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**MAPPING ETHNICITY-PROPERTY NEXUS:
FRAMING AND NEGOTIATING ETHNICITY
IN THE PROCESS OF LAND RESTITUTION
IN SOUTH-EASTERN LITHUANIA**

Doctoral Dissertation
Social Sciences, Sociology (S 005)

Vilnius, 2022

This doctoral dissertation has been prepared during the period of 2017-2021 at the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, under the doctoral program right conferred to Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences and Kaunas University of Technology, on 22 February 2019 by the Order No V-160 (amendment – 2021 January 18, order No. V-75) of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The preparation and successful defence of a dissertation is considered to be a sign of the ability to work independently and individually in the Academy. However, this particular dissertation can hardly be said to be a sign of my individual hard work and effort alone. I would therefore like to thank the people – in a sense, the co-authors of the dissertation – without whom this intellectual adventure, joy and misery all at once, would not have been possible.

First of all, I would like to thank my ex-wife Csilla Malomvölgy for her constant support and encouragement during the preparation of this thesis.

I would also like to thank my closest family members – my mother, my sister and my grandmother, who left this world during the writing process – who were always with me during the dissertation writing process. I owe them the time that my academic activities took away from us.

A special thanks goes to my supervisor Kristina Šliavaitė, who accompanied, took care of me, and whose helping hand I always felt whenever I needed it during this difficult intellectual journey.

I would also like to thank Meilutė Taljūnaitė for expressing her confidence in my proposed PhD project, and all my colleagues from the Department of Ethnic Studies at the Institute of Sociology at the Lithuanian Centre of Social Sciences, who always listened and gave me friendly advice during the writing of my thesis. I would like to thank the reviewers of this dissertation for their constructive criticism.

I also feel extremely grateful to my former supervisors for my bachelor's and master's theses, Andrzej Pukszo, Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, András Kovács and Luca Váradi. Working with you has shaped me as a scientist. This thesis would not have seen the light of day without my having been your student in the past.

Thank you to all my friends who had the joy and the misery of hearing the story of “the return of land in south-eastern Lithuania” so many times. I promise this is the last time!

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the editors Tomas Marcinkevičius and Hywel Griffiths for their editorial assistance in the preparation of this dissertation in English.

Last but not least, this thesis is dedicated to all the participants of my research and to the people who were “less fortunate” during the post-socialist transformation. It was an extraordinary honour for me to be able to write this thesis not about you, but together with you. May your stories not be silenced and may your voices be heard.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- EAPL-CFA** – Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania- Christian Families Alliance
- NLS** – National Land Service
- SEL** – south-eastern Lithuania

INTRODUCTION

When Lithuania became independent, a decision was made to restore previously collectivized land to its former owners. Consequently, on June 18, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania passed a restitution law called “On the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property”. Restitution aimed at remedying the injustice the Soviet regime inflicted upon persons whose private property was collectivized. Simultaneously, in independent Lithuania, private property was meant to become one of the key principles structuring the new society. Article 23 of the state’s constitution declared, “Property shall be inviolable.”¹ Article 46 proclaimed that “Lithuania’s economy shall be based on the right of private ownership, freedom of individual economic activity and initiative.”² Despite these aims declared at the beginning of independence, the restitution process is still unfinished and several thousand owners are still waiting for the completion of the reform.

Until October 1, 2021, the highest number of citizens whose property rights in cities were not restored as a percentage of the total number of citizens who submitted applications was in Grikiškės (56.36 %), Vilnius (47.95 %) and Trakai (27.56 %) cities and towns.³ During the same period, the highest number of citizens whose property rights to land in rural areas were not restored as a percentage of the total number of citizens who submitted applications was recorded in the following territorial branches of the National Land Service (NLS) - Vilnius (3.76 %), Vilnius district (2.86%), Trakai (0.3 %).⁴ That being the case, most of the unrestituted land is to be found in south-eastern Lithuania (SEL). One feature that is common to these areas is that they are close to the capital or that they are in beautiful and commercially attractive areas, e.g., Trakai. In other words, these are areas where a large number of people have a potential interest in owning land.

However, the second feature that unites these cases is their locality: they are found in the multi-ethnic region of SEL, where higher concentrations of national minorities have long lived, e.g., Lithuanian Poles. The largest share of Lithuanian

¹ Lithuanian Parliament. 1992. “Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania”. URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.21892?jfwid=-wd7z8ivg5>.

² Ibid.

³ National Land Service. 2021. “Restoration of citizens’ land ownership rights in the urban area” (Lith. “Piliečių nuosavybės teisių į žemę atkūrimas miestų teritorijoje”). URL: <http://www.nzt.lt/go.php/lit/Pilieciu-nuosavybes-teisiu-i-zeme-atkurimas-miestu-teritorijoje>.

⁴ National Land Service. 2021. “Restoration of citizens’ land rights in rural areas” (Lith. “Piliečių nuosavybės teisių į žemę atkūrimas kaimo teritorijoje”). URL: <http://www.nzt.lt/go.php/lit/Pilieciu-nuosavybes-teisiu-i-zeme-atkurimas-kaimo-teritorijoje>.

Polish minority populations are found in Šalčininkai (77.8 %), Vilnius (52. %), Trakai (30.1 %) and Švenčionys (26 %) district municipalities, while Lithuanian Russians are present in large numbers in Visaginas (51.9 %), Klaipėda district (19.6 %), Zarasai district (18.7 %) and Švenčionys district (13.3 %) municipalities.⁵ Šalčininkai, Vilnius and (to some extent) Trakai district municipalities are located in SEL. Therefore, we can assume that many of the owners in SEL who either struggled or are still struggling to get back their land are of minority background.

In addition to the fact that the largest number of unrecovered land ownership rights are found in territories located in SEL, one more thing distinguishes land restitution in this part of the country when compared to the rest of Lithuania. Even though the return of land took place in the same way throughout the country, the policy required certain adjustments in some regions. One of the reasons that hampered local inhabitants' efforts to get back the land was the re-emergence of the so-called street-plot settlements – settlements organized according to an archaic system of land rights with poor legal documentation which existed in SEL before collectivisation. These settlements, therefore, constitute an additional feature which distinguishes restitution in SEL from the same process in other parts of the country.

Having in mind the above-mentioned context of post-socialist land restitution in Lithuania, the country's south-eastern region was chosen for the study. Although the land restitution took place in SEL just as in the whole of Lithuania, here the restitution process, it seems, can hardly be analysed without taking into account such region-specific factors as the ethnically heterogeneous character of the local population and certain peculiarities of land ownership that existed before collectivization, e.g., the street-plot settlements. These factors provide a basis for viewing land restitution in relation to ethnicity. This assumed relationship underlies the approach chosen in this work to treat ethnicity and property as possibly entwined in a nexus.

Finally, the choice to study ethnicity not as such but rather in relation to the process of reinstating private property in independent Lithuania was also informed by the fact that members of the Polish minority list land restitution, along with education and the original spelling of minority names, as one of the major problems which the minority encounters in independent Lithuania. For instance, one study on the Lithuanian Polish minority's identity examined the Lithuanian Polish press, published in Lithuania from 2004 to 2013, and found that the return

⁵ Statistics Lithuania. 2013. "Information on ethnicity, mother tongue and confession by municipality" (Lith. "Informacija apie gyventojų tautybę, gimtąją kalbą ir tikybę pagal savivaldybes"). URL: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistikos-leidiniu-katalogas?publication=22>.

of land to legal owners in Vilnius and the Vilnius region was among the major problems discussed in the minority press (Kazėnas et a. 2014: 57). Further, the Lithuanian Polish scientist and active minority community organizer Mariusz Antonowicz named compromised restitution as one of the factors behind mutual distrust between the Lithuanian political elite and local Poles. In the opinion of Antonowicz, the restitution law passed in 1996 which provided for the return of property expropriated through Soviet and Nazi occupation, proposed the transfer of land in another part of Lithuania instead of the real estate owned. Antonowicz noted that many ethnic Lithuanians have been negatively affected by the aforementioned provision. However, it was Poles who suffered the most from it, because the Vilnius region, “where the most attractive and expensive land is, has become the main target of various corruption schemes” (Antonowicz 2015: 21-22). These considerations indicate that among minority members land restitution is seen as an important issue, affecting the minority’s life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars working on post-socialist transformations have argued that the outcome of post-socialist transformation, including property reforms, was complex, open-ended and anything but linear (Burawoy and Verdery 2000; Buyandelgeriyn 2008; Collier 2011). In his study on urban infrastructure, public sector budgets, and “rollback” reforms, e.g. privatization and liberalization, in post 90s Russia, Stephen J. Collier demonstrated that neoliberalism in post-Soviet Russia also governed individuals as “subjects of need” – something that would be seen as a characteristic feature of the Soviet social state – and defined neoliberalism as a form of critique of the social state, which nevertheless takes into account normative orientations characteristic of and developed by the 20th century’s welfare states (Collier 2011).

In this research, the term “post-socialism” is used first and foremost as a temporal marker to designate the period after socialism. The term post-socialism was widely used among anthropologists interested in the societies of countries who had experienced actually existing socialism, as well as geographers (Müller 2019: 5). Political scientists and sociologists, on the other hand, preferred the term “post-communism” (Müller 2019: 6). As noted by Martin Müller, differences in terminology also meant different approaches to the subject. Scholars working under the label of post-communism were more focused on “formal and institutional aspects— regimes, markets, prices, laws, voter preferences, state and party formation— and less on subjectivities and the everyday” (2019: 6) when compared to their colleagues interested in post-socialism. The term post-socialism was also preferred by those scholars who saw social change not as a transition from one order to another but rather as a transformation. Therefore, according to Müller, rather than a concept, “post-socialism” might be considered “as a sensibility, a particular perspective, emphasizing the plurality of lifeworlds and experiences, characteristic to societies under post-socialist transformation” (2019: 5). Being aware of differences between the above-mentioned scholarly traditions regarding the usage of the terms “post-socialism” and “post-communism”, and even sympathizing with scholars who work on the subjects of “post-socialism”, I, however, use the term post-socialism simply as a temporal marker in this work.

One aspect of post-socialist transformation relates to undoing Soviet collectivisation policies and reinstating the institution of private property. One form of private property, which was reinstated during the post-socialist period, was land. The results of post-socialist land reform have been analysed by many scholars.

Katherine Verdery (2003) has analysed decollectivisation policies in post-socialist Romania. In her monograph, *The Vanishing Hectare*, she sought to understand

how previously collectivised land became private property, what impact this transformation had on the land (what value it had) and rural communities, and how privatization structured social relations in post-socialist rural societies. In *The Vanishing Hectare*, Verdery tells a story of decollectivisation in one Transylvanian village in post-socialist Romania. Among many intellectually stimulating insights, the author describes that in some cases decollectivisation meant demodernisation – without access to modern farming equipment and techniques, people returned to traditional farming methods or would cease farming at all (Verdery 2003). Hectares of arable land would thereby become abandoned and vanish, in Verdery’s words. Speaking more broadly, Verdery termed this phenomenon the elasticity of land. By this, she meant that during the decollectivisation land acquired elastic qualities as it started moving, stretching, and evaporating, often due to the illegal activities of, for example, local government (Verdery 1994, 2003).

Taking on the fuzziness of post-socialist property, as described by Verdery, Janet C. Sturgeon and Thomas Sikor (2004) discussed the reasons behind such fuzziness and compared it to the flexible property relations in post-colonial African and Asian settings. The authors noticed multiple similarities between fuzzy post-socialist and ambiguous post-colonial property. However, what distinguishes the situation of post-socialist property from the post-colonial case is the absence of established practices of exclusion and inclusion: decollectivisation allowed local elites to claim rural resources (economic, political and cultural). Possession of these resources allowed the elites to take advantage of a situation where practices of exclusion and inclusion were not yet defined, and also to perpetuate such indeterminacy further (Sturgeon and Sikor 2004: 13-14).

Tatjana Thelen (2005) examined post-socialist land reform in terms of the ability of the peasant elite to reproduce itself since pre-socialist times, as well as changes in the meaning of privately owned land. According to her, different parts of the elite had different abilities to reproduce themselves. The difference could best be explained by the nature of the collectivization process: bigger differences in the elite’s social continuity from pre- to post-socialist times are characteristic of those cases where collectivisation was conducted more violently.

Thomas Sikor, Stefan Dorondel, Johannes Stahl and Phuc Xuan To (2017) have examined how land and forest became property in post-socialist European and Asian countries. They emphasise that by turning things into property, governments engaged in continuous “propertizing projects,” which were seen as a solution to multiple social, economic and political problems, characteristic of post-socialist societies. According to these authors, propertizing didn’t simply mean that a state grants objects of a certain value to various social actors. Struggles over property crossed with contestations over authority (2017: 22) which, in turn, would occur

along several dimensions: politico-legal (authority to declare resources as property is attributed to political-legal institutions); procedures by which the state exercises its authority (may vary between rule-based and personalized procedures, in case the state is a dominant political-legal institution); struggle between various state actors (local and central government officials compete over who sets the rules and gets decision-making rights) (2017: 22).

Stefan Dorondel has discussed how property restitution after socialism in fact resulted in repeated property deprivation for some of Romania's ethnic groups. Over the years of post-socialist transformation, the Rudari – a Romani ethnic group in Romania - were deprived of the forest, which was supposed to be given back to them as a result of property restitution. However, due to their vulnerable position in Romanian society, members of ethnic groups were exploited by local elites. Dorondel defined the relationship between Rudari and local elites as clientelism: the latter have access to state positions, while the former provides the elites with illegal services, e.g., wood stealing and smuggling. For Rudari, who possess neither land nor forest and are impoverished and live from social benefits, but who are also known as skilled woodsmen, such services for more powerful patrons are a way to survive in a rough economic environment. For elites, Rudari represent a group of people who can be entrusted with illegal activities but are also scapegoats who can be blamed for deforestation (Dorondel 2009: 59).

Regarding this research, one important claim shared among the above-mentioned analyses is that post-socialist property reforms were open-ended and uncertain, despite the intentions of those who initiated these reforms. Similar things have been observed by Lithuanian scholars examining land reforms in independent Lithuania. In Lithuania, post-socialist land reform has been analysed by the sociologist Zenonas Norkus (2014). He analysed the reform and its outcomes in comparison to land reform conducted in Lithuania after WWI and concluded that in some respects the post-socialist reform meant returning to the status quo in land ownership and management which existed even before the interwar land reform. Moreover, Norkus mentioned that the interwar land reform had a national integrative aspect as the land was taken from the wealthy Polish nobility and given to the rural Lithuanian part of the society. The post-socialist land reform, on the contrary, divided the society and pitted its urban and rural segments against each other (Norkus 2014).

Vylius Leonavičius and Eglė Ozolinčiūtė (2019) have analysed the transformation of the Soviet agriculture in an independent Lithuania, and, similarly to Thelen, argued that the violent incorporation and transformation of the Lithuanian nation-state into the Soviet Union was directly linked to the hardships of transforming kolkhoz-based agriculture according to the principles of a free-market economy.

Antanas Poviliūnas (2008) analysed how Lithuanian agriculture was reformed according to the principles of the market economy. However, as with many other scholars interested in the topic (Treinys 2008; Aleknavičius 2017), his scholarly works analyse these reforms on their own terms (what was intended and what was the outcome). In the context of this research, these works are important because they shed light on the inner contradictions of post-socialist agrarian/land reforms.

Like studies on land reforms, there have been numerous studies on ethnicity and ethnic minorities in Lithuania. Lithuanian scholars have studied various issues related to ethnicity: from models of adaptation by Lithuania's different ethnic groups (Kasatkina, Leončikas 2003), to problems of unemployment among members of Lithuanian national minorities (Neverauskienė et al. 2007; Neverauskienė 2010), to ethnicity as a cause of political cleavage in Lithuanian party politics (Janušauskienė 2016). One of the most researched aspects of ethnicity has been the identity of national minorities (Kazėnas et al. 2014, Frėjutė-Rakauskienė et al. 2016, Janušauskienė 2021).

However, with some minor exceptions (Repečkaitė 2011; Podagelytė 2014; Šliavaitė 2016, Norkus 2018), little to no attention has been paid to ethnicity in relation to economic/material issues, e.g., issues of post-socialist land reform in connection to relations between the country's different ethnic groups. In other words, research regarding the material (as opposed to identity) side of ethnic minority issues in Lithuania is scarce. In the context of this thesis, worthy of particular mention is a collective monograph, *Social and Historical Justice in Multi-ethnic Lithuania: Ideas, Experiences, and Contexts*, written by a group of Lithuanian scholars, whose aim was to analyse social and historical justice from the perspective of different scholarly disciplines – sociology, political science, economics, and anthropology (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė et al. 2018). The issue of social justice was also researched in the context of neoliberal reforms of education (Šliavaitė 2018). Although the monograph's authors rely on several social justice theories (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė et al. 2018: 15-44), one of which was developed by Nancy Fraser and which distinguishes 3 dimensions of social justice – economic, social and political – the economic dimension receives less attention. The monograph's chapter 6, titled "Concepts and experiences of social justice: security, equality and trust", tackles the economic dimension of social justice, particularly social and economic (in) equality (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė et al. 2018: 255-263). The researchers noted that in the case of their informants, "economic and political representation issues are linked: economic exclusion is linked to political exclusion, e.g., wealth inequality is seen as a determinant of different opportunities to influence political processes or seek representation, thus directly affecting democratic processes" (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė et al. 2018: 267). In the same chapter, the authors discuss the issue of

social differentiation and political exclusion, described by some of the informants along the lines of “ordinary” and “influential” citizens. Research participants thereby raise the issue of the unequal distribution of power in society, which leads to social injustice. Conversely, those who had power or better access to it were able to resolve their restitution cases quicker. The monograph and the above-mentioned example provide an instance of research this thesis seeks to develop further.

Geographers Donatas Burneika and Rūta Ubarevičienė have analysed the process of socio-ethnic segregation in Lithuania’s metropolitan areas of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda (Burneika and Ubarevičienė 2016). They noticed that post-socialist urban sprawl – a direct result of constraints the Soviet government once put on suburban development – resulted in the suburban expansion of Vilnius city after socialism. This in turn affected the prevailing ethnic landscape of the Vilnius metropolitan area – wealthier Lithuanians from the city started moving to the capital’s vicinities, inhabited by poorer members of minority groups (Burneika and Ubarevičienė 2016: 802). The analysis provided by these authors is important for this research because it can be assumed that land restitution contributed to the process of suburbanization as defined by Burneika and Ubarevičienė.

