas the other was at home with the children, while her husband had a job in town. The oldest brother lived in Kaunas with his wife. He was a truck driver, and she worked in the local kindergarten. The other twin brother lived just across the street from the parents' place with his wife and their baby son. He was working in a bakery, and his wife was at home with the child.

Donatas' mother had retired at the age of 50. She had chosen to take the so-called "many-children-pension" (Lith. – *daugiavaikės motinos pensija*) which was offered to all women with more than three children. The father got a state support for disabled persons (Lith. – *invalidumas*) due to bad health, and he spent most of his time in bed. The family had previously had a few cows, pigs and a horse, but during

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> A pseudonym.

my fieldwork both the horse and all the cows except for one, were sold. The mother contributed to her pension by selling the little extra milk she had and by preparing food for weddings and funerals.

The combination of farming and pension made their living. The natural resources at the farm were only potentials from the onset: if no one worked the land it provided no crops, if no one planted potatoes or cultivated vegetables they would not grow, if no one took care of the animals, milked the cow, or slaughtered the pigs, no milk or meat would be provided. To keep even a small farm required hard labour, and despite the many children, labour was scarce. As mentioned above, two of the sons had died, the remaining children had left the house and the father was ill. The farm was primarily the mother's responsibility, but as an ageing woman she could not possibly carry out the heavy work on her own. She was dependent on her children. The daughters and the elder brother lived far away and had their own families to take care of. The brother across the street was working daily in a bakery but would help out at the farm when he could. He was, however, drinking quite heavily which had an impact of his ability to work. Then there was Donatas. Contrary to his siblings he had no family of his own, which meant that his family obligations were towards the mother only. The problem was that he no longer lived in the village. He was employed both as a carpenter and a construction worker and he worked illegally in order to avoid taxes. This meant he moved around Lithuania, from city to city, from job to job.

To be an urban migrant with old parents in the countryside put Donatas in an uncanny situation. After five days of hard work in the city he went back to his parents Friday evening. The weekend was spent on labour at the farm, and in the evenings he was together with his friends in the village (the kind of young men that De Munck described to us, and Donatas was no exception) who had returned home in the weekend for the same reason as him: to work at the farms. In the evenings they would hang out in front of the local store with beers, or they would go down to the lake in the company of girls, drink and smoke, and some almost always got into a fight with somebody else. Alternatively they drove to the neighbouring village to look for a good fight. As Monday arrived, Donatas left in the early morning in order to get back to the city. The summer was particularly demanding as this was the season with the most work at the farms. In this period the oldest brother would also come from Kaunas in order to share the workload, and his wife came along to collect potatoes or help the mother in the kitchen. In the winter other work tasks were needed such as chopping winter wood and transporting it home, repairing equipment for the farm or renovating the house. In this period Donatas only returned sporadically.

As the internal resources in the mother's household were few, the mother had to expand them with resources from other families. Donatas' mother would help on other farms, and often other women or men would work on her farm in return. When Donatas was at home, the neighbouring women would often come over on the weekends and "borrow" him to work on their farms. The additional work Donatas carried out on other farms enabled the family to engage in a broader network, something the mother could benefit from when he was not there. I once asked Donatas if he would not rather stay in the countryside and work on the farm instead of always having to travel, but he replied: "Are you kidding, or what?!" (Lith. – *Ar juokauji, o ką?!*) Clearly, a countryside life was not to be preferred to his present conditions.

### **The urban-rural compromise**

Donatas' situation of was not exceptional but reflected the conditions for many young people. The countryside offered basically no alternative work to farming, and it was becoming increasingly

difficult to make a living off farming unless you had a lot of land or many animals. The situation demanded that young people found employment elsewhere. This was in itself not a sacrifice, as the small and remote villages were not attractive places to live. The problem was that the parents still counted on their children's support. The fact that the children no longer lived in the village did not change this expectation. In this we find the reason why the bus that arrived in *Bilvytis* Friday 5.30 pm and left from *Bilvytis* Monday 6.30 am was always crowded with young people who travelled back and forth between the city and the countryside. It was, as a rule, young men in their twenties who had not yet married and still had primary obligations towards their parents.