Finally, there is one more work which is important to mention in the context of this research. In his monograph, *Lithuanians and Lithuania’s Poles, and Lithuania and Poland in 1988-1994* historian Vladas Sirutavičius provides a robust analysis, rich in primary sources, of the relation between Lithuanians and Lithuanian Poles in Lithuania in the context of the interstate relations between Lithuania and Poland between 1988-1994 (Sirutavičius 2017). Albeit briefly, the monograph addressed the issue of land restitution (Sirutavičius 2017: 254-258). The issues addressed are from the period of 1988-1994. In this section, however, Sirutavičius makes the important observation that land restitution caused social tensions. In his interpretation, these tensions occurred between members of different ethnicities in SEL.

To sum up, the topic of ethnicity in relation to property and economy in Lithuania has been analysed by scholars representing different disciplines. Yet scholarship regarding this topic has overall been scarce. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that topics relating ethnicity and property, or in broader terms, nationalism and economy, have received less attention not only among Lithuanian scholars but among foreign scholars as well. For example, after reviewing a large amount of interdisciplinary literature on the relationship between nationalism and economy and connecting this literature to broader discussions in nationalism studies, Thomas Fetzer (2020: 3) noticed that among scholars studying nationalism, little attention has been paid to, for instance, research on economic aspects of nationalist political programs. Fetzer hinted that to connect economic analysis with discussions on comparative typologies of nationalism, researchers could study

“how the nationalist self-determination principle feeds into (neo)liberal doctrines” or “how nationalism “inhabits” other ideologies in the economic realm” (Fetzer 2020: 8). This thesis follows Fetzer’s recommendation to a certain extent: it deals less with economy and nationalism and more with what could be called preconditions of both: (private) property (which is an important element of the market economy) and ethnicity (a precondition for nationalism, understood as ethnic ideology).

RESEARCH OBJECT, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Because the restitution process is as yet unfinished and many of the unresolved cases can be found in the ethnically heterogeneous SEL, and at the same time having in mind the lack of materially oriented studies of ethnic issues in Lithuania as well as the lack of theorization of the ethnicity-property nexus, this research analyses the possible role ethnicity might have played in post-socialist property reform by examining the case of land restitution in post-socialist Lithuania's multi-ethnic south-eastern region. Taking on this aim, the research asks what role ethnicity played in the process of land restitution in SEL, as revealed in the documents regulating land restitution as well as in accounts of the restitution provided by persons who sought to have land restored to them. In other words, I am interested in the perceptions of ethnicity and its role in the process of land restitution.

The thesis examines the possible relation between ethnicity and land restitution on several levels. It asks whether and how the role of ethnicity is revealed in parliamentary discussions and policy documents according to which the restitution was implemented, as well as instances of how these policies were implemented in practice. Here the thesis examines whether ethnicity played any role in different dimensions of the governance of land restitution, such as in resolving the problems restitution reform aimed to address, how it was implemented, as well as the ideas that informed the restitution process. On the micro-level, the role of ethnicity in the restitution process is explored by looking at how ethnicity was perceived, utilized, and negotiated, and how ethnic boundaries were drawn in the context of land restitution as revealed by interpreting and constructing restitution narratives by people who sought to have land restored.

Research object: governance and perceptions of property restitution in ethnically diverse south-eastern Lithuania

The research aims to investigate whether and how the governance and perceptions of land restitution in south-eastern Lithuania were framed in ethnic categories.

Research objectives:

1. Building on existing relevant scholarship to develop a theoretical toolkit that allows approaching ethnicity and property as related phenomena.
2. To analyse what role the category of ethnicity played in the regulatory documents of the restitution process and to inquire whether this process

diverged in any substantial ways in south-eastern Lithuania in comparison to the rest of the country.

3. To analyse the research data, collected through interviews with informants who sought to have land restored to them in south-eastern Lithuania, to find out whether and how ethnicity is constructed and employed in their accounts of property restitution.
4. To map the effects of land restitution in south-eastern Lithuania on the reification of group boundaries regarding ethnic majority and minority groups (with a focus on the Polish minority group).

STATEMENTS TO DEFEND

1. Cross-fertilization between the concepts of a nationalizing state and governmentality allow us to analyse ethnicity in relation to the land restitution process: the concept of governmentality helps us to understand how nationalization happens, while the nation provides an important context in which to analyse governmental practices. Such analysis is further facilitated by treating ethnicity as a cognitive category.
2. Although land restitution in Lithuania was planned to be colour blind and members of every ethnic group were to be treated equally, the implementation of the restitution in (south-eastern) Lithuania was marked by treating unequal ethnic and/or social groups as equal and by experiences of additional troubles members of the region's ethnic minorities had in restoring their rights to land.
3. Minority members would frame land restitution in south-eastern Lithuania in ethnic terms, but ethnicity would not appear as a master category in the interpretation of restitution. The usage of the category would vary depending on a person's social background and experience with restitution.
4. Members of the region's ethnic minority political party would be more inclined to interpret the process of land restitution through the ethnic prism when compared to ordinary participants of the restitution process. Nevertheless, attempts at such a framing would have a limited impact on the mobilization of the group on ethnic terms.

1. THEORY

The chapter consists of 3 major parts. First, I present a concept to analyse nationalism from a top-down perspective. This part thus begins with an introduction of Roger Brubaker's (1996; 2011) definition of nationalizing nationalism developed to analyse national issues in post-socialist Europe. Further, I argue that some of the analytically weak spots of the definition can be corrected by supplementing Brubaker's concept with Michel Foucault's (1991) notion of governmentality.

The second part outlines the approach towards studying ethnicity and land restitution from a bottom-up perspective. This part thus starts by presenting the relational approach to studying and understanding ethnicity. Next, I argue that in the context of this research such an approach could be supplemented by the Weberian notion of an ethnic group as a status group.

Finally, I argue that relationships between the governor and the governed, i.e., between the state and its citizenry, can be interrupted by many external factors. Furthermore, governmentalities are historical and emerge out of particular conditions. Therefore, in the final part of this chapter, I present some insights on the unexpected outcomes of post-socialist transformation regarding its economic aspects, e.g., privatization and nationalism.

1.1 Nationalizing state: Top-Down Perspective⁶

After the end of the Cold War, some scholars predicted the death of the nation-state and suggested that the new milieu would instead belong to financial capital (Harvey 1989: 164-65). Such predictions corresponded to broadly accepted ideas of the time that suggested a linear development towards uniform modernity embodied in democratic forms of government and market economies (Fukuyama 1992). However, not everyone shared this opinion. In 1996, the sociologist and one of the leading contemporary scholars in nationalism studies, Rogers Brubaker, proposed a threefold definition of nationalism in post-socialist Europe, including Lithuania, consisting of interlocking and interactive nationalist discourses: nationalism of national minorities, nationalism of nationalizing states, and nationalism of external

⁶ Parts of the section presented below were published as a scientific article "Re-interpretation of the Nationalism-Economy Nexus: Nation-State Building via Neoliberal Reforms During Post-Socialist Transformations in the Baltic States", in the journal *Filosofija.Sociologija* (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6001/fil-soc.v32i2.4414>). Parts of the article are quoted here with the permission of the editorial board of the journal.

homelands. The second type of these nationalist discourses was state-oriented: the state here was conceived to be “*of and for the nation*” (Brubaker 1996).

Brubaker formulated a conceptual model of the nationalizing state which consisted of seven elements. The first 5 elements defined the contours of a distinctive discourse or a distinctive way of thinking and talking about nation and state. The key elements of this nationalizing discourse were the following:

- a distinction between a core nation or nationality and the total population/citizenry;
 - a claim that the core nation owns the state;
 - an assumption that the core nation is weak in some aspect;
 - a call for remedial action by the state;
 - a justification for compensation or readdress for earlier harm.
- These motives were important elements of what one may call political common sense in many of the post-socialist states (Brubaker 1996: 5). The last two elements pointed to:
- mobilization based on the aforementioned set of ideas in electoral campaigns or media, and policies to take remedial action;
 - adoption of formal and informal practices informed and justified by these ideas and discourse.

Fifteen years later, Brubaker (2011) recognized that the model was incomplete. It was missing any reference to the outcomes of nationalizing processes as well as any reference to social processes as distinguished from state policies; practices and processes through which, say, structures of economic and political dominance change or ethnonational boundaries are sharpened or blurred.⁷ Moreover, Brubaker stressed that nationalizing states should not be understood as a theory because it does not allow predictions as to “how nationalizing states will be or more interestingly how they will be nationalizing” (2011: 1807). Instead, one should see the concept of the nationalizing state as a way of posing questions, rather than a conclusion of analysis.

One reason why the concept does not allow the aforementioned predictions to be made is that on one hand nationalizing discourses and nationalizing processes do not necessarily produce nationalizing outcomes, while on the other hand

⁷ Besides his 2011 article, Brubaker presented possible revisions of his model in October 2012 at a public lecture called, “Nationalizing states revisited: projects and processes of nationalization in post-Soviet states”, which he gave at the University of Latvia. To present his points on how the model should be amended both his article and the lecture are mentioned in this work. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=px-VXkoBXww&t=335s&ab_channel=LatvijasUniversite

nationalizing processes may occur even in the absence of explicit nationalizing discourses or policies (Brubaker 2011: 1808).⁸ To be attentive to other reasons behind nationalizing-nationalism-like effects we should consider other analytical perspectives too. Brubaker warns that the notion of “nationalizing state”

risks occluding other analytical perspectives. In particular, it risks contributing to what I have characterized elsewhere as an ‘overethnicized’ understanding of the social world [...]. Processes of state consolidation, for example, are at best imperfectly described, and may be misleadingly described, if one focuses on nationalizing discourses, policies or practices. The same holds for processes of cultural transformation, and even more so for processes of economic transformation. Nationalizing discourse like the discourse of civic nationhood or multiculturalism can conceal as much as it reveals, masking, for example, the pursuit of clan, clique or class interests. Or what appear as nationalizing processes on the aggregate level may mask underlying processes driven by different dynamics (2011: 1808).

If nationalizing discourse can conceal as much as it can reveal, how then should one use the concept of nationalizing nationalism? Brubaker suggested that a possible way to study nationalizing discourses, nationalizing processes, practices and policies is to do so in particular domains, e.g., demography, economy, in relation to strengthening the dominant collective’s positions (Brubaker 2011). Focusing on concrete domains makes it easier to sharpen our ideas and pose sharper questions.

This research follows Brubaker’s advice and asks *how* nationalizing state nationalism operates in the domain of property regimes. Yet, as the nationalizing state is not a theory, in this research I use it not to make predictions or evaluations, e.g., as to whether land restitution in SEL was a form of nationalizing activity characteristic of a nationalizing state, but to pose questions about the character of land restitution in the ethnically mixed region. As shown in chapter 3, Vilnius and SEL have become more ethnically Lithuanian since the Soviet period. Together with Brubaker’s insights on nationalizing states in post-socialist countries, this fact

⁸ To support his argument, Brubaker used an example of economic reforms in Kazakhstan. Here evidence of economic nationalism can be noticed if we focus on various informal and anonymous rather than official policies and discourses. But mechanisms that produce it may have little to do with nationalizing nationalism. This is because what may seem like displacement of a minority by members of the majority in the most important political and economic positions may be caused by complicated processes of internal competition over resources between members of different segments of the core nation. Such intra-group competition can be structured along the lines of family, clan, clientele and their patrons and not of ethnic group (Brubaker 2011: 1801).

raises a question: does the restitution, which sought to give back land to private ownership, contribute to the aforementioned nationalization and if so, was this due to state-implemented policy? If not on the official policy level, then perhaps the nationalization occurred on the level of the practical implementation of this policy, or maybe it was an outcome or by-product of some other social processes, e.g., competition between rural and urban social groups of post-socialist society or competition between different groups of the post-communist social and political elite, who sought to represent the interests of the first two groups. Finally, Brubaker has noted that nationalizing nationalism hardly says anything about the outcomes of nationalizing processes, e.g., sharpened or blurred ethno-national boundaries. Therefore, in the second half of this research, I look at the way the restitution process is viewed, framed and experienced by those who took part in it – local inhabitants of SEL. Further, I elaborate on the theoretical perspectives that inform the several dimensions of the research to understand the restitution process from top-down and bottom-up directions.

1.1.2. Nationalizing State as a Type of Governmentality? Top-Down Perspective

To better understand how nationalizing states will be nationalizing, Brubaker's concept can be supplemented by Foucault's (1991) notion of governmentality. Looking closer, the first five points of Brubaker's model – the contours of the discourse on nation and state – can be seen as a rationale for governing. These are the ideas that inform techniques of governing – the other two constitutive elements of Brubaker's model. In this sense, the model is reminiscent of a more nuanced version of what Foucault called "governmentality" – a neologism that denotes the way governance is practised and rationalized (Colin 1991; Foucault 1991). "What if the state were nothing more than a way of governing? What if the state were nothing more than a type of governmentality?" asked Foucault in his lectures at the College de France called "Security, Territory, Population" (2009: 325). According to Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, the term "governmentality" signifies a certain type of acting and thinking in the governing of the wellbeing of populations (1992: 174). According to Richard F. Huff, in this compound term, "government" refers either to the conduct, the means to shape the conduct of other people, or to the "conduct of oneself", guided by the sense of self-governance (2007: 389). As Gary Gutting and Johanna Oksala (2021) explained, "[t]o govern is not to physically determine the conduct of passive objects. Government involves offering reasons why those governed should do what they are told, and this implies that they can also question these reasons" (no page available). The term thus suggests a difference between

a sovereign form of government (manifesting itself through reigning, ruling, and commanding) and the later art of government, aimed at governing through freedom.

If the state is a form of governmentality and if we are to approach the post-socialist state as a form of governmental reflection, then it is worth recalling what, in their analysis of post-socialist capitalism, Eleanor Townsley, Gil Eyal, Iván Szelenyi called “managerialism”, by which they meant a certain type of “governmentality” or an idea about how to manage individuals, society and markets (2000: 86). According to Townsley, Eyal and Szelenyi, once the opportunity of a social order which could be governed “from afar” was rediscovered in the workings of the market, it became possible to govern by imposing monetary representations on social phenomena, and expect that it would become “self-regulating” (2000: 88). They also add that such thinking allows one to assume that direct state intervention is not necessary for solving social problems (Eyal, Szelenyi, Townsley 2000: 89). However, this works only if individuals are entrepreneurial and possess a necessary amount of human capital to be able to take the opportunities that monetization offers. Hence, monetarist theorists and policy-makers encounter problems with enterprise culture malfeasance and trust (Eyal, Szelenyi, Townsley 2000: 90). The problem of trust allows one to assume that such governing might rely upon appeals to personal responsibility and rational behaviour. As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, this kind of governmentality guided post-socialist land restitution in several ways, e.g., when the restitution process was deregulated (allowing the transference of land) or when people were entrusted the right to solve certain restitution-related issues among themselves (restitution in former street-plot settlements).

It can be said that the nationalizing state and governmentality are similar concepts, for both speak of the ideas and mechanisms through which power is exercised. Yet, governmentality offers more than the nationalizing state and possesses those features which, as Brubaker acknowledged, the nationalizing state model is missing. Brubaker noted that, besides the risk of overethnicizing, the model of nationalizing nationalism should be supplemented with analysis of social processes initiated and performed other than through state policies. Moreover, he also stressed that the idea of the nationalizing state is ambiguous because

[i]t suggests, on the one hand, that the state (narrowly understood as distinct from society) is doing the nationalizing and, on the other hand, that the state (broadly understood as the ‘country’ as a whole) is undergoing nationalization. The state is understood in the former case as the agent of a nationalizing project, and in the latter as the subject of a nationalizing process (Brubaker 2011: 1808).

And it is exactly here where the concept of governmentality can help in avoiding some of the above-mentioned drawbacks of the concept of nationalizing nationalism. Governmentality problematizes the role the state plays in governing. For example, what if it appears that, regarding land restitution, nationalisation was not a result of official state policy? In the following, I further explain this problematization.

In his works, Foucault argued against overvaluing the importance of the state, because it neither dominates us nor has a privileged position to fulfil important economic and social functions. Therefore, as noted by his commentators, Foucault thought that what is really important “is not so much the State-domination of society, but the “governmentalization” of the State” (quoted in Rose and Miller 1992: 175). By “governmentalization of the state” he meant that the role the state should play in governing the health and security of its population becomes a problem of government. In the context of such a problem, the question of what is the right amount of state intervention and how not to govern too much arises, e.g., in determining what amount of state intervention is needed to accomplish post-socialist restitution policies. Moreover, if the Soviet state is seen as an oppressor who once enforced collective ownership, what role should the new state, critical towards its predecessor, take concerning regulating property relations and remedying injustices caused by the previous Soviet governments? To understand the nature of such questions, we should make a few remarks on the way Foucault understood the state and governing.

Rose and Miller explain that Foucault saw the state as a way of separating the political from non-political spheres, as well as a manner of putting different governmental technologies together and giving them temporary institutional durability (1992: 176-177). Rose and Miller suggest that, regarding the government, analytical focus shifts from focusing on the power of the state to paying attention to the extent “the state is articulated into the activity of government: what relations are established between political and other authorities; what funds, forces, persons, knowledge or legitimacy are utilised; and by means of what devices and techniques are these different tactics made operable” (1992: 177). Government, on the other hand, according to Rose and Miller,

is a problematizing activity: it poses the obligations of rulers in terms of the problems they seek to address. The ideals of government are intrinsically linked to the problems around which it circulates, the failings it seeks to rectify, the ills it seeks to cure. Indeed, the history of government might well be written as a history of problematizations, in which politicians, intellectuals, philosophers, medics, military men, feminists and philanthropists have measured the real against the ideal and

found it wanting. From the danger of de-population, the threats posed by pauperism or the forecasts of the decline of the race, through the problematization of urban unrest, industrial militancy, failures of productivity, to contemporary concerns with international competitiveness, the articulation of government has been bound to the constant identification of the difficulties and failures of government (1992: 181).

As shown in the subsequent chapter, the post-socialist Lithuanian government was conscious about the right amount of state intervention (when compared to what was perceived as a totalitarian Soviet state), problematized the Soviet legacy of collective property, sought to eliminate it by returning to the system of property relations that existed before Soviet occupation, and thereby remedy the injustices caused by the Soviet regime.

Thus, the issue of the governmentalization of the state is reminiscent of the ambiguity of the nationalizing state mentioned by Brubaker. In both cases, the state is an agent which, according to Foucault, governs, and which, according to Brubaker, nationalizes. Yet, at the same time, it is an object of such activity, for it is governmentalized – taken as a problem of governing, and nationalized, as in Brubaker’s theorization. In the context of this research, one could expect to observe the above-mentioned agent/object tension in the state-level efforts to establish justice by remedying the harms caused by the Soviet regime, and at the same time pursuing policies with unjust effect (e.g., reflected in the still unfinished restitution), harming the state. Elsewhere, I have described the tension between different approaches the independent Lithuanian state has taken and tried to combine – the desire to be a democratic state, and the desire to be a state of and for the titular nation (Dambrauskas 2017). Moreover, both governing and nationalization can be carried out by forces other than the state. As has been mentioned, among several meanings, governmentality includes individuals governing themselves and their behaviour. As for nationalizing effects, these can also be produced by other social forces than the state.

Having described both the nationalizing state and governmentality, as well as how they relate, I want to make a few remarks on how to study governmentality. According to Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke,

Governing means creating lines of force that make certain forms of behaviour more probable than others. Measuring these lines of force does not mean asking how people actually move within them. Studies of governmentality are more interested in how people are invoked to move within these lines. The focus is on the interrelations between regimes of self-government and technologies of controlling and shaping

the conduct of individuals and collectives, not on what human beings governed by these regimes and technologies actually say and do (Bröckling et al. 2011: 13; cited in Teghtsoonian 2015: 6).

However, it is equally possible to focus on both the governing practices directed to shaping other people's conduct as well as their actual conduct.

Furthermore, we should adhere to the fact that governing is never a goal in itself. As noticed by Marco Antonsich, the nation is an "essential lens to understand state governmentality practices" (2016: 10), because, although various state practices may "seem indeed to operate in an abstract space, a sort of national vacuum" (2016: 6), the state is not "an autonomous entity, driven by a self-governing logic, detached from both the national context within which it is imbricated and the national people who populate it" (2016: 6). National context is thus something that governmentality scholars miss in their analyses on different types of governmentalities.

Finally, one thing that should be attended to when analysing certain governmentalities is that they are always affected by bottom-up realities. Proposed ways of governing might fail because they are rejected by the governed ones. However, they can also be interrupted by external factors. Michelle Brady noted that in different national contexts, governmental rationalities might differ. This is because they emerge out of different critiques to different economic forms of social government (Brady 2014: 24–25), and their application in particular geographies is always affected by "the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles" (Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2010; referred to in Brady 2014: 24–25). Such insights are reminiscent of a broader critique of the transitologist approaches that dominated scholarly accounts of the further development of former socialists.

As noted by Manduhai Buyandelgeriyn after the end of the Cold War, the Marxist-Leninist type of evolutionism was replaced by an evolutionism characteristic of transition theories, which "mimic a notion of a single modernity as an objective stage of a unilinear history at which all societies arrive at some point through a complete break with the past" (Buyandelgeriyn 2008: 236). Drawing on Burawoy and Verdery's pioneering work, *Uncertain Transition* (1999), Buyandelgeriyn argued that post-socialist transition was an uncertain process, which leads "to innovation when new rights and rules enmesh with old values and interests" and that therefore "economy does not operate only through rules, but is influenced also by memories, relationships, and historically grounded cultural values" (Buyandelgeriyn 2008: 238).

Similarly, scholars that have studied reprivatization in former socialist countries have noted that post-socialist property reforms were far from linear. The works of

several scholars are worth mentioning regarding this research on land restitution in post-socialist Lithuania. Thomas Sikor, Stefan Dorondel, Johannes Stahl and Phuc Xuan To (2017) have argued that post-socialist governments hoped that the property reforms “would yield various kinds of benefits to the new owners, such as economic income and political empowerment. However, people have often found themselves embroiled in disparate economic, political, and cultural transformations that have prevented them from realizing such benefits” (Sikor et al. 2017: 1). Property reforms, according to these authors, meant more than just privatizing publicly owned assets, because they included governments’ efforts to assign certain new rights and duties to private and public actors, e.g., different local and national collective organizations and state agencies (Sikor et al. 2017: 3). Therefore, the authors suggested that “it is more effective to examine postsocialist property reforms not as instances of privatization but as propertizing projects” (Sikor et al. 2017: 3). If one uses land restitution as a lens to examine broader post-socialist societal changes, not as a single complete act but as long continuous processes, then the above-outlined approach of propertizing projects seems to be the right tool for the aim of this thesis. This inquiry takes the latter approach for this reason.

Another relevant author is Katherine Verdery, who in her seminal work on decollectivization in Romania, *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*, (2003) analysed how the land that was collectivized during socialism was transformed into private property, how it was evaluated, what the new owners did with it and what the land meant to various people who sought to own it. In her ethnography, Verdery tells a story about the people who entered the 90s believing that if they controlled the land, they would also control the means necessary for cultivating it, as before collectivization. However, this did not happen, and around 2001 smallholder farmers appeared to own something that had ceased to be an important status symbol and had become a negative economic asset. It turned out that those who were able to realize the value of the land under the new conditions were not small farmers but individuals with sufficient previously acquired resources (e.g., cultural and symbolic capital and prestigious jobs in the public sector).

Verdery noted that decollectivization was more than just a set of public policies with a distributional aspect, and that it had symbolic, ideological, or even mythical elements, for it symbolized the arrival of a new order, and was saturated with ideological assumptions (both at home and abroad) which reminded participants of powerful myths (Verdery 2003: 114). At home, private property was important because memories of communist collectivization and the abolition of private property quickly became politicized in the newly independent societies, while

for foreign actors property was something inherent to human nature and it was assumed that property would automatically flourish once the state ceases to intervene in property relations (Verdery 2003: 114). This echoes the above-mentioned managerial approaches to governmentality. Therefore, according to Verdery, decollectivization and the politics that surrounded it made people think that the land still had economic value, at the same time silencing the fact that small farms could do little with the land they had without the additional resources needed for efficient farming (Verdery 2003: 114).

In the context of this research, it is worth mentioning another important meaning which land acquired after socialism. In the aforementioned study on decollectivization, Verdery tells a story of people for whom land ownership created the opportunity to form a positive identity. Under socialism, former property owners were stigmatized. Therefore, after the fall of such regimes, people wanted to get rid of such stigmas and the collective farmer identity. However, the new circumstances did not provide many with resources to create more appealing new identities, people therefore had to rely on familiar idioms to create such identities (Verdery 2003: 172). Thus, private property allowed people and their relatives, who were once deprived of property, to regain their status and establish a positive identity. In the context of this research, this insight bears relevance as through independence minority members had a chance to regain their land and live a dignified life in the region where they made a majority of the local population. Yet, as shown in the following chapters of this research, the obstacles in regaining the land led them to rely on familiar idioms of kinship and localness in forming a positive identity for themselves.

Therefore, the top-down part of the analysis conducted for this research consists of two parts. First, I analyse restitution as policy by taking a governmentality approach and then applying analytical tools developed to foster the governmentality type of analysis. This is done in the first part of chapter 4 by applying Deans' (2010) model of the "analytics of government" (the model is presented in chapter 4 before being used). Here I focus on the problems that restitution policies sought to solve, the means through which they were to be implemented, and the ideas that informed the policy. Second, I analyse restitution as practice (that is, the way this policy was put into effect). I do this through the lens of the nation state, as proposed by Antonsich (2016). Moreover, I also attend to local contexts that affected the course of planned restitution reforms. In both cases, I look at whether nationalizing discourse (characteristic of a nationalizing state) informed formal restitution policies and/or informal practices (as distinguished by Brubaker).

1.2 Ethnicity, Ethnic Relations and Governmentality: Bottom-up Perspective

This part starts by presenting the relational approach (Barth 1969) to studying and understanding ethnicity. I argue that in the context of this research the relational approach to ethnicity is more suitable than the substantive because this inquiry has as its object the interplay between ethnicity and property. This is not to say that this research is uninterested in the “content” of the ethnicities involved in this research, but I will leave the task of defining the “ethnic content” to my informants themselves. This is because, once again, I assume ethnicity to be the result of social relations. Further, in this section I argue that to avoid different aspects of methodological nationalism, ethnicity should be understood as a cognitive category. As the categorization is seen as something that structures relations between people, then in the context of this research it is useful to approach ethnic groups as status groups, and ask how members of such status groups conceive and enact their status, e.g., minority status, the status of being local, etc.

1.2.1 Avoiding Methodological Nationalism: Ethnicity as Relation, Cognition and Status

In terms of ethnicity, this research relies on the relational approach to ethnicity which dates back to the works of Frederik Barth (1969). Barth suggested that a better way of understating ethnicity was through focusing on “the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (Barth 1969:15). Ethnicity, according to Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2010), is not a group property but rather an aspect of social relationships. As such it emerges through the contact between groups whose members see each other as representatives of culturally different collectives (Eriksen 2010: 16). According to Eriksen, because it is an aspect of a relationship that involves perceptions of difference, it is also possible to define ethnicity as social identity understood as allegorical or metaphoric kinship (2010: 17). Eriksen notes that “[w]hen cultural differences regularly make a difference in interaction between members of groups, the social relationship has an ethnic element. Ethnicity refers both to aspects of gain and loss in interaction, and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity. In this way it has a political, organisational aspect as well as a symbolic, meaningful one” (2010: 17).

Defined in relational terms, ethnicity appears to be an important aspect that can intersect with other types of social relationships, e.g., property. In her works on the decollectivization process in post-socialist Romania, Verdery conceptualized property “as a political symbol and active force in the contemporary world, as

a basis for appropriation, as social relations conjoining people and things, and as a process of determining the values those things hold" (2003: 355). In her conceptualization, property is "a device for linking persons through things", and thereby "property creates inequalities" (2003: 356). Property "states what things one has to have to the exclusion of which other persons, in order to control the process of making and appropriating value" (Verdery 2003: 356).

Having in mind the definitions of ethnicity and property, we can ask whether in the context of land restitution, ethnicity emerged out of these "social relations conjoining people and things" (Verdery 2003: 355) and created inequalities. Did changes in property regimes regarding land strengthen ethnic boundaries in post-socialist Lithuania, when looked at from the perspective of those who sought to get back their land in SEL? Finally, once the analysis is conducted, we can say what kind of ethnicity and groupness have emerged during the redefinitions and changes of property relations after socialism. In this sense, the task to define ethnic content is left to the participants of this research. These questions are asked in a bottom-up part of the analysis conducted for this research.

Several caveats should be taken into consideration when answering such a question. It is important to avoid methodological nationalism - to treat nation and ethnic groups as a really existing and natural thing and to reify group boundaries. Michael Billig has warned against reproducing such common-sense categories as society and nation in scholarly works (1995: 51-55). Another similar category is "group", against the reification of which Brubaker has warned (2004). In his works, Brubaker targeted "groupism", by which he means "the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous, and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts and fundamental units of social analysis" (2004: 45). In research on ethnic groups and nationalism, groupism is manifested by treating ethnic groups, races, and nations "as things-in-the-world, as real, substantial entities with their own cultures, their own identities and their own interests. [...] the social and cultural world is represented in groupist terms as a multichrome mosaic of monochrome racial, ethnic, or cultural blocks" (Brubaker 2004: 45).

In the context of this research, a groupism approach would mean conceiving of restitution as a situation where two bounded ethnic groups, whose content is already known, competed against each other for acquiring a dominant position in terms of property rights to land. The restitution policy would be designed by the titular nation, and the minority group would be the recipient group. Yet, this is simply an inaccurate way to conceive of the situation, because as shown in the fieldwork data, some members of the minority took part in implementing the

restitution process, and others did not interpret the restitution process through an ethnic perspective.

Brubaker encouraged researchers to distinguish between categories and groups and thereby to make an analytical step that could shed light on different ways in which ethnicity can exist and operate without ethnic groups:

By distinguishing consistently between categories and groups, we can problematize – rather than presume – the relation between them. [...] We can study the politics of categories, both from above and from below. From above, we can focus on the ways in which categories are proposed, propagated, imposed, institutionalized, discursively articulated, organizationally entrenched, and generally embedded in multifarious forms of ‘governmentality’. From below, we can study the ‘micropolitics’ of categories, the ways in which the categorized appropriate, internalize, subvert, evade, or transform the categories that are imposed on them (Dominguez 1986). [...] we can study the sociocognitive and interactional processes through which categories are used by individuals to make sense of the social world, linked to stereotypical beliefs and expectations about category members, invested with emotional associations and evaluative judgments, deployed as resources in specific interactional contexts, and activated by situational triggers or cues (Brubaker 2004: 13).

The quote, therefore, outlines how methodological decisions to analytically separate groups and categories fit the broader theoretical toolkit used for this research. Such an analytical step allows us to combine top-down and bottom-up perspectives, as well as to analyse ethnicity without at the same time reifying groups as already existing entities with their own agency. For example, by taking the above-mentioned stance, we can assume that Lithuania’s majority population was not internally homogeneous, because, as shown in chapter 4, different segments of this group had different understandings of what a restitution policy should look like and whose interests it should serve. Similarly, we may avoid treating the Polish ethnic minority as a homogeneous group for the purposes of a restitution policy.

However, such approaches to study ethnicity are not without criticism. As already mentioned, the concept of nationalizing nationalism is not a theory, and used uncritically it can result in an over-ethnicized view of the social world. However, Umut Özkirimli (2010) has noticed that some scholars have criticized these postmodern approaches because of their view of the nation not as a real community but rather as a deconstructable cultural artefact that can be disassembled to its constitutive ethnic parts. Therefore, it is unclear why anyone would identify with the nation and be ready to sacrifice himself for it (Özkirimli 2010: 195).

A similar objection has been formulated by Craig Calhoun (2003). He emphasised that Brubaker's critical take on groupism and methodological focus on groupness and identification underestimates the importance of ethnic solidarity and "adopts language that obscures the necessity and some of the importance of the social" (Calhoun 2003a: 558). Calhoun acknowledged that Brubaker is right to argue against substantivist approaches towards ethnic groups, yet he also argued that it is equally important to understand and stay attentive to "reasons why ethnicity may *feel* binding, may be not only an effect of social relations but itself part of the organization of practical action, and may predispose people to form and value groups – even if these are not perfectly bounded, internally homogeneous, or the a priori building blocks of social structure" (2003a: 567). According to Calhoun, ethnic solidarity refers not only to the exclusionary behaviour of the majority towards the minority but also to a resource that enables collective action among those that have less power. Ethnic solidarity may strengthen the weak and empower marginalized groups (2003b: 545). But was this the case with Lithuanian Poles and land restitution in SEL? A possible answer to such a criticism is that a postmodernist account can explain why ethnicity may not happen, and why people do not demonstrate ethnic solidarity or sacrifice themselves for the nation. To understand how ethnicity works, Brubaker (2004) has suggested approaching ethnicity as a type of cognition. According to him, "instead of simply asserting that ethnicity, race, and nationhood are constructed" such perspectives

can help specify how they are constructed. They can help specify how - and when - people identify themselves, perceive others, experience the world, and interpret their predicaments in racial, ethnic, or national rather than other terms. They can help specify how 'groupness' can 'crystallize' in some situations while remaining latent and merely potential in others. And they can help link macro level outcomes with microlevel processes (Brubaker 2004: 17-18).

This perspective, therefore, seems apt for this research because, as I demonstrate in the empirical part of this work, the land restitution in ethnically mixed SEL did not spark serious ethnic tension, ethnic solidarity only became a resource to empower marginalized groups to a small extent, and "groupness" remained limited, as did the use of ethnic categories to interpret the social world.

Furthermore, to supplement Brubaker's approach towards ethnicity as a cognitive category, this thesis approaches ethnic groups as status groups. Honour and status are matters of perception and cognition. In this respect, definitions of an ethnic group and a status group converge. As already mentioned, property links "persons through things" and thereby "creates inequalities" (Verdery 2003: 356).

Yet from Max Weber's definition of status groups as opposed to social classes, we know that inequalities can be grounded otherwise than through the possession of material wealth. According to Weber, "[i]n contrast to the purely economically determined 'class situation', we wish to designate as *status situation* every typical component of the life chances of men [*sic*] that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of *honor*" (Weber 1978: 932). Weber acknowledged that class distinctions may correlate with status distinctions and that honour can be linked with class situations. Also, property might be and very often is regarded as a status qualification (Weber 1978: 932), yet although connected, in his opinion, the two still often stood in sharp contrast. Sinisa Malesevic sums up that although ethnic groups often act as status groups, they are not only status groups and "can simultaneously have features of status, class, caste, estate, etc. and be neither status groups, nor class, caste and so on. In fact, the group dynamics provides for hybrid forms of group social structure" (2004: 140-141).

However, there are several problems with conceptualizing ethnic groups as status groups. First, such a definition says little about the impact of changing inter-group realities that affect their individual and collective status position. (Malesevic 2004: 140) According to Malesevic, the definition "omits the decisive impact of changing inter-group realities that directly affect their individual and collective status positions. The key element in understanding ethnic relations is the nature of group dynamics. [...] status-centred analysis is often unable to deal with the sudden ruptures, with the dramatic transformations of status orders" (Malesevic 2004: 140-141). Second, according to Malesevic, status-focused analysis tends to miss individual and micro group differences that may exist within a particular collective. Moreover, concentrating on status distinctions between different ethnic groups may obscure significant status group differences between members of the same ethnic group (Malesevic 2004: 141). Finally, the status-centred approach does not help to account for transformations in in-group/out-group perceptions among individuals and sub-groups. Therefore, it cannot explain how in times of conflict status groups traditionally seen as inferior can become the superior sub-groups within the group in question, e.g., West Herzegovinian Croats within the Croatian ethnic corpus during an ethnic war (Malesevic 2004: 141).

In chapter 3, I show how land has always been an important "thing", a type of property, which defined and structured social and/or ethnic relations in (south-eastern) Lithuania. The historical perspective then assists the research in its main task to define the interplay between ethnicity and property in the case of land restitution in SEL. The status of Soviet victims, family's honour, the status of being a local, as shall be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters, all played an important role in the restitution process.

In the context of this research, we can ask whether land restitution had any positive effect on the status situation of Poles, who, as presented in the following chapters, have a long history as a marginalized status/ethnic group in Lithuania (see chapter 3). We can also ask whether turning minorities into proprietors improved their status in Lithuanian society. Moreover, we can ask how, in the context of the restitution reform, do the assumed members of the group who took part in this research negotiate their (ethnic) group status? Or do they perhaps develop a feeling of indifference towards it?