These readjustments of work, cooperation, and parent-child relationships that we find in such demanding changes in working structures suggest that the unintended consequences of the EU-integration, which has failed to establish alternative work places in the countryside while closing small farms, and their counterproductive influence on the further future modernization already have significant impact on the composition and socio-economic organization in rural Lithuanian families. Based on my ethnographic data, I will argue that instead of seeing EUropeanization as a process of fulfilling desires and dreams, or adapting to certain lifestyles, I suggest that we also view it as the consequences the EU integration has in people's everyday life; such as responses to persisting demands under a changed structure. Far from being the road to an increasingly cosmopolitan life, EUropeanization may, for many, mean increased pressure and responsibility on the home front.

### **Bridging between Europeanization and parental expectations**

I believe that when studying what EUropeanization came to mean in the previously socialist countries and when describing their potential "longing for the west", which indeed has been and still is a dominant feature in the political agendas after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we should look at it from a broader perspective. Despite the big EUrope-campaigns, the "return to Europe" has not only been fed by a straight and undisputed desire to become European. Rather, the process has also entailed new and increased restraints, doubt, and anxiety. As argued by Haukanes and Pine in their contribution to the debate, people do embrace some aspects of the westernization with enthusiasm, while they only reluctantly comply with others<sup>15</sup>, and we could add, other aspects they do not comply with at all. In this sense, Europeanization has been understood and interpreted differently among different people. Only by viewing the various and sometimes ambivalent aspects of this, we get a broader and more nuanced picture. Returning to De Munck gives us a clear idea of this; whereas the youth in his article envisioned a life, which they formulated as "without structures" (Lith. – *be struktūros*), which was based on their ideas of what Europe and the turn to the west means; the young people from my study were not envisioning any "free life", they were bound by changes in structures and new options for work paired with parental expectations and obligations. However, these restraints (or their appearance for that sake) did not put the young people in non-participatory roles in Europe. It is here, I argue, that we get a better insight into what EUropeanization comes to mean for the majority of young people from the rural, and likely, the urban areas, as the envisioning of a cosmopolitan and "free" life is only an option for the minority. The youth *staying behind* in Lithuania is forced into a concrete relation with changed circumstances, which they have to cope with on the home-stage. Thus in other and probably more concrete ways than the *new Lithuanians*, they participated in the presently changing society.

<sup>15</sup> See: HAUKANES, Haldis & PINE, Frances. *Generations, Kinship, Care, Gendered Provisions of Social Security in Central Eastern Europe*. University of Bergen, 2005.

### **Concluding remarks**

I started out by giving an example of how well educated Lithuanian youth was pre-occupied with promoting so-called correct images of the Lithuanians. In such promotions of the Euro-Lithuanian man, I agree that slaughtering pigs may not be the image which should be conveyed on international conferences. But submitting to such narratives has never been my ambition. My ambition is to warn against turning the countryside into a trash bin for EU-unfit phenomena, against glossing over complex features by classifying them as “Soviet” and “atypical”. This, I say, is only a product of the failed attempt to produce a modern nation based on an identity-ideology about “new Europeans”, which in reality only applies to a minority. Since too many features consequently fall outside this narrow scope, it constitutes the vision of “us” versus “them”. I suggest; retaining “us-ness” is applicable only to those who produce such discourses, and the resistance to change which they apply to the so-called other, is nowhere found. In order to prove this point I gave an example from my fieldwork about a young man, who, like other young men from my field site, was forced into an ongoing and demanding negotiation of past expectations and current conditions, which more than anything evokes very concrete responses to the ongoing changes in the countryside which came about with the EU.

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## **KAS YRA KAS? KRITINĖS PASTABOS APIE ŠIUOLAIKINĖS LIETUVIŠKOSIOS TAPATYBĖS SAMPRATĄ**

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Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje siekiama ištirti, kaip lietuviškasis tautinis identitetas yra suvokiamas šalies ir tarptautiniu mastu. Autorė išties pusmetį gyveno šių laikų Lietuvos kaime. Žvelgdama į kasdienę