Tara Zahra (2010) has argued that national indifference was not a relic of the premodern past, but quite the opposite – a product of and a response to modern mass politics and rising national movements. T. Snyder (2003) spoke of an early modern strategy used by Lithuanian Polish and Belarusian gentry and peasants to avoid national tensions. In the second half of the 19th century, when the major theses of Lithuanian nationalism were developed, many members of the local aristocracy rejected national ideologies, perceived these as alien, emphasised “tutejszosc” (from Polish it translates as “localness”, or “local-mindedness”) and continued to identify themselves with the Lithuanian Grand Duchy (Snyder 2003: 40). As for the peasants who lived near Vilnius, the idea of “tutejszosc” provided a “practical response to the complicated patterns of linguistic assimilation and a diplomatic way of avoiding the obligation to side with either Polish-speaking gentry or Russian imperial officials” (Snyder 2003: 40). As shown in chapter 5, sometimes interviewed persons seeking to have land restored would demonstrate national indifference to avoid ethnic tensions in the context of restitution.

To sum up, the analytical decision to treat ethnicity as relational and as a type of cognitive category which does not automatically imply the existence of ethnic groups allows us to avoid reification of groups and methodological nationalism. Relational and cognitive approaches towards ethnicity are supplemented by the Weberian view of ethnic groups as status groups. Status implies (an unequal) relationship between groups in relation to something, e.g., esteem or wealth (property). By analysing ethnic relations and their cognitive dimension, we can understand what statuses it produces and how people conceive and enact these statuses. From such reactions we can then analyse what type of power relations we are witnessing in society.

1.3 Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by once again reflecting on the main concepts and methodological stances presented and used in this inquiry. In revising his concept of the nationalizing state, Brubaker suggested that the concept says little about how the process of nationalization happens. He suggested that reliance on the model of nationalizing nationalism risks overethnicizing the world researchers interpret and analyse. He also suggested that nationalization may be a product of other social forces, not necessarily the state. Therefore, according to Brubaker, researchers should also stay attentive to other analytical perspectives.

I have argued that among the other possible analytical perspectives that can supplement the nationalizing state is Foucault's notion of governmentality, which is worth considering for several reasons: first, it can better capture rationalities and governmental technologies that constitute governing (and thereby better explain how nationalization in certain domains takes place). Governmentality has a reserved approach to states, which it sees as neither omnipotent nor unique in terms of ensuring various social functions. Governmentality emphasises the distinction between the state and other forms of governing (e.g., self-governing) and shows how the state can become a problem of government (e.g., as in post-socialism when governments of socialist-successor states were preoccupied with the excessive role that the Soviet inherited state played in property relations). Finally, governmentality suggests a certain notion of government as governmental critique and the problematization of certain social, political and economic aspects of the life of national populations.

This then means that every governmentality is historical and rooted in particular responses to particular problems and issues. At the same time, the governmentality approach has a blind spot, which refers to the nation: governmentality is not self-driven and does not operate in a vacuum but instead is defined by the context of nationhood (Antonsich 2016). Thereby, governmentality and the nationalizing state can be viewed as supplementing each other in the sense that they correct each other's weak spots. Used together, these two concepts can be used to envision a top-down approach for studying how the nationalizing state nationalizes (as well as the effects of such a process) in a concrete domain (an analytical step proposed by Brubaker). In the case of this inquiry, this domain is property relations, and more specifically the land restitution process in SEL.

As for ways of analysing nationalizing processes or governmentalities in the property domain through a bottom-up approach, the second part of this chapter outlined some concepts and methodological principles that facilitate such inquiry. First, it suggested that such an approach is better facilitated by a relational

understanding of ethnicity. This is because, as is the case with this inquiry, we are interested in relations between ethnicity and other ideas, techniques and processes which shape the property domain and with the help of which this domain operates. Moreover, the relational approach helps us to understand whether and what kind of ethnicities emerge in the type of social relations that obtain in the field of changing property regimes.

Further, I argued that at the same time it is important to avoid methodological nationalism and especially what Brubaker called “groupism” – treating (ethnic) groups as fixed, bounded and as real things in the world rather than perspectives on the world. One way to avoid this is by understanding ethnicity as a category of cognition. Such a cognitive approach to ethnicity helps in examining how categories are used (politics of categories) and on the other hand, it helps in understanding when and how such categories give birth to groupness. Moreover, it can help us to understand under what circumstances ethnic groups fail to crystallize and ethnicity remains potential. The cognitive approach can be supplemented with the Weberian notion of ethnic groups as status groups. The status situation is defined by perceptions and such an understanding of ethnic groups allows us to ask questions like how minority members accept, reject, and negotiate their status.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This research is interested in the role of ethnicity in the process of land restitution in SEL, as revealed in the documents regulating land restitution, as well as in the accounts on the restitution provided by persons who sought have land restored to them. More precisely, its interest lies in the perceptions of ethnicity and its role in the process of land restitution. The research was conducted in the tradition of the constructivist approach (Berger and Luckmann 1966) to qualitative research because this approach focuses on how categories of social knowledge in everyday life are created through social relations and interactions (in this case – relations and interactions that occurred during the land restitution process). Social constructivism seeks to show the multiplicity of constructed realities as well as the manifold ways in which it is constructed (Creswell and Poth 2017: 552). This is why a social constructivist approach was taken in this research, which is interested in different types of social interactions regarding the land restitution process in ethnically heterogeneous SEL, and the manifold types of knowledge, understanding and meanings of land restitution created through these interactions.

To answer the research question, qualitative research was conducted. The research seeks to describe the form and nature of an interplay between ethnicity and land restitution in SEL. In the context of this inquiry, contextual research is expected to produce evidence that would help: a) to map how informants define and understand the land restitution process in SEL; b) to display how, if existing, the interplay between ethnicity and the restitution process might have been experienced; c) to reveal the meanings informants ascribe to it; d) to describe what defines the difference in understandings of restitution among its participants.

Moreover, the research explains the interplay by producing evidence that helps to a) identify factors behind certain perceptions of the restitution process (e.g. why the government problematized certain aspects of property relations it wanted to reform, why certain changes in restitution policy were made over the course of its implementation; b) motivations behind certain decisions made by people involved in restitution process (e.g. what motivated people in their struggle over the land they wanted to get back); c) why something occurs (e.g. beside the state, what else causes nationalization (Brubaker 1996)); why did people mobilize or not on an ethnic basis during the restitution process; d) the contexts in which phenomena under observation occur, e.g., under what circumstances is ethnicity used to interpret the restitution process in ethnic terms).

The reason for using qualitative research methods in this inquiry relates to the research object. Typically, qualitative research alone is conducted when the

research object is not yet well understood; when the object is deeply set within participants' knowledge and understanding; when the object is complex, intangible and conceptually difficult to relate. The research object of this inquiry fulfils these characteristics: it hasn't been studied among nationalism and ethnicity scholars in Lithuania. To understand it we need to unpack the participants' understanding and knowledge of the process. The research object is complex because it encompasses macro and micro-processes.

2.1 Data Collection Methods

To fulfil the tasks set for this inquiry, different data collection methods were used. To fulfil the tasks related to the top-down part of the research, documents that shaped the restitution process in (south-eastern) Lithuania were collected following the principles of a Foucauldian-inspired historical approach to studying the various texts and, in particular, according to principles of the analytics of government (Dean 2010) – a research method developed to facilitate research conducted in the Foucauldian historical approach. In other words, the selection of texts in this part of the research followed the principles of data collection common to governmentality scholars. To fulfil the tasks that relate to the bottom-up approach towards land restitution policies in the south-eastern part of Lithuania, such methods as unstructured and semi-structured interviews were used. The way data was collected according to these methods is discussed in the following subsections of this chapter.

2.1.1 Document Selection and Collection

To fulfil the tasks related to the top-down perspective of the analysis of land restitution policies, I relied upon the principles of data collection common in governmentality studies. As mentioned in the theoretical part, governmentality scholars are interested in how people are invoked to behave in certain ways. Therefore, as noted by Katherine Teghtsoonian, many governmentality scholars focus “exclusively on the texts, discursive strategies and governing practices within and through which efforts to ‘conduct the conduct’ of individuals are visible, rather than on how these are taken up (or not) by people in particular empirical settings” (2016: 6). Further, the selection of documents for this research was made following governmentality scholar Mitchell Dean's (2010) model of how to conduct governmentality-oriented analysis – the analytics of government. The model proposed by Dean analyses governmentality along four dimensions: field of visibility (what is to be governed); governmental technologies (by what means the

government is established and rules are enforced); knowledge (what knowledge the governing relies upon); identities (what forms of identities different forms of government presuppose) (2010: 41–44). Therefore, to fulfil the tasks that relate to the top-down approach, documents and texts related to the first 3 dimensions of Dean’s model were collected. The fourth dimension of Dean’s model in this research was omitted because it does not correspond to the tasks related to a top-down approach.⁹

Texts analysed in each of the three mentioned analytical dimensions were selected according to the assumed performative impact it might have had on the nature of the restitution policies and their implementation (how the land was to be returned; to whom; by what means, principles, values and rationales; seeking what results; criticizing what legacy). Therefore, the top-down part of the analysis largely focuses on the following text: transcripts of parliamentary debates on designing and/or reforming the land restitution process, statements of politicians who took part in these debates.

After extensive reading of parliamentary debates transcripts, I decided that transcripts of politicians’ statements as well as laws related to restitution from the period between 1990 and 1997 will be selected for analysis in this research. This is because of the formative character the debates had on the emergence of restitution policies: during this period major discussions as to why, how and to whom previously collectivised land should be returned took place. These debates resulted in concrete laws which, once put into effect, determined the nature and course of the still ongoing restitution process. Once I became familiar with a substantial number of transcripts of parliamentary debates, a number of statements and individual positions on the land restitution issue by the following politicians were identified and selected for analysis:

- Eimantas Grakauskas (between 1988-1992 – a member of the Lithuanian farmer’s movement);
- Vytautas Landsbergis (in 1991 - Speaker of the Parliament);
- Gediminas Vagnorius (in 1996 - Prime Minister);
- Petras Algirdas Miškinis (between 1992-1996 – a member of Parliament);
- Alvydas Baležentis (between 1992-1996 – a member of Parliament);
- Mykolas Pronckus (between 1992-2004 – a member of Parliament);
- Benediktas Vilmantas Rupeika (between 1990-1996 – a member of Parliament);

⁹ Moreover the 4th dimension relates not to how the government tries to influence people’s conduct, but to the ways people respond to such efforts and to identities that are forged as a result of this interaction. The 4th dimension therefore overlaps with the bottom-up part of this inquiry and data necessary for the bottom-up analysis was collected largely by semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

- Petras Poškus (between 1990-1992 – a member of Parliament, and member of the parliamentary Agrarian commission).

The speeches provide important insights into how members of the political elite at that time thought about land restitution as well as the ways they framed the issue. The following items of legislation borne out of these parliamentary debates, as well as their amended versions, were selected for analysis:

- The Restitution Law, passed in 1991;
- The Restitution Law, as amended in 1993;
- The Law on Land Reform, passed in 1991;
- The Law on Land Reform, as amended in 1993;
- The Law on the Amendment of the Law on Land Reform, passed in 1997;
- The Law Regarding the restoration of the Constitution of Lithuania of May 12, 1938, passed in 1990 March 11.

To sum up, the aforementioned parliamentary speeches were identified and selected for the research after examining transcripts of the parliament's sittings and reading the parliamentary debates on laws regarding land restitution. The laws selected for the analysis are those laws that authors of public speeches debated and passed. These are the main laws that define(d) the process of land restitution.

These laws and public statements were supplemented with a few more types of texts, which, although not formative, provided important context to understand the above-mentioned debates and laws that emerged out of them. These additional texts encompass public statements of prominent political figures that influenced land restitution and/or land reform in Lithuania between 1990-1997, but also later when the country was on the course of becoming an EU member state. The speeches were included into the body of data for the analysis for several reasons. Some of these speeches help in understanding the role land played in the national imagination. Other speeches helped in understanding how the government-appointed officials influenced the course of land restitution in SEL. Some of these statements have been requoted from other scientists' (Abdelal 2004) works. Texts produced by the following persons were selected for the analysis:

- Minister of Agriculture Vytautas Petras Knašys' 1989 speech at the conference organized by the Lithuanian Farmers' Movement (Lith. "Lietuvos žemdirbių sąjūdis");
- (quoted) Ramūnas Karbauskas – at the time a wealthy farmer and politician, in 1996-2004 – a member of Parliament;
- (quoted) Kazys Bobelis – a Christian democrat and former Lithuanian immigrant in the US, in 1992-2006 a member of Parliament;

- (quoted) Vytautas Plečkaitis – a member of the social-democratic faction in the Parliament;
- (quoted) Andrius Kubilius – a prominent member of the Lithuanian conservative party, between 1996 and 1999 deputy speaker of Seimas (the name of the Lithuanian Parliament);
- The central government's commissioner for Vilnius district, Artūras Merkys (the early 90s).
- Another group of texts that are important in providing context are memoirs and past comments regarding the debates on what the restitution process should look like and how this policy was implemented later:
- Algirdas Brazauskas – the last chairman of Lithuanian Communist Party and the first president of an independent Lithuania;
- Gediminas Vagnorius, the prime minister in 1996;
- Gediminas Kirkilas, a prominent member of the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party and later of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party.

It is important to mention that I chose these speeches for the analysis because of their contextualizing nature and also because some of them were referred to me by my expert interviewees.

The previously mentioned texts were important for the top-down analysis, which followed the three dimensions of Dean's (2010) model of the analytics of government and is outlined in the first part of chapter 4. The second part of the top-down analysis examines the ways restitution policies were put into practice and analyses governmentality in the context of national ideas, relying heavily on the close examination of several groups of texts. First of all, on international reports on Lithuania and Lithuania's official responses to these reports. The following reports and responses were selected for the analysis:

- In 1997 the Council of Europe's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights issued a report on how Lithuania fulfilled the obligations it committed itself to by joining the Council of Europe (rapporteur György Frunda);
- The 2003 Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities report on Lithuania;
- Lithuania's response to the 2003 report;
- The 2008 Advisory Committee's opinion on Lithuania;
- Lithuania's response to the 2008 report.

These reports were chosen because they explicitly discuss the problems ethnic minorities faced through the restitution process. At the same time, official responses

help in understanding the state's official position on why SEL's minorities faced problems during the restitution process.

Second, in this part of the top-down research I chose to analyse a scientific report "Sociological aspect of Poles' problems in Lithuania" (Lith. „Lenkų problemos Lietuvoje sociologinis aspektas“) prepared in 1990 by scientist Eugenija Krukauskienė and published at the Institute of Philosophy of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Sociology and Law (Krukauskienė 1991).¹⁰ The reason to select this document for the analysis is that the report was written on ethnic minority problems in early independent Lithuania. The document, as transcripts of parliamentary sessions show, circulated among members of parliament,¹¹ and the knowledge and ideas presented in the document could have influenced politicians' attitudes towards minority issues, as well as policies including land restitution.

Finally, I discuss the ways restitution policies were put into practice in several expert interviews. Although in this work interview-collected data was used mostly in the bottom-up part of the analysis, several expert interviews appeared informative regarding the second half of top-down analysis. Therefore, data of interviews with 3 experts – a minority politician, a person who helped design the restitution process, and a member of an NGO which represented the interests of landowners – were used in this part of the inquiry, as they helped to shed light on how ethnicity intervened in the restitution process in SEL.

It is important to mention that besides their restitution stories, some of my informants also provided data of another kind. Often informants would bring with themselves a collection of various documents (e.g., appeals they wrote to various institutions, court rulings, replies from various official institutions, maps, list of advocates or officers who took part in solving their issues, but, as already mentioned, also media articles which, according to the interviewee who brought them, reflect on an important aspect of restitution, and books with testimonies provided by the land surveyors who worked in SEL, etc.). These documents reflect people's subjective interpretations and therefore constitute an integral part of the body of research data. Therefore, these texts could be interpreted as a part of the data gathered during the interviews planned for the bottom-up part of the analysis).

The analysis of each group of the above-mentioned texts was supplemented with insights from other scholarly works, which either briefly or more systematically analysed land reform or land restitution in post-socialist Lithuania. These works

¹⁰ The document has been kindly shared with me by historian Vladas Sirutavičius.

¹¹ For example, as shown in the transcript of the 85th sitting of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania on June 19, 1990. URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/TAIS.251302>.

were used throughout the analysis laid down in chapter 4. An additional reason to use these secondary sources lies in the fact that some of them were provided by informants who had knowledge of how the restitution policy was developed and conducted after independence.

2.1.2 Unstructured and Semi-Structured Interviews

The bottom-up part of the inquiry relied on data gathered using the interview method. At the beginning of this part of the inquiry, unstructured pilot interviews were used to gain familiarity with the main topics and themes of restitution (in south-eastern Lithuania) which people consider important. Semi-structured interviews were used to ask some more specific questions, as was the case with interviewing various experts on minority and restitution issues, people who planned and implemented restitution policies. In the case of the semi-structured interviews, if informants in similar positions had been contacted in the past, the questions were based on data collected during previous interviews, scientific literature read and archival and legal documents examined, as well as material collected during pilot interviews. Questionnaires designed for semi-structured interviews differed slightly because of different groups of informants (e.g., although similar questions were asked of both types of informants, certain questions addressed to journalists differed from questions given to lawyers).

As for the interviews with people who were seeking to get their land back, I used an unstructured interview method. Although after the pilot interviews I had gained a general understanding of the main problems raised regarding the restitution process, and I was then able to formulate questions based on the information gathered during previous interviews, I used an unstructured interview method because I was interested not in specific information on the restitution process, but more in my interviewee's perceptions, feelings, attitudes and narratives regarding the topic of restitution. As mentioned by Hennink, in-depth interviews are conducted to gather information on individual experiences regarding specific issues (2010: 109). These interviewing strategies correspond to common ways these research methods are used in qualitative research.

In the next section, I present the criteria that were used for selecting texts and types of informants for this research.

2.2 Sampling

Informants selected for this research should have met the following criteria (in order of priority):

- they have regained land in the south-eastern part of Lithuania or were still seeking to do so;
- they were involved in planning and/or implementation of the restitution process in the whole country and/or in the region.