kaimo gyventojų buitį, ji fiksavo ten tvyrančio tamsaus ir užguito gyvenimo rutiną, lygindama ją su savo (užsienietės) gyvenimo patirtimi. Ji realiai suvokė ir atsiribojo nuo jaunų bei išsilavinusių lietuvių pastangų atitraukti jos dėmesį nuo vargingos kaimo kasdienybės reikalų ir siūlymų perkelti savo tyrimų objektyvą į švaresnį, šviesesnį žmonių gyvenimą Lietuvos miestų industrinėje aplinkoje. Miestiečių pamokymai nebraidžioti po kaimo purvynus šio straipsnio autorei aiškiai liudijo dviejų skirtingų Lietuvos įvaizdžių užsienyje egzistavimą. Pirmasis – „oficialus“ įvaizdis – švari, tvarkinga, šviesi ir visai kitaip idealizuota Lietuva, viliojanti atvykti užsienio turistus. Antrasis išpūdis – „realus“ įvaizdis. Tai nualintas, pavargęs, pesimistiškai žiūrintis į ateitį nuošalaus Lietuvos kaimo žmonių gyvenimas. Visas šis kontrastas fantasmagoriškai išryškėja šalies valdininkų nuolat deklaruojamų europeizacijos, modernizacijos ir kitokių šviesių Lietuvos perspektyvų propagandos kontekste. Realūs paprastų žmonių požiūriai į tokius Euro-įvaizdžius, jų asmeniniai bei visuomeniniai vertinimai marginaliniame kaimo kontekste ir yra autorės mokslinių tyrimų objektas. Autorė pažymi, kad Lietuva pastaruoju metu vis labiau tampa „dviveidžio Januso“ fenomenu, kur realusis gyvenimas ir oficialusis jo išivaizdavimas valdininkų kabinetuose skiriasi iš esmės.

Straipsnyje teigiama, kad Lietuvos žmonių gyvenime pastebimi identitetų hegemonijos diskursai. Nepaisant Lietuvos Respublikos įstojimo į Europos Sąjungą, paprastų jos piliečių sąmonėje dažnu atveju dar yra giliai išsiskniję sovietinio mąstymo stereotipai.

Kita priešingybė – spartus „naujųjų lietuvių“ klasės formavimasis. Tai mokantys „suktis“ gyvenime jauni, veiklūs kosmopolitinių pažiūrų vyrukai, savo gyvenimą aiškiai orientuojantys į maksimalios materialinės gerovės sau kūrimą, legalaus ir nelegalaus kapitalo kaupimą, ignoruojantys dvasines ar intelektualines vertybes. Verslo reikalais jie skersai išilgai keliauja po jiems atsivėrusios Europos Sąjungos erdves, nesirūpindami savo tėviškės problemomis. Materialinės gerovės vardan jie be jokių skrupulų yra pasirengę atsisakyti lietuviškojo identiteto, jiems nerūpi ir pozityvaus Lietuvos įvaizdžio kūrimo reikalai užsienyje.

Autorė atkreipia dėmesį ir į tai, kad tokios gyvenimos formavimuisi daug įtakos turėjo ir kasdienio gyvenimo deformacijos sovietiniais laikais. Sovietinė propaganda nuolat akcentuodavo „naujosios visuomenės“, „naujojo žmogaus“ kūrimo idėjas. Toks žmogus turėjo parodyti „naujojo gyvenimo“ sovietinėje sistemoje privalumus, iki kurių „supuvusio Vakarų kapitalizmo“ atstovams dar labai toli..

Toks „naujasis žmogus“ sovietinėje visuomenėje ir buvo suformuotas *homo sovieticus* pavidalu. Tai žmogus, kantriai dirbantis mistinės visuomenės gerovės sukūrimo vardan, ir vardan tokios gerovės atsisakęs bet kokių asmeninės gerovės siekių (žr. Čiubrinskas, 2000). Nauji posovietinio gyvenimo modeliai liudija siekius kuo greičiau atsisakyti minėto sovietinio gyvenimo idealų ir ieškoti kitų gerovės kūrimo būdų. Pastebimas inversinio pobūdžio gyvenimos kontrastų sukeitimas. Vietoje ankstesnės priešpriešos „modernus, šiuolaikinis *homo sovieticus* – archajinis, atsilikęs kapitalizmas“ atsiranda kita priešprieša: „modernus, šiuolaikinis (kapitalistinis) *naujasis lietuvis* – archajinis, atsilikęs *homo sovieticus*“.

Čia aptariami kontrastai liudija istorinių gyvenimos pasikeitimų paradoksus, būdingus posovietinės Lietuvos žmonių gyvenimui – jų kasdienybei ir geresnio gyvenimo vizijoms.