Additional interviews were made with minority members who worked as journalists, state officers, scientists, lawyers, minority politicians, employers and employees of one agricultural company in the region, and members of NGOs advocating for the rights of landowners. These interviews provided additional information regarding the interviews with persons from each of the two previously mentioned categories.

Within the first category of informants, it was important that such persons were seeking to regain land (or had regained it) and identified themselves with ethnic groups other than Lithuanians. Yet, although ethnicity was an important aspect of what this research focuses on, I did not emphasise it during the recruitment process. The invitation to take part mentioned that the research is primarily interested in land restitution in ethnically mixed south-eastern Lithuania. Ethnicity was not emphasised when presenting potential interviewees with the research topic because it was expected that the research would show how much ethnicity mattered in the land restitution process for my informants. I would only ask explicitly whether it did or did not play any role in the restitution process at the end of each interview, in case my interviewee had not brought it up themselves. Second, because this inquiry focuses on ethnicity (and property) as a cognitive category, less emphasis was put on actual or concrete ethnic groups of the region. Nevertheless, as property restitution in south-eastern Lithuania is in question, talking about ethnicity or ethnic groups leads directly to focusing on the region's biggest minority, the Polish. In the region, Poles are autochthonous and are therefore more likely to claim their land rights back compared to members of other minorities. Third, there is also a good reason not to treat "Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance" (EAPL-CFA) – the party traditionally viewed as representing the Polish minority interest – as solely a Polish minority party, because, as shown in chapter 5, the party has represented the interest of and cooperated with various minorities in Lithuania, and not only Poles. That being said, I decided not to centre my work on Lithuanian Poles specifically in this work,

although I must admit that most of the time it was the Polish ethnicity that was at question in this work.

A total of 44 people took part in this research all of whom were interviewed during 38 interviews conducted for this research (for more detailed information see the Appendix). Some of these interviews were follow-up interviews, while some were conducted with two or four persons at the same time (when the interviewee would be spontaneously accompanied by his spouse or when the interview was conducted with the workers collective). The research involved 22 women and 22 men, who ranged in age from students to 80 year-old seniors.

It should be mentioned however that some of the interviewees fell into more than one type. If an interview was made with, say, a person who is a minority politician, but the interview was about his family's attempt to get back their land, then such an interviewee would be categorized as an "ordinary" person rather than a minority politician.

The spatial distribution of the interviews could be described according to where my informants had been or were seeking to have their land restored. 13 people had received or were still trying to have their land restored in Vilnius city (out of whom 3 people belonged to the same family), 2 people – in Vilnius district, 3 people in Trakai district, and 2 – in Šalčininkai. One informant did not provide the information.

The interviews conducted for the empirical part of the research were oriented towards certain knowledge of the restitution process and experiences and perceptions of it (see Appendix). Semi-structured interviews with various experts and/or political actors were conducted to achieve the first aim of the research. Here questions were mostly related to people's professional experience (e.g., journalists and lawyers were asked what were the problems people experienced during the restitution process; minority politicians were asked to share their experiences, opinions and evaluation of the restitution process, land managers – to describe the common problems that hindered restitution, as they saw it).

The interviews with people seeking land restoration began with a request for the person to tell their restitution story from the beginning. During the pilot interviews I had learned that street-plot settlements played an important role in the restitution process, and so I would always ask a question about it. Also, in case the restitution process was troublesome I asked questions regarding people's motivation not to give up on trying to have the land restored. Besides this, I would ask who had helped people in their time-consuming struggles over land. In case the interview informant did not mention ethnicity, I would ask a question whether in his or her case ethnicity played any role in the restitution process.

To elucidate aspects of restitution important to my informants at the end of each interview, a final question was always asked about what the interviewee thought we had missed through the interview and what should be emphasized regarding the analysed topic. The purpose of these questions was to allow informants to articulate what they consider to be important in the restitution process. After this question, the conversation would often receive a second wind, and the topic of the conversation would take a different turn, closer to things more meaningful to the interlocutor.

The region of SEL was chosen for the research because although the restitution in this part of the country followed the same principles as elsewhere in Lithuania, here nevertheless the restitution process might have been influenced by such region-specific factors as the ethnically heterogeneous local population and certain peculiarities of land ownership that existed before collectivization. These features formed the basis of the assumption that the process of restitution in SEL might be studied in relation to ethnicity. Was there a relationship between ethnicity and restitution that could be a question for quantitative research? This inquiry is interested in whether there was a perceived relationship between the two aspects as seen from the perspective of policymakers and policy recipients.

Once it was decided to focus on SEL, another question arose - how to call the region under study. The term "south-eastern Lithuania" has been entrenched in the scientific discourse regarding different inquiries on the region (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė et al. 2016; Stravinskienė 2020). However, the choice raised further questions, e.g., whether the term "south-eastern Lithuania" includes Vilnius or Trakai. In the context of this research, there are several reasons why Vilnius should be treated as part of the region. First, for analytical purposes, it would not be beneficial to separate the capital from the region because during the Soviet period Vilnius expanded at the expense of the surrounding districts. Second, most of the territories that today surround Vilnius are rural. However, some of Vilnius's current districts were rural territories and its inhabitants became city dwellers after these territories were incorporated into the capital in the past. Hence, Soviet urban politics and the restitution process has increased the value of the land which former villagers who now live in the capital were seeking to have restored. Third, separating the capital from its vicinities is conceptually difficult, since land restitution in the territories connected to Vilnius after independence was carried out following the procedure that stipulates how land must be returned in rural areas. As for treating Trakai and its vicinities as a part of SEL in this research, it should be noted that such a decision is informed by the fact that, like other parts of SEL, during the interwar period it belonged to Poland, and therefore preserved

street-plot settlements. As is shown in this research, this legacy contributed to a unique character of land restitution in SEL.

In the bottom-up part of the analysis, I relied on data gathered during other research on issues pertaining to ethnic minorities (as was mentioned already), as well as data obtained through interviews conducted for my previous research on state-minority relations in independent Lithuania (Dambrauskas 2017). This was because during the data analysis process described below, I recalled that some of my previously made interviews with members of the Lithuanian Polish minority explicitly touched the issue of restitution.

2.3 Fieldwork Stages and Challenges

Certain challenges occurred in the search for potential informants. Finding people who would agree to tell their stories appeared to be a more challenging task than expected, perhaps because the topic is too sensitive, or people simply didn't think that taking part in the research would help them somehow. Therefore, I needed to look for other ways of finding possible informants. Disseminating notices written in Polish and Lithuanian on social media, in various groups that try to bring together people of the same region (e.g., a Facebook group called "Wilenszczyzna") or city (e.g., a Facebook group called "Wilno") proved to be a successful strategy. On the other hand, appearing on the Lithuanian Polish radio station, "Znad Wili" (July 2, 2019), and trying to recruit people there while presenting the topic of my research appeared to be a fruitless strategy.

The "snowball" technique of finding informants was used when informants who had already taken part in the research were asked to recommend other potential research participants. Generally, this method runs the risk that informants will recommend someone similar to them. Aiming to gather a greater diversity of perceptions of land restitution concerning ethnic matters, the "snowball" technique in this research was applied in a way which sought to start multiple "snowballs". The multiple snowballs should have helped to minimise the risk of overlap between those who recommended potential study participants and those who were recommended. Such a decision aimed to reduce the aforementioned risks associated with the representativeness of this sampling method. Using this method, informants were sought through various acquaintances and friends among Lithuanian Poles that I had met during my previous research, and were asked to put me in contact with people who had sought to have land restored. Sometimes such help meant calling someone and asking whether a person would agree to meet me for an interview or simply sharing my invitation to take part in the research on social media. In case a friend was a scholar, journalist, politician

or an expert in minority issues, I asked for their advice on documents, legal acts or any other type of texts I should familiarise myself with for this research.

In parallel to this research, I took part in a few more pieces of research on Lithuanian minorities, including the Poles. Having been permitted by research supervisors, I would ask whether these informants knew anyone whom I could interview for my research on restitution, or whether they had anything relevant to share and could answer a few more questions for my dissertation research. Several interviewees were recruited by this process.¹²

The bottom-up part of the research was conducted in several periods. The first three pilot interviews were made in 2018 between May 29 and November 5. The recruitment process was started by looking for potential informants via contacts among members of the Lithuanian Polish community which I had established during my previous research. Besides this, a call to participate in the research was published several times on Facebook. Both strategies were fruitful and during this period several pilot interviews were made with people who had sought land restoration as well as persons who provided legal assistance to such people.

Five other interviews were made in 2019 during February 5 – 27. Having

¹² The first research project, called “Minority Institutions in Post-Communist Europe”, was led by prof. Zsuzsa Csergő (Queen’s University, Canada) as part of an international comparative research project which aimed to describe the institutional domains that ethnolinguistic minorities use for maintaining their cultures and also for communicating with majority members of their societies. The research explored minority institutions in eight different countries and nine minority communities, among them Lithuanian Poles, and was interested in their organizational structure, their institutional aims, and the role they play in the life of the minority community and the broader society. The second research project, called “Minority Participation and Representation in National Societies”, was led by prof. Timofey Agarin (Queen’s University Belfast, UK) and focused on political participation and representation of minorities in the following nationally constituted societies: the Catholics of Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), German speakers of South Tyrol (Italy), the Südschleswiger (Germany) and the Polish speakers of the Vilnius region (Lithuania). The research was based on the assumption that consolidation of societies around culturally defined democratic institutions puts minorities in a less advantageous position when engaging with and contributing to the formal political process and therefore was interested in the consequences such a situation has on the participation and representation of the minority members of four of Europe’s divided nations. In case of both of these researches, my task was to make interviews for researchers led by other scholars. Thus, with the permission of researchers leading the inquiry, sometimes at the end of interviews conducted for these parallel researches, I would ask whether by chance they would know anyone who could help me in my research.

analysed the data obtained during the pilot interviews, the first thematic guidelines on how to proceed with the inquiry were formulated. The process of searching for new informants began. However, despite the positive relationship established with these interviewees, they became either non-responsive or were not able to recommend other people who could participate in the interviews. Thus, during this period the first difficulties with finding potential interviewees occurred.

To proceed with the research, it was decided to make further interviews with various experts who helped to provide a better understanding of how the land restitution process looked over the whole country (an NLS officer in Kaunas), how did it look in SEL (two Lithuanian Polish journalists, one of whom was a former Politician and former high-ranking state officer in SEL), as well as minority scholars with knowledge of problems the minority experienced in this process (interviews with a few members of the minority intelligentsia). Some of these experts I knew from my previous research or studies, while some of them were recommended to me by my acquaintances or friends. Similarly to the previously made interviews, these interviews were mostly made in Vilnius (except one which was made in Kaunas). One interview was handwritten and the research participant did not want to be recorded. Thus, although the initial plan during this phase was for interviews to be conducted only with persons who had themselves sought land restitution, further interviews that helped contextualize the restitution process were conducted. This provided a better understanding of the research field.

The rest of the interviews were made during the period between June 28 2019 and February 2 2020. During this period a total of 30 interviews were conducted. The first interviews were made with persons recommended by previously interviewed experts, e.g., the person who took part in designing the restitution order (prepared the methodology which established the order in which the land should be given back to its former owners), land surveyors of different ethnic backgrounds who worked in Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts, politicians from the Polish minority party, as well as a leader of an NGO which assists landowners in their struggle for having their land restored. These interviews helped in understanding the variety of land restitution interpretations among members of socially differently positioned minority members as well as the main characteristics and problems regarding the restitution process in SEL, as seen by various officers implementing the restitution policy. Finally, one interview was made with a person who used to work as a state officer responsible for implementing minority policy. The interviews provided important contextual information on minority rights problems related to the topic of restitution. One interview with a land manager from Šalčininkai district was conducted in Šalčininkai. One interview was conducted with two land managers at the same time since they both work at the same place.

During the second half of this period, more interviews were made with people who had sought land restitution. These interviews aimed at understanding how these participants, who are of other than Lithuanian ethnicity, construe and frame the restitution process. Some of these informants were found by posting calls to take part in the research on social media, while others were contacted with the help of my Polish friends and acquaintances, colleagues at the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, or foreign scientists who had previously conducted their research in SEL and shared their contacts. Other interviewees were recommended by previous informants or local community leaders. Finally, some of the informants were contacted while conducting other research, mentioned above.

Five people refused to take part in the research. Four of these refused to give interviews straight away or after initial contact. People did not want to talk about their experiences of restitution issues because the topic was too sensitive or because they did not see what difference their participation in the research would make for them. Some people refused to take part in the research because they were cautious not to disclose any information that could endanger their case for land restoration. The remaining person who refused, perhaps because of his negative experience in the restitution process, was too angry to talk about it. Among those who refused to give an interview, the majority were former minority politicians, community leaders, officers at local municipalities, or minority members who live abroad. Yet, their refusal and reasons for it, in case they were willing to elaborate on their decision not to take part in the research, are informative and contribute to the data gathered for this research.

The interviews were conducted in different locations. A total of 29 informants were interviewed in Vilnius city, 6 in Šalčininkai district, one in Vilnius district (an interview with the same person was also made in Vilnius city), 3 in Trakai district, one in Birštonas and one in Kaunas. Two interviews were made in Warsaw with Lithuanian citizens of Polish origin, who live and work in Poland and whose relatives have already received or are still trying to receive land in SEL. The interview locations were always picked by my informants. Sometimes we would meet in a rather neutral environment, such as cafes, pubs, train stations, people's homes or even in a research participant's car. In other cases, the interviews were conducted at informants' workplaces, such as ministries, municipalities, or NGOs offices. Some interviewees who are of Polish ethnic background offered for the interviews to take place at the House of Polish Culture in Vilnius. In the case of some of the interviews conducted in Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts, I had a chance to visit interviewees and observe their workplaces or the land that they were seeking to have restored. Although this was not intended, in some cases the informants either lived in the same location or would refer to the location where

other informants sought to get back their land. In other words, the location of some informants' interviews coincided with the location of land other informants sought to have restored. This fact benefited the research because it allowed the comparison of differences in understanding of the problems with restitution in similar locations.

In two cases, follow-up interviews were made. This was the case when it was possible to visit a research participant in his home environment in the Vilnius district and also observe the location where the interviewee is trying to have their land restored. Similarly, a follow-up interview was made with the workers of one farm in Šalčininkai district, after the chairman of an agricultural enterprise had been interviewed and agreed to organize a group discussion with his employees. The later follow-up interview was carried out together with one Lithuanian Russian journalist who served as a translator but also took part in asking questions. Later on, a podcast episode based on this group interview was made by a Lithuanian media portal.¹³

All of the interviews except two were conducted in the Lithuanian language as all of my interviewees spoke Lithuanian. The rest of the interviews were conducted in the Russian language as this was a language in which both I and my informants were able to communicate. All interviews were recorded, except for a few cases when informants refused to be interviewed or when there were no technical means for doing so. In such cases, I wrote things down in my research notebook.

2.4 Analysis of Fieldwork Data and Documents

First, the research data was collected, saved, organized, classified, and stored in a place with restricted access. Further, the materials and other documents were read several times. Parts of the data were read before conducting the following interviews. Also, the interviews were read and analysis of them began during the transcription process. Notes were made on various materials in my research notebook along with memories, impressions and other notes from the field. One interviewee (Zenon) expressed a wish to see the final draft of the dissertation to be able to evaluate the way his thoughts were presented in the text and to confirm that it was done correctly. Therefore, this was done as requested.

Qualitative analysis of research data was conducted (Marvasti 2003: 88). It could

¹³ nara.lt/ru. June 05, 2020. Ina Šilina, Karolis Dambrauskas. "You are dinosaurs, you should have disappeared 10 years ago" (Rus. Инна Шилина, Каролис Дамбраускас, "Вы — динозавры, вас уже 10 лет не должно быть"). URL: <https://nara.lt/ru/articles-ru/vy-dinozavry>.

be said that many forms of qualitative analysis rely on three basic procedures: “data reduction”, “data display,” and “conclusion: drawing/verifying” (Miles and Huberman 1994). These procedures are inseparable from other research steps and supplement each other. Typically, the research generates more data than is needed, therefore there is always a need to edit, cut, summarize and make data presentable. To make it more manageable, data needs to be reduced by summarizing, coding, clustering, and identifying main themes. Similar first steps towards data analysis were taken in this research: after getting acquainted with the data, I decided what interview data was to be skipped, which interviews were to be transcribed, and which interviews (typically interviews of some use) were to be summarized by making notes and transcribing only relevant parts of it. Once the interviews were transcribed and/or summarized, coding and categorization of relevant data were started. First, recurring topics and themes were identified, then the most important relevant quotes were selected and written out. However, it should be noted that the data reduction process starts with the formulation of research questions and continues, directly or indirectly, during the entire research process and not only after data is collected (Marvasti 2003: 88-89).

Displaying data requires textual representations of research data necessary for selecting those segments that best illustrate concepts of interest. To display data in such a way, several steps are typically made: careful reading and rereading of interview transcripts; making notes in the margins (“research memos”); highlighting important passages or themes that, according to the research, represents particular concepts of interest. The aim of data display “is to gradually transform a seemingly chaotic mess of raw data into a recognizable conceptual scheme” (Marvasti 2004: 90). This can be done by relying on different mediums, such as paper or computer screens when various data analysis software is used (Marvasti 2004: 89-90). In the case of the data analysis carried out in this research, all the work was done mainly using a computer and notebook. The quotes that were written out were analysed again and the most important codes and categories were developed. The links between these major categories and codes were identified. In between these steps, the research’s theoretical model was revised from time to time. The final step of data analysis involves formulating meaning statements from the displayed data about how the research data illustrates the research topic (Marvasti 2004: 90). In making these statements, such factors as the co-productive nature of data and the temporal perspective of the accounts presented in the interviews were taken into consideration.

The texts gathered for the top-down part of the research were analysed in accordance with the Foucauldian approach to analysing written texts. This approach “focuses on tracing the interrelatedness of knowledge and power in studying

historical processes through which certain human practices and ways of thinking have emerged” (Peräkylä, Ruusuvoori, 2017: 1167). Because of this, the top-down and bottom-up parts of the analysis laid out in chapters 4 and 5 were conducted against the backdrop of chapter 3, which provides a historical account of the relationship between land and social status/ethnicity. The contextual information in chapter 3 provided an important historical perspective, which facilitated the analysis outlined in chapters 4 and 5, and without which it would be, for example, harder to understand the nature and character of land restitution problems in street-plot settlements, the enlargement of Vilnius, or the overlap between ethnicity and tutejszocz/krajowocz/locality as observed in socially constructed narratives of restitution in SEL.

Foucault did not explicitly formulate a set of methods for the analysis of texts. Therefore, what Foucauldian scholars share in common is a concern about how, or in what historical context, a set of “statements” comes to constitute objects and subjects. This is a historical approach to the analysis of texts and therefore this approach is sometimes called historical discourse analysis. The analytics of government model, developed by Dean (2010) to facilitate Foucauldian research, tries to track the evolution of certain rationales and technologies concerning the governance of different aspects of human life. Therefore, this type of inquiry examines ways of thinking which are reflected in concepts typical for the period and the texts (e.g., different articles, documents, notes and other types of texts) that are analysed (Peräkylä, Ruusuvoori 2017: 1169). During the analysis, such texts are arranged thematically and analysed along particular dimensions present in the texts in question:

[h]ow are the entities of interest [...] defined and described, what are the standpoints and styles of reasoning and argumentation (how [something] is made problematic and what solutions are presented to the problems), and how are the target groups (particular sections of the population) defined. This analysis is then drawn together from the historical point of view by tracing the continuities and turning points in the historical approach to the focus of interest [...]. The overarching idea is the intertwining of texts and practices (Peräkylä, Ruusuvoori 2017: 1169).

In short, such historical analysis is concerned with how certain issues come to be defined as problems in various texts and how such styles of reasoning then might become reformed or get stabilized in time and across different types of documents. In this research, the Foucauldian historical approach to studying texts is used in chapter 4 for the analysis of documents related to restitution following the three

dimensions of the analytics of government. The three dimensions are introduced in chapter 4 before being used.

Analysis performed along the three dimensions of the analytics of government constituted the first part of the top-down analysis, aimed at understanding what kind of restitution process was planned and intended. The second part of chapter 4 continues the top-down analysis by incorporating the concept of governmentality, observed in the land restitution process, through the lens of the “nation”, as proposed by Antonsich (2016). While the first part of the top-down analysis analysed restitution “as intended”, the second part focuses on restitution in practice (“actual restitution”) and the role national ideas might have played in it.

The bottom-up part of the analysis relied on the “anti-groupist” methodological principles outlined by Brubaker, and treats ethnicity as a cognitive category. During the process of coding data, I first focused on whether my informants’ restitution stories took place in former street settlements. I looked where those cases would take place and what exactly was problematic about land restitution in these territories. Further, I focused on the category of ethnicity in interpreting and framing their restitution stories. Next, I analysed who used the category of ethnicity in the above-mentioned way and also, perhaps even more importantly, who did not. Once these things were identified, I looked at what other frames people used when constructing their restitution stories (e.g., locality, kinship) and what was the relationship between these categories and the category of ethnicity.

It should also be noted that data collected via interviews should be seen as a co-production of the interviewer and interviewee. According to Monique Hennink, during an in-depth interview, not only does the researcher ask questions and interviewees respond to them, but “they also react to each other’s (perceived) appearance, identity and personality. This situation influences what and how the issues are discussed in the interview. [...] The interviewer and interviewee thus co-create knowledge and meaning in the interview setting and thereby co-construct reality” (2010: 109). Similarly, in his discussion on life or oral history interviews, Thompson observed that instead of seeking to nullify a possible bias, for example by not demonstrating emotion during the interview, researchers should aim instead to reveal the sources of such bias (2000: 137). Thompson acknowledged that “interviewers carry into the interview both their own expectations and a social manner which affect their feelings” (2000: 138-139).

Methodologically, it is important to adhere to the fact that in terms of the interviews, all the accounts should be interpreted as stories told from today’s perspective. What people say during the interview is determined by what they consider to be important today. However, this is more complicated than it may seem at first. As noted by Paul Thompson, people report facts in a socially meaningful

way. In the case of reports on recent events, the information provided by people lets us know either how people behave or how society expects them to behave in a given situation. Yet, with reports on older events, there is a risk that a person's perception of the events and situations he tells might have been influenced by changing values and norms (Thompson 2000: 128-129).

Thompson has also noticed that as sources, oral testimonies can be credible not because they adhere to the facts, but on the contrary – because the stories people tell diverge from the facts. Yet, even if people tell stories that are merely a product of their imagination and desire, they are still informative, because they allow us to know what is meaningful to people. Thus, the way things are imagined to have happened may be as important as the way things have happened (Thompson 2000: 161-162). Of similar importance are distortions, suppressions and lies a researcher may discover in life stories. According to Thompson, such discoveries provide us with clues to, say, social attitudes and types of social pressure that may affect how and what an interviewee chooses to narrate (2000: 169).

In terms of the reliability of oral sources, Thompson quotes Jan Vansina (1985: 92), and argues that one needs to be careful enough to avoid a few types of reductionism: on one hand people indeed intend to tell something, because they assume it's relevant to the present, but “while it is true that ‘all messages have some intent which has to do with the present, otherwise they would not be told in the present and the tradition would die out’, the notion that traditions retain no messages at all from the past is an absurd exaggeration” (2000: 170).

Regarding the time frame, it should be noted that the research encompasses the period from 1989 to the present day. Several reasons informed such a choice. First, in Lithuania the first attempts to reform property regimes were made during the perestroika period, when in 1989 the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR adopted a Law on Privately Owned Farms,¹⁴ allowing private farms along with collective property. Persons were allowed to buy land for private farming in the hope that this would help to increase the productivity of agriculture. The decision made by the Soviet Lithuanian government had an important impact on the later implementation of restitution policy pursued by independent Lithuania's governments: some of the land that was meant to be given back to its previous owners according to the policies designed by the newly independent Lithuanian government was instead distributed to others, who were eager to start private farming was. Second, the reason the time frame chosen for this research reaches

¹⁴ Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, 4 July 1989, “Law of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic Law on Farmer's Farm of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic” (Lith. “Dėl Lietuvos respublikos valstiečio ūkio”), No. XI-3066. URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.303592?jfvaid=q86m1vqhz>.

contemporary days lies in the fact that restitution is an ongoing process that remains unfinished. Several thousand people, mostly in the SEL (including Vilnius) have not yet had land restored to them. However, judging from their memories, as shared through the interviews, the restitution process unfolds and is constructed like a continuum of events starting at the beginning of the state's independence.

2.5 Research Ethics

Ethical research is first and foremost methodologically well-implemented research, as stated in the Guidelines for the assessment of compliance with research ethics¹⁵ (Section IV, paragraph 23.1). Methodological principles guiding this research and ensuring its transparency have been described above. Regarding the interviews, they were preceded by providing potential informants with the main information about the research (researcher's contact information, research topic, methods of data collection, the purpose of the data collection and how it will be used in the future), and then by getting their verbal consent to take part in the research, as required by the Guidelines (Section IV). Further, informants were explained that they can cease answering the questions and quit the research at any point without negative consequences. After the data collection phase of the research was over, the data was stored using cloud technologies, and protected with a password, thereby ensuring that no one else would be able to access it.

After the interviews, the anonymity of informants' identities was ensured by removing or coding any information which might have allowed identifying people, places, institutions, etc., mentioned in the interviews, except for interviews with experts or people who did not mind having their identity revealed. When coding this information, only participant's sex, approximate age, and occupation were mentioned. A table with 'cyphers' has been created for personal use to check the details of the interviews whenever necessary and to ensure the protection of the data obtained during the interviews.

Among the participants, many people expected to get some help in their struggle to get back their land. However, research cannot do this, therefore the main principle which guided this research was at least not to cause any harm to my interviewees: sensitive topics were omitted, in case the interviewee expressed such a will, to avoid psychological harm and the collected data was stored in a protected

¹⁵ The guidelines were approved on December 10, 2020, by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Lithuania Academic Ethics and Procedures (order no. V-60). URL: <https://etikostarnyba.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/V-60-D%C4%971-Atitikties-mokslini%C5%B3-tyrim%C5%B3-etikai-vertinimo-gairi%C5%B3-toirtinimo-su-pakeitimais.pdf>.

way to avoid financial and social harm, which could be caused by leakage of personal data.

The sole responsibility for the results of the research and its publication, the consequences of the research and the consequences for those who might be affected by it rests with the author of the research.

2.7 Positionality

Acknowledging that the data received through interviews is co-productive, I should reflect on my position and the bias that I might have brought to the field. As a field of study, nationalism has interested me for a long time. I became interested in it first during my BA studies at Vytautas Magnus University Kaunas, where I wrote my thesis on Hungarian kin-state politics. Further, I got interested in the political aspects of the oeuvre of Cz. Miłosz – the last citizen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as he liked to call himself – for my MA thesis while studying anthropology of literature and culture at Vilnius University. And in my second MA thesis, written during my Nationalism studies at Central European University, I analysed Lithuanian state minority politics and the way this policy is perceived, negotiated and dealt with by the country's largest Polish minority. This doctoral thesis thus is an organic continuation of my interest in nationalism in general and minority issues in particular. However, if previous inquiries dealt more with culture and the adaptation strategies of minorities, the current research on land restitution is more interested in the material aspect of national issues in Lithuania. Considering this, I acknowledge that immersion in various theories and analytical perspectives on nationalism poses a threat of an overethnicized view towards the world that I aim to analyse. Therefore, in this research, my primary task was to listen to what different sources say and at the same time to suspend for a while the theoretical knowledge that had been acquired thus far.

I believe that my interest in nationalism has something to do with the fact that a large part of my youth was spent in the eastern part of Lithuania, Švenčionys district, where my grandparents lived. I remember people who in their daily life spoke *po prostu*, who came from different ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds. But most importantly, I remember how this was never a problem in the place where I and my grandparents lived. On the other hand, travelling from my rather ethnically homogeneous home town Alytus to the village in Švenčionys district would always feel a little bit like travelling abroad. I also remember how at some point in time people started talking about “vilniečiai” (in Lithuanian, “people from the capital Vilnius”) who started buying real estate – mostly old wooden farmhouses – and turned them into fancy summerhouses. I also remember how

painful it was to sell our farmhouse. Therefore, for me, neither *tutejszy* nor some of the land-related issues are something I know only through books.

Besides this, I also remember that later on during my studies at university I got to know that the region had a slightly more turbulent path towards independence than the rest of Lithuania (e.g., attempts to establish Polish territorial autonomy in south-eastern Lithuania). Yet, what puzzled me was the feeling that there were many discussions on the region which included no local perspective. I got a feeling that the south-eastern part of Lithuania was a sort of Lithuanian Orient.

I believe that this experience of ethnic hybridity and ruralness was among the factors that shaped my left-wing political views. And this is another bias I should acknowledge here. However, I believe that the research interests taken in this inquiry may result in providing another perspective on national and minority issues. I do not hope to bring any final conclusions or truths. Yet, what I would like this research, along with the existing accounts on issues similar to the one analysed here, to achieve is a more complicated and nuanced view on ethnic relations in SEL.

3. HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

This chapter aims at providing general context to the problems related to restitution that are presented in the subsequent chapters. First, I show how historically, from the first major land reform in Lithuania in the 16th century up to decollectivization in 1990, land and property played an important role in structuring social relations in (south-eastern) Lithuania. The chapter's first half tells how shifting property regimes resulted in status changes of different social and/or ethnic groups in (south-eastern) Lithuania. The legacy of street-plot settlements, the 1922 land reform and its absence in SEL, which at the time belonged to Poland, land remaining vacant after repatriation to post-war Poland, positive discrimination against Lithuanian Poles in Soviet times, post-socialist suburbanization, all had an impact, I argue, on restitution and the status of ethnic groups in post-socialist Lithuania as described in subsequent chapters. The second part of this chapter zooms in and focuses on major problems in the decollectivization process which impeded restitution in post-socialist (south-eastern) Lithuania.

3.1 Land, Property and History (Changing Property Regimes/ Minority Statuses)

The first attempt to modernise land ownership and cultivation was made during the so-called Vok reform carried out in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th century (Sužiedelis 2011: 321). The reform was meant to increase the income of the Grand Duke's treasury and to distribute feudal obligations evenly among the peasants. In the course of the reform, land in every one of the Grand Duke's estates was declared the sole property of the ruler and was first merged into one unit and then measured and cut into voloks (about 21.38 ha). The land around the estate was assigned to folwarks (the estate's local branches, Lith. "palivarkams"), while the land that was further from it was assigned to peasant villages. After the location for a new village would be chosen, a rectangle as regular as possible would be measured and then divided into 3 equal smaller fields. Each field would be divided into plots (Lith. "rėžiai") so that each volok would have land in each of the 3 fields (Tarvydienė 2008: 39-42).

Voloks would then be distributed by peasant yards. The peasants who would be assigned the volok, were inscribed into the estate's inventory, and were compelled to pay quitrent (Lith. "činčas") and perform corvée work (Lith. "eiti lažą") (Tarvydienė 2008: 43). The determination of peasant feudal obligations was based on the household's size and calculated according to the size of the volok. A volok was heritable and the landlord did not have the right to take it away (Tarvydienė

2008: 45). In short, the reform consolidated serfdom in Lithuania as peasants lost their freedom.

The reform also had an influence on the organization of social life in rural parts of society. After the reform, previously scattered peasant homesteads were now moved to street-plot settlements (Lith. “rėžiniai kaimai”), established next to the manors and the voloks which belonged to these villages (2008: 43-45). The plots would differ in size – the biggest plots were in Samogitia and Užnemunė and the smallest ones were to be found in the eastern and south-eastern part of Lithuania. The size depended on the fertility of the land (2008: 46).

Although at the outset the reform provided peasants with land necessary for making a living, over time the volok would be divided among new family members, which caused fragmentation harmful for agriculture: narrow plots complicated land cultivation and usage (especially livestock grazing). This would eventually lead to peasants becoming poorer. Eventually, the system reached a point where it required further reform.¹⁶

Changes came with the abolition of serfdom and land reform in the Russian empire in 1861. Another impulse for reduction of the traditional system of the three-field and street-plot settlements was the 1906 Stolypin reform. During it, street-plot settlements were broken down and farmers were encouraged to form homesteads instead (Tarvydienė 2008: 86-90). Nevertheless, this reform and formation of homesteads were sometimes opposed, particularly among the small-scale peasants with no finances to relocate their sheds, and who would receive a small share of the common rural land, as it was distributed in proportion to the size of the main plot. Peasants from eastern Lithuania were among the most conservative and dissatisfied with the new order (Marytė Elena Tarvydienė 2008: 88). The reforms under which private farming was encouraged once again sought to modernize the economy and society in Lithuania, albeit not without social costs. According to Marytė Elena Tarvydienė, “[t]his reform was the second clearing of roadblocks for capitalism, after the abolition of serfdom. It furthered the destitution of small farmers and completely failed to solve the problem of landlessness. From the perspective of rural redevelopment, the reform led to a significant rise in the number of single-family, detached farmsteads” (2008: 90, my translation into English).

In Lithuania, the plot system practically disappeared as a consequence of the land reform conducted during the interwar period by the government of independent Lithuania.¹⁷ However, it persisted in the Polish-occupied SEL. The land reform in

¹⁶ Based on consultations with historian dr. Laurynas Šedvydis from Vytautas Magnus University.

¹⁷ As part of the land reform launched in 1922, by the beginning of 1940, 6,993 street-plot settlements had been divided into homesteads, 159,118 homesteads had been created.

Lithuania aimed at solving socio-economic problems (giving land to the landless poor), Yet, unlike in the case of the Volog and Stolypin reforms, this time it also had a national character. At the time of the reform, land ownership was in the hands of large Lithuanian landowners, seen as foreign Poles, although they would perceive themselves as the “real” Lithuanians. Some ethnic Lithuanians perceived such a *status quo* in land ownership as unfair. Although landowners comprised only a small part of the Lithuanian Polish minority, deputies representing the minority in interwar Lithuania’s parliaments were the fiercest opponents of the land reform (Norkus 2014: 355). The reform’s national aspect secured support for it among those members of an ethnic majority who did not derive direct benefits from it, including farmers who had enough land, and a tiny layer of urban dwellers and scattered intelligentsia. According to Norkus,

[t]he land reform was perceived as a crucial condition for the entrenchment of Lithuanianness, as well as the liquidation of the economic power foundations of the Polish minority, seen as “the fifth column”. Thus, the demand for a land reform integrated the Lithuanian society as a whole and provided socio-economic content to the slogans of building a national state. As a result, the broad masses of the rural population, whose national consciousness was only yet awakening, started perceiving the slogan as familiar and understandable. (Norkus 2014: 355, my translation into English).

However, the changes in the social, economic and political status of Poles did not affect the minority’s kinsmen that resided in parts of Lithuania that remained under Polish control. In SEL, the interwar reform was not conducted and the former type of land administration underwent a less radical reform. Just before the Soviet occupation, SEL became a part of Lithuania and the country was about to experience radical reforms aimed at land collectivization.

Collectivization in Lithuania was a complicated process, first of all, because of armed resistance to the country’s annexation, though peasants’ passports were not taken away in Soviet Lithuania as was the case with collectivisation in other republics (Norkus 2014: 352). Due to the armed resistance movement, passports to Soviet Lithuanian citizens were already issued in 1945. This allowed for better control of people’s movement (including members of the resistance). On the other

However, street-plot settlements were not eliminated totally in interwar Lithuania and 2,600 street-plot villages (8% of the country’s farms) remained untouched. URL: <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/zemes-reformas/>

hand, peasants were able to travel from one kolkhoz to another, and from one district to another (Norkus 2014: 352), which did not help to speed up collectivization.

Several further factors also limited the progress of collectivization, one of which related to regional differences in terms of people's ethnicity and the presence of national minorities. Quoting Liudas Truska, Tamara Bairašauskaitė has noted that among the last people to be included/inscribed to collective farms were small-scale (Lith. "mažžemiai") peasants from south-east Lithuania (Baraišauskaitė 1990: 66). People in SEL would sabotage collectivization and such activities would mean that attempts to embed Lithuania into the Soviet system for a while remained only partially successful. Consider the following example, mentioned by Elena Zubkova (2004), in a work on the collectivization process in the Baltic states:

[h]owever, in reality, a significant part of the newly organized collective farms during the verification turned out to be fictitious. For example, in the village of Abolai, Šalčininkai District, Vilnius Region, the collective farm "Forward" was allegedly organized, which, as it should be, had a charter registered with the district executive committee. The peasants, who were registered as members of the artel, continued to work alone, and livestock and equipment were also in individual use. This so-called collective farm had neither a board nor a chairman. In the village of Daulėnai of the same region, the peasants organized as many as three fictitious collective farms – 'Friendship', 'Happiness' and 'Chapaev', and in total there were 13 collective farms in the region that existed only on paper (no page available, my translation into English).

Besides fictitious collective farms, Zubkova mentioned another feature characteristic of the process of collectivisation in Lithuania. According to her, in cases when collective farms were created after sowing, their peasants demanded to be allowed to harvest individually (Zubkova 2004). These peasants were reluctant to socialize livestock and farming equipment and, in some areas, there were cases when peasants would start taking away formerly socialized cattle and equipment during the harvest period. Collectivization in the Baltic Soviet republics was completed by 1953 (Zubkova 2004). Nevertheless, according to Zubkova, collective farms did not "take root" in the region, peasantry did not abandon the tradition of individual farming, "the process of 'embedding' the region in the Soviet system dragged on and, in general, was never completed until the end" (2004). The Lithuanian case is not unique. It has been noticed that in those parts of socialist Romania which were inhabited by Hungarian and other ethnic minorities, collectivization took longer to be accomplished (Montias 1967: 93).

Collectivization was embedded in Soviet policies relating to labour, demography and nationality. Consider the displacement of Poles that took part during and after the war in the Soviet Union: in Lithuania as well as in other Soviet republics, this policy was implemented treating urban and rural populations differently, first getting rid of more educated urbanites and then postponing or even sabotaging the displacement of people from rural areas (Kochanowski 2001). Such different prioritization of rural and urban residents was, according to Kochanowski, partly due to nationalism “since the larger cities in the former eastern territories were contested symbols between the Poles, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and Lithuanians. There was a rush to make the cities nationally homogeneous” (2001: 141). In Vilnius, the registration of evacuees took place between 28 December 1944 and March 1945, while in areas around Vilnius, it was finished as late as February 1945 or was never even started (Kochanowski 2001: 141).

According to Kochanowski, the registration of evacuees was not that smooth in rural areas, particularly “where the national consciousness of the population seemed undeveloped” (Kochanowski 2001: 141). To support his argument, he quotes a report written by an inspector of the General Plenipotentiary for Evacuation in the Belorussian Soviet Republic Aleksandr Janczukowicz:

[o]ften, a Pole could not prove that he was Polish to a Russian representative because he did not have documents that the local authorities considered satisfactory... Types of documents that entitled their holder to be repatriated were never specified, and the so-called mixed committees deprived many Poles of the possibility of repatriation. This aggravated the rural population, especially those who did not have identity cards issued when these territories were Polish. Thousands of village families could not get registered and many of the registered were deprived of their right to repatriate... There were times when peasants were not allowed to register before they had sown the crops. After they had done so on 1 May, the registration was discontinued. There were no railway carriages for those who managed to get registered, so all of them had to wait and wait. The urban population and those who were looking for easy money could find the means to leave soon (Kochanowski 2001: 141).

Yet there were other reasons that the city and rural segments of the Polish minority were treated differently regarding the displacement policy:

[t]he inhabitants of towns lived closer to sources of information, registration points, Polish evacuation institutions, and means of transportation. They were also more mobile compared to peasants, who often wanted to take their livestock

and equipment with them. [...] Registration was also difficult for Poles who had received Soviet citizenship. Lithuania additionally put-up hurdles against Poles who had served in Lithuanian military units and those who had accepted Lithuanian citizenship during the German occupation to avoid harassment by the Germans. The Lithuanians also refused to let go of Poles who had inhabited the territory of pre-war Lithuania and who had never been Polish citizens. In some cases, the Polish-Lithuanian conflicts over repatriation were so severe that they could not be solved in bilateral negotiations (Kochanowski 2001: 142).

Similar observations, considering the Soviet Lithuanian officials' different approaches towards rural and urban Polish residents to be repatriated, have been made by Timothy Snyder. According to him,

[t]ens of thousands of Poles from the Lithuanian countryside were not required to register for repatriation, and tens of thousands more who registered to leave for Poland were then prevented from doing so. This was rather clearly a policy of the Lithuanian repatriation commission, protested at every point by Polish communists in Warsaw. Poland had empty fields to be farmed in the spring of 1945, and its repatriation officials anxiously awaited Polish peasants from Lithuania (Snyder 2004: 92).

However, Snyder notes that Soviet Lithuanian officials had different plans, and by exploiting the general Soviet policy, they sought to create the space for a new Vilnius dominated by Lithuanians (2004: 92).

Besides the displacement policies directed at the Polish minority, one needs to consider resettlement policies within the borders of Soviet Lithuania. According to Vitalija Stravinskienė, due to SEL's special economic situation (inappropriate conditions for agriculture, late collectivization), resettlement of the region's inhabitants to other parts of Lithuania was planned to take place in 1951-1955 (Stravinskienė 2010: 44). Initially, 24,000 people were to be resettled, however, only one-third of these plans were implemented. This was due to delayed construction of new dwellings, poor economic-household conditions in new places of residence, the unwillingness of the governments of the districts selected for "relocation" to lose their workforce, but also to residents' reluctance to move (Stravinskienė 2010: 54-55). Nevertheless, for some people, resettlement was a way to escape Soviet government repressions, and some inhabitants of the region (mostly Lithuanians) moved to other regions of Lithuania (Stravinskienė 2010: 55). Following Stravinskienė's observations, this should have made the region's population ethnically more homogeneous and Polish. In 1950, the leadership of

the Lithuanian Soviet republic wanted to avoid conflicts with Moscow over the republic's Polish minority. Therefore, the LSSR administrative authorities did not include most of the 'Polish districts' (Vilnius, Naujoji Vilnia, Nemenčinė) in the list of districts taking part in the resettlement campaign (Stravinskienė 2010: 55).

At the same time, the region's homogeneity was preserved by the fact that the republic's authorities struggled to attract people to relocate to SEL (Stravinskienė 2014: 129). People were reluctant to relocate mostly because of the region's specific socio-ethnic situation (many non-Lithuanians), its poorer economic conditions, entrenched stereotypes of a highly backward, closed, and conservative region, and tense interethnic relations among its inhabitants (Stravinskienė 2014: 129). Meanwhile, people from other Soviet territories (primarily from Belarus) were less reluctant to move in. Therefore, unlike in Lithuania's other regions, post-war demographic problems in the south-eastern part of the country were solved by welcoming immigration from other Soviet republics (Stravinskienė 2014). Yet here it is important to mention that migration of Poles from Western Belarus to SEL might have been interpreted as inner migration within the Vilnius region. It might be that Poles perceived it as one region, which due to certain historical circumstances was now divided among two Soviet republics.

The rural part of the Polish minority which avoided displacement and resettlement policies would eventually find itself living under better conditions compared to Poles in other Soviet republics (Stravinskienė 2012: 107-108). During the first years after WWII, the situation of Poles was similar in all of the republics (minority schools and media were allowed). Yet in the later 1940s, the situation started to deteriorate for them in several places (Stravinskienė 2012: 107-108) due to assimilationist policy initiatives by the central government in Moscow. In 1947, russification of Polish schools started in Belarus (Stravinskienė 2012: 107). In 1948, the Soviet Lithuanian government started converting Polish schools into Lithuanian or Russian ones. Soon, Polish schools ceased to exist in Soviet Latvia (Stravinskienė 2012: 108). In 1950, leaders of the Lithuanian Communist party even suggested that Lithuanian and not Polish language should be taught at schools besides Russian in SEL, because Poles, in their view, were Polonized Lithuanians and Belarussians (Budrytė 2005: 147-148). Besides, teaching Polish in SEL, according to Lithuanian communists, would have meant a continuation of the Polonization that was pursued by bourgeois Poland after the First World War (Budrytė 2005: 147-148). However, the situation of Poles in Soviet Lithuania remained better than in other Soviet republics.¹⁸ Positive discrimination regarding the right to education in the

¹⁸ Stravinskienė mentions several explanations for this (2012: 108). First, the attitude towards Poles differed among party governments in different Soviet republics. If the

native language persisted and was informed by the idea to facilitate Sovietisation through minority language. Also, instructed by the central government, Soviet Lithuanian authorities would favour Poles and seek to increase their number in governmental institutions. Stravinskienė concludes that “[s]tarting with the 1950s, when the LSSR started to assemble Polish institutions of education, science, and publishing, Vilnius gained the status of a strong Polish centre in the USSR as a whole. It became a centre of attraction for Polish youth from the neighbouring republics (Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia)” (2012: 108, my translation into English).

Nevertheless, greater demographic changes in the region occurred again during the 1950s (Stravinskienė 2014: 129). Khrushchev’s thaw created space for Poles’ migration from the USSR to the Polish People’s Republic, as the two countries agreed upon the renewal of a pre-war migration policy which allowed Poles to leave the USSR and move to Poland. As a consequence, between 1955 and 1959 – during the second wave of Polish repatriation from Lithuania to Poland – 45,000 people left SEL, 90% of whom were Poles (Stravinskienė 2014: 130). The Poles’ departure coincided with the return of Lithuanian deportees from Siberia, and the resulting increase of living space allowed the returning deportees to get a place to settle from local authorities (Stravinskienė 2014: 130).

However, at the end of the 50s the situation regarding the preferential treatment of Poles in the region started to change as the republic’s government was more and more in favour of employing Lithuanians in various institutions of the region (Stravinskienė 2013: 136-137). This caused dissatisfaction and an anti-Lithuanian mood among the local Polish and Russian population. The liberalization period did not last for long and the resulting tensions were soon suppressed. In 1959, the

governments of Byelorussian and Ukrainian Soviet republics sought to Russify or Belarusify their Polish populations, then in Lithuania efforts were made to Sovietize them, but there were no attempts to convert them into Lithuanians. The troubled history of Lithuanian-Polish relations forced the local government to manoeuvre to avoid bringing the old ethnic tensions back. Second. the Polish community in the Lithuanian SSR was in a somewhat exceptional position: its members lived compactly in east and south-eastern Lithuania, and in terms of numbers was a dominant ethnic group in this part of the republic. Third, Poles lived either in or near Vilnius a city which had an image as a historically important centre of Polish culture and science. Fourth, as a minority group, Poles were active in demanding the reinstatement of education in their mother tongue (Stravinskienė 2012: 108). Finally, Stravinskienė mentions that Poles’ positions in neighbouring Belarus were weakened by the fact that between the 50s and early 60s, many better-educated Poles (e.g., teachers, agricultural professionals) moved from Belarus to Lithuania. Once they moved and established themselves in Lithuania, they opposed any plans that would have meant weakening Polish education or cultural life (2012: 108).

government of the USSR initiated changes aimed at faster unification of Soviet society. This was done by increasing the usage of the Russian language in public life and encouraging connections between Lithuanian citizens and citizens from other 'brotherly' republics. Similar policies were applied for the inhabitants of south-eastern Lithuania (Stravinskienė 2013: 136).

The changes brought about by the above-mentioned Soviet land, demographic and national policies to the residents of SEL could be summed up by the following quote of T. Snyder,

[i]n 1944-46, Soviet resettlements as implemented by Lithuanian communists broke the centuries-long hold of Polish culture on Wilno. The choice to remove Poles from Vilnius but keep Poles in the countryside was made by people who understood the history of nationality. As a result, Poles became in Lithuania what they had never been: a peasant nation. Not only were they fewer in number, they were lower in status (2004: 95).

What did these changes in group status mean in practice? As noticed by Burneika and Ubarevičienė, during the Soviet period a distinct ethnic landscape formed in the Vilnius metropolitan area: the inner city was inhabited by people who moved to Vilnius from other parts of Lithuania and other Soviet republics, while the surrounding areas mostly remained dominated by Poles of rural origin (Burneika and Ubarevičienė 2016: 801-802). After the country gained independence, another period of changes started. First, Russian speaking residents emigrated. Second, previously communist-constrained suburban development started and the city began to expand. This in turn started to affect the prevailing ethnic landscape of the Vilnius metropolitan area (Burneika and Ubarevičienė 2016: 802).

As argued by Burneika and Ubarevičienė, with Vilnius residents moving to suburbs, "[n]owadays, suburbanisation is the main process changing the social and ethnic landscapes in the Mas" (2016: 804). Yet it seems that compared to the Soviet period, migration patterns of the minority members remained somewhat similar. According to the scientists, "[t]he analysis of the individual-level data showed that the flows of migration from Polish-dominated areas, which are located on the outskirts of the city, are lower than from more remote areas, where Lithuanians dominate" (Burneika and Ubarevičienė 2016: 804-805). As in the Soviet times, Poles were not keen on leaving the region. Thus, the suburbanisation was mostly driven by members of Lithuania's majority population moving to the surroundings of Vilnius, inhabited by minorities.

After Lithuania gained independence, the country became more Lithuanian. However, the biggest increase of Lithuanians, according to Burneika and

Ubarevičienė, occurred in the Vilnius metropolitan area, composed of regions dominated by Poles. Moreover, “Lithuanians have started to dominate in some parts of the suburban areas of Vilnius and, moreover, the share of Lithuanians has started to exceed the city average in some places there. This confirms that Lithuanians dominate among suburbanites” (Burneika and Ubarevičienė 2016: 805). Available statistical data on the ethnic-demographic changes in SEL support such an argument.

Table 1: Poles and Lithuanians in different Lithuanian Municipalities

Municipality	2001 census				2011 census			
	Poles	%	Lithuanians	%	Poles	%	Lithuanians	%
Vilnius	104446	19	318510	58	88408	17	338 758	63
Vilnius dist.	56197	64	19855	22	49648	52	30967	32
Šalčininkai dist.	31223	80	4086	10	26858	78	3746	11
Trakai dist.	12403	33	19 798	53	10362	30	19 383	56
Švenčionys dist.	9100	28	16899	51	7239	26	14723	53
Elektrėnai dist.	2175	8	23740	82	1769	7	20834	83
Širvintos dist.	2019	10	17507	87	1628	9	15 290	87
Ukmergė dist.	335	1	45901	94	280	1	37752	94

Source: “Statistics Lithuania”¹⁹

The researchers explain this tendency by the fact that ethnic Lithuanians with higher income choose to move out of the city (Burneika and Ubarevičienė 2016: 805). Perhaps Lithuanization of the surroundings of Vilnius could be treated as a continuation of the Lithuanization of the Vilnius region that started after the region became part of Lithuania. Lithuanization affects those territories that are the most attractive economically. Yet, this is not a universal pattern regarding other major urban centres in the country and minorities there.²⁰

¹⁹ Statistics Lithuania. 2021. “Population and Housing Census” (Lith. “Gyventojų ir būstų surašymai”). URL: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/lt/gyventoju-ir-bustu-surasymai>

²⁰ Yet, it should be also noted that suburbanization was not always driven by wealthier Lithuanians moving to attractive areas inhabited by minorities. Burneika and Ubarevičienė provide an example of members of the Russian minority moving from

Table 2: “Percentage of employed population belonging to the highest and the lowest occupational groups in the major cities”²¹

Ethnicity	Vilnius		Kaunas		Klaipėda	
	High ISCO	Low ISCO	High ISCO	Low ISCO	High ISCO	Low ISCO
Lithuanian	54.9%	14.7%	41.5%	26.6%	35.3%	30.3%
Polish	25.0%	38.7%	42.9%	30.1%	33.9%	30.4%
Russian	34.3%	31.1%	31.8%	35.6%	26.4%	39.0%

Source: Statistics Lithuania [2011].

Source: Burneika and Ubarevičienė (2016: 808)

The suburbanization of Vilnius correlates with the fact that groups of higher social status demonstrate a tendency to live separately from groups of the lowest social status. This is especially evident in the case of suburban areas and the city centre (Burneika and Ubarevičienė 2016: 808). Such segregationist tendencies are particularly evident in the richer north and poorer, formerly industrial southern parts of Vilnius (Burneika and Ubarevičienė 2016: 808-809). Burneika and Ubarevičienė conclude that “[t]he increasing population and changing ethnic composition of the MAs (above all, the rapid ‘Lithuanisation’ of the area surrounding Vilnius City) leads us to expect that there will be increasing social segregation, which, most importantly, has an ethnic dimension to it” (2016: 809).

The concentration of unskilled workers and members of the Polish minority can be found in previous industrial or rural settlements in the north of Vilnius and the city’s industrial south, along with and behind the main railroad line. This suggests a strong socio-ethnic division exists in Vilnius city. Burneika and Ubarevičienė concluded that “the only notably high ethnic disproportion is in the high-status job market, where Lithuanians are highly overrepresented. Lithuanians dominate among managers and high-skilled professionals in all the MAs and especially

Klaipėda to the surrounding areas, inhabited mostly by Lithuanians, suggesting that suburbanization patterns in Lithuania are more varied (2016: 807). Moreover, in the context of this research, in which ethnic groups are approached as a type of status group, the two scholars make the important observation that “Klaipėda’s case demonstrates that there are differences between ethnic groups (Russians in this case) in terms of their participation in the suburbanisation process and in migration behaviour in general. It may also imply that the social position of ethnic minorities varies in the different MAs in Lithuania” (2016: 807).

²¹ The table is taken from Burneika and Ubarevičienė’s article, quoted above and below in this chapter.

in Vilnius. Ethnic minorities are overrepresented among unskilled workers” (Burneika, Ubarevičienė 2016: 811).

The Lithuanization of the region might be related to another occupational factor, which brings us closer to the topic of this inquiry – land. In January 2020 there were 114,181 farms registered in Lithuania. The average size of a farm was 12.06 ha. The smallest farms were to be found in Vilnius County, where the average size of the farm was 5.82 ha. At the same time, Vilnius County had the highest number of farms – 16,921.²² Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the territory of SEL covers lands that are among the least suitable for agriculture. Together, these facts indicate that the true purpose of the farms is not farming. The high number of small farms could be explained by the fact that these farms very often exist only on paper because, according to Lithuanian law, if one passes farmer’s courses and registers as a farmer, then one is allowed to build farmers’ houses on agricultural land. Thus, the pattern of land ownership and fragmentation has remained the same as in medieval times – large numbers of people want to have a piece of land whose value is defined not by its fertility but by its status.

Although there is no reliable data to show ethnic differentiation of the new farmers, we can speculate that the people who register as farmers to build their residences there might be wealthier Lithuanian settlers. Lithuanian Poles then might be less mobile. Most of them live in Šalčininkai (77,75%), Vilnius (52,07%), Trakai (30,11%) and Švenčionys (25,98%) district municipalities. As previously mentioned, Poles are attached to their places of residence, and locality plays an important role in their identity. The minority members’ attachment to their place of residence is reflected in the general rates of emigration from Lithuania. According to scientists, “ethnic Russians have the highest likelihood of emigrating, while members of the Polish minority are less likely to emigrate than the ethnic Lithuanians who form our reference group. In terms of the place of residence, people who were living in

²² Data from State Enterprise Agricultural Information and Rural Business Centre, Farm statistics as of 2020 (Lith. Valstybės įmonė Žemės ūkio informacijos ir kaimo verslo centras, “Ūkių statistika”). URL: <http://www.vic.lt/valdos-ukiai/statistika/ukininku-ukiu-statistika/>. Within the county the biggest number of farms has been registered in Vilnius district municipality – 6225 farms, the average size of farm was 2.6 ha., in Trakai district municipality – 2593 farms, the average size of which was 3.16 ha, Ukmergė district municipality – 2227 farms, the average size of which was 10.17 ha. The third municipality in terms of smallest average size of a farm was Elektrėnai district municipality with 1513 farms, the average size of which was 3.56 ha. The biggest farms in the district were to be found in Švenčionys district – 995 farms, of which the average size of a farm was 16,98 ha, Šalčininkai district municipality – 1276 farms, of which the average size of a farms was 10,54 ha and the aforementioned Ukmergė.

rural areas at the time of the census have significantly lower emigration rates than residents of large cities” (Klūsener et al. 2015: 187). Therefore, we can see that there is a correlation between ethnicity and rural/urban status in terms of the likelihood of emigration. Moreover, the scientists have noticed that “members of the Polish minority have significantly lower migration propensities than ethnic Lithuanians, while Russians have significantly higher propensities,” and hypothesised that a difference between the Polish and the Russian minorities may be caused by the fact that Poles in Lithuania are autochthons (Klūsener et al. 2015: 190).

To sum up, changing property regimes have always played an important role in structuring social relations in Lithuania. The Voloč reform introduced what was at the time the modern western feudal system. The cultivation of the land moved to the new three-field system, street-plot settlements emerged, and serfdom was consolidated. The abolition of serfdom in the 19th-century Russian empire foreshadowed the emergence of capitalist social relations based on private property. This required reforming traditional modes of life, represented, e.g., in street plot settlements. Land reform carried out by independent Lithuania continued this modernization through the pursuit of socio-economic reforms marked by a social/national aspect – the aim was to give more land to small (Lithuanian) farmers, at the expense of the (Polish) aristocracy. Redistribution of property meant redistribution of status: the reform sought to end the privileged status of the (Polish) aristocracy and served the process of Lithuanian nation-state building.

Collectivization was at the core of the Soviet projects of radical changes and building a new classless society. However, as I seek to show, collectivisation was embedded in various other policies pursued by the Soviet central and local governments, e.g., demographic, ethnic, and urban policies. The fact that after WWII, urban Poles were allowed to leave was closely tied to efforts aimed at Lithuanizing the country’s urban centres. Hindering the displacement of the rural part of the region’s Polish minority population on the other hand was informed by the need to preserve the labour force as well as the Lithuanian communists’ attitude towards rural Poles as Polonized Lithuanians. At the same time, the central Soviet government would use means of positive discrimination in favour of Poles in south-eastern Soviet Lithuania to counterbalance Lithuanian nationalism and spread the Soviet ideology in the minority’s native language. During the Soviet period, Poles managed to persist in SEL. However, in the words of T. Snyder (2004), they became a rural group within Lithuanian society. Lithuanians, on the other hand, unlike in the cases of Estonia and Latvia, were able to become a dominant ethnic group in the country. The post-war Lithuanization of Vilnius greatly contributed to this. Finally, after Lithuania became independent, the process of suburbanization started. The process furthered nationalization (Brubaker 1996) of

SEL: during the Soviet period, the nationalization of Vilnius happened, and after independence, the number of Lithuanians in previously predominantly Polish areas around Vilnius started to grow due to migration within the country and the expansion and development of Vilnius city.

3.2 The Course of Land Restitution (Main Moments)

On June 18, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania passed the so-called Restitution law “On the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property”.²³ However, the implementation of the law was hampered from the beginning by obstacles which resulted from the decisions made by the last communist-dominated government as well as by the new reform movement “Sąjūdis” that dominated the newly independent parliament. First, in 1989, just before “Sąjūdis” come to power, the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR adopted a “Law on Privately Owned Farms”,²⁴ which allowed forming large private farms of up to 50 ha alongside the collective property system. The law stayed in force until the autumn of 1991. However, unlike in Estonia and Latvia, where similar laws were also passed, the Lithuanian version of the law did not require persons willing to start private farms to get written permission from previous landowners to carry out such activities. According to the law, one was able to get the land from state reserves, state forest funds, Soviet farms (sovkhoz), collective farms (kolkhoz), as well as other enterprises and organizations. Priority was given to those people who were the “land’s lawful inheritors and who lived there and worked it” (provision 7). The land was supposed to be given for non-terminated usage and free of charge with the right to inherit it. However, one didn’t have the right to sell, rent or pledge it. The law on private farming remained valid even after the Supreme Council passed the law on restitution.

²³ The Supreme Council Republic of Lithuania. 1991. “Law on the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property” (Lith. ‘Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turta atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų’) (No. I-1454). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.21109?jfwid=f1hu5mqv8>.

²⁴ The Supreme Council Republic of Lithuania. 1989. “Law of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic Law on Farmer’s Farm of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic Vilnius” (Lith. “Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos valstiečio ūkio”) (No. XI-3066). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.303592?jfwid=q86m1vqhz>.

Second, on July 26, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania passed the law “On the extension of farmer land parcels”.²⁵ Later, the law became known as the “trihektarininkai” law. The law obliged the heads of state and collective farms to provide people living in rural areas and working in agricultural enterprises or pensioners with up to 3 hectares of land for personal farming. Initially, the idea was to allocate these plots, not for ownership, but termless personal usage until the real owner of the land would appear.

Unlike the Law on Privately Owned Farms, the law “On the extension of farmer land parcels” did not have analogues in the other two Baltic states and was uniquely Lithuanian. As noticed by Zenonas Norkus, it emerged from the conviction shared among the majority of the Lithuanian Supreme Council that when the legislation was passed, the heads of collective farms were the second biggest threat to Lithuania’s newly restored independence after Moscow (Norkus 2014: 29). One way to contain this threat was through weakening this group of people by giving the land to their subordinates and winning the sympathy of collective farmworkers. However, instead of changing the actual land use in the village, the law created an additional obstacle to the restitution of land ownership rights (Norkus 2014: 29).

In 1993, amendments were made to another law related to restitution – the “Law on Land Reform”.²⁶ These amendments were passed by former communists, who at the time were back in power and foresaw a possibility of buying out the previously allocated land. Even though these amendments brought some difficulties in restoring the land, the state’s Constitutional Court ruled that these amendments were in line with the Constitution.²⁷ For a while, the Law on Privately

²⁵ The Supreme Council Republic of Lithuania. 1990. “On the extension of farmer land parcels” (No. I-411) (Lith. “Dėl kaimo gyventojų sodybinių sklypų išplėtimo”). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.409?jfwid=1anskbwmze>.

²⁶ Lithuanian Parliament. 1993. “Regarding the supplementation of the Law on Land Reform of the Republic of Lithuania” (No. I-230) (Lith. “Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos žemės reformos įstatymo papildymo ir pakeitimo”). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.5548>.

²⁷ Constitutional Court of The Republic of Lithuania. 1995. “Regarding the 1993 amendments of the ‘Law on the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property’” (Lith. “Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos 1993 m. liepos 15 d. įstatymo “Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turta atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų” papildymo ir pakeitimo” 8 punkto, kuriuo iš naujo išdėstytas įstatymo “Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turta atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų” 12 straipsnio pirmosios dalies 3 punktas, ir Lietuvos Respublikos 1993 m. liepos 15 d. įstatymo “Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos žemės reformos įstatymo papildymo ir pakeitimo” 23 punkto, kuriuo iš naujo išdėstytas Lietuvos Respublikos žemės reformos įstatymo

Owned Farms, the so-called “trihektarininkai” decision, as well as a provision on land transfer, were in force. Such a situation resulted in many disputed territories, which appeared between 1992-1996, as some people’s land was occupied by beneficiaries of one of the three above-mentioned items of legislation.

However, the 1991 law “On the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property” also had provisions that would eventually result in controversies:

[i]n the event that such persons reside or work on an area of the farm other than that being restored, or if the plot of land cannot be given back for reasons specified in Article 12 of this law, these persons shall be allotted, upon their request, a plot of land according to their place of residence, provided that there exists vacant state-owned land. All plots of land situated in that locality, which are not returned to persons specified in Article 2 of this law, and which may be sold for private ownership under the Land Reform Law, shall be deemed a vacant lot of the state land fund (Amended 14 January, 1992) (My translation into English).²⁸

This provision created an important precedent – as the legislature turned the land into a movable object, hectares started to “move”, albeit only within the geographical borders of a particular locality. The later developments of this provision and its impact are discussed below.

To understand inconsistencies characteristic of the 1991 Restitution Law, one needs to keep in mind that it was passed by the reform-minded Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. The reformist right prioritized the interests of former owners and those who at that time were city dwellers. However, during the next autumn’s parliamentary elections, the Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania – former communists – came to power. The new government prioritized the interests of former nomenklatura and those who worked the land.

After electoral success in 1996, the reformist right returned to power. First, its politicians suspended for a year the 1991 “Restitution law”, which they had passed five years previously. An amended version of this law was adopted in 1997. The amended law on restitution increased the maximum area of land to be returned

16 straipsnio septintasis punktas, atitikimo Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijai”). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.19255?jfwid=1anskbwmze>.

²⁸ The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. 1991. “Law on the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property” (Lith. “Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turtą atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų) (No. I-1454). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.21109?jfwid=fhhu5mqv8>.

from 80 to 150 ha. The definition of an applicant for whom the land could have been returned was also been expanded. Previously such a right was ensured to former owners, their spouses, or their children. The new law included grandchildren as well. Finally, when it became clear that there was not enough land to be returned to all legitimate applicants in their respective homelands, the new law allowed the land to be “relocated”. The law allowed recipients to get land in another place where there was “free” land to be returned. The amended law also provided that a citizen may transfer the right to inherited land to other persons as long as they are Lithuanian citizens. This provision later created room for corruption.

Another important change that affected residents’ right to regain the land was the expansion of Vilnius city. On September 25, 1991, the council of Vilnius city passed a decree to expand the capital’s borders. The decision was dictated by the need to provide people with land parcels and housing. One month later the state’s government supported the municipality in its plan to expand city borders at the expense of the surrounding territories. According to Sirutavičius, local inhabitants, as well as the smaller local councils (Lith. “apylinkių tarybos”), protested against such plans because the expansion of the capital and allocation of land for private house construction would have taken place before restitution of the land to local inhabitants (Sirutavičius 2017: 255). The local people called it theft, and the smaller local councils disobeyed and refused to allocate land for private construction until land rights were restored to local inhabitants (Sirutavičius 2017: 255).

The beginning of the 90s was marked by some serious tension between Lithuanian and Polish communities in the country. On September 6, 1990, the Polish National-Territorial Region (Pl: “Polski Kraj Narodowo-Terytorialny”) was proclaimed by some of the political leaders of the Polish minority. The Lithuanian government declared this decision unconstitutional. On September 3, 1991, the operation of these councils was suspended and on September 12 the “Resolution on Direct Governance in Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts and the Sniečkus settlement of Ignalina district”²⁹ was passed by the parliament. Direct governance was prolonged a few times and lasted until November 1992, when new local councils were elected. During this period, the governance of these regions was delegated to the government’s trustees in the region. The trustees were also responsible for the implementation of restitution policy in the region, which had been in effect since 1991.

²⁹ The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. 1991. “Resolution on Direct Governance in Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts and in the Sniečkus settlement of Ignalina district” (Lith. “Dėl tiesioginio valdymo Vilniaus ir Šalčininkų rajonuose bei Ignalinos rajono Sniečkaus gyvenvietėje”) (I-1798). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.2908?jfwid=q8i88l5xr>.

According to the laws passed between 1989 and 1990, the local councils of Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts could allocate land parcels to local inhabitants. When the district councils were disbanded and direct governance was introduced, the right to allocate the land appeared to be in the hands of the government's trustee. Artūras Merkys – a trustee who worked in the Vilnius district – has said that during one and a half years of his service “[o]ver 5,000 plots were formed and distributed for individual construction” (my translation into English).³⁰ V. Sirutavičius assumed that “the majority of those who received the plots were from Vilnius and Lithuanians, therefore agricultural experts also tend to call this action of the Representative of the Government ‘Lithuanisation of the district’” (Sirutavičius 2017: 256, my translation into English).

Regarding the land restitution in SEL, the 1997 version of the Restitution Law contained important provisions regarding restitution in Vilnius city. Of particular importance here was the paragraph of article 5 which found that

[t]he right of ownership to land situated within the territories of the municipalities of the towns of Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Alytus, Marijampolė, Druskininkai, Palanga, Birštonas, which was attributed to the territories of the municipalities of these towns after 1 June 1995, shall be restored in the manner prescribed by Article 4 of this Law by giving it back in kind, and if this land is, according to Article 12 of this Law, attributed to the land subject to being purchased by the State, the State shall compensate for it according to Article 16 of this Law.³¹

Despite the logical nature of this decision, the restitution of land in the territory, which, in 1996, according to the law No. 1-1304, was assigned to the city of Vilnius, led to tensions. Although, according to the law, land restitution in these territories was to be conducted following the same procedures as in rural areas, here applicants were able to restore their inherited and unoccupied land only where it

³⁰ Alkas.lt. 2011. “A. Merkys. Direct governance in Vilnius district and unfinished works” (Lith. “A.Merkys. Tiesioginis valdymas Vilniaus rajone ir nebaigti darbai”). URL: <https://alkas.lt/2011/09/22/a-merkys-tiesioginis-valdymas-vilniaus-rajone-ir-nebaigti-darbai/>. The speech was read at the conference “Challenges to the Integrity of the State Twenty Years Ago Today” held at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 21 September 2011 to discuss the problems of south-eastern Lithuania.

³¹ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 1997. “The Republic of Lithuania Law on the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership of Citizens to the Existing Real Property” (Lith. “Lietuvos Respublikos piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turtą atkūrimo įstatymas”) (No. VIII-359). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/949193f215a011e9bd28d9a28a9e9ad9?jfwid=fhhu5mqv8>.

had previously been owned “in kind” (Lith. “natūra”), i.e., former owners could not receive land without compensation (Lith. “neatlygintinai”) not only in the same village where their land used to be, but also in any other territory assigned to the city. Thus, if their inherited land was occupied—that is, if such land was bought out by the state (Lith. “valstybės išperkama”)—the applicants were able to claim their land without compensation only in other rural areas, if it was available in the fund of free land. This led to tensions, since commercial value of land in a rural area differed from that assigned to the city. Furthermore, in the territory assigned to the city, the inheritors did not have the right to restore the forest land which had been designated for the state to buy out.

Even though inhabitants regained the right to have a democratically elected local government after the end of direct governance, this did not result in restitution issues being solved by the government close to them and trusted by them – on the contrary. Although the process of land restitution was initially implemented by municipalities, the whole process was managed by the Ministry of Agriculture. Later in July 1994, counties were re-established in Lithuania³² and became the largest administrative unit in the country. The counties were subordinate to the state administration. Each county had a government-appointed governor whose main task was to ensure that the country’s laws were applied in the county’s territory. County governors cooperated with the executive bodies of the municipalities, but the municipalities were not subordinate to the county administrations. The established county administrations were assigned the function of land reform in rural areas and areas assigned to cities after 1995. Until June 1995, in the territories formerly assigned to cities, the formation of land plots for return remained within municipalities’ competence, while the decision-making regarding the transfer of these plots to private ownership became a function of the counties. In July 2010, due to the country’s administrative reform, the county disappeared. The issues of land restitution were then transferred to the competence sphere of the National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture, established back in 2001. To perform the taken over functions, 48 territorial land management departments were established in the Office of the NLS (later their number increased to 50), serving the territories of all municipalities of the country.

However, the above-mentioned issues were not the only things that complicated the restitution process in south-eastern Lithuania. In SEL restitution was impeded by the historical legacy of street-plot settlements which emerged as a result of the

³² Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 1994. “Law on Administrative Units of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania and Their Boundaries” (Lith. “Lietuvos Respublikos teritorijos administracinių vienetų ir jų ribų įstatymas”) (No. I-558). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.24729?jfwid=96t6tcwym>.

Volok reform and was inherited through the interwar period in the Vilnius regions, which at that time was under Polish rule. The problem of this historical legacy arose with the decision to return the land in kind to its former owners. However, methodology for the restitution of land in such territories was only prepared three years after the law on restitution was passed, that is, in 1994. The methodology was prepared to carry out land restitution in villages that, before 1940–1944 were divided into farmsteads (Lith. “vienkiemius”). In other words, it was designed for those land restoration cases that related to the restitution of land in former street-plot settlements. This type of village disappeared in interwar Lithuania as a result of the 1922 land reform. However, as at the time SEL belonged to Poland, the reform did not affect it, and although the Polish state carried out certain land reforms in what is today known as SEL, it did not break street-plot settlements into farmsteads. When the region and eventually the whole country was occupied by the Soviets, the land was collectivized and street-plot settlements disappeared. However, they reappeared with the beginning of restitution. The legacy of this type of land ownership was an obstacle that interfered with and aggravated the process of decollectivization and restitution in SEL.

In terms of restitution, no laws that could be seen as an attempt towards positive discrimination of Poles keen on regaining the land in SEL have been passed. However, citizenship regimes played an important role in the Baltic states’ restitution process. On December 5, 1991, the Law on Citizenship was passed. According to section 2 of the law’s article 1, citizens of the Republic of Lithuania were “persons who were permanent residents on the territory of the Republic of Lithuania in the period from 9 January 1919 to 15 June 1940, as well as their children and grandchildren, provided on the day of entry into force of this Law they have been permanent residents in Lithuania, and are not citizens of another state.”³³ As noted by historian Vladas Sirutavičius, this provision was important to Polish residents of SEL since it excluded those who immigrated to Lithuania from various Soviet socialist republics after June 1940 (Sirutavičius 2017: 264).

At the same time, this provision remedied an injustice caused by some of the decisions the Lithuanian government made in 1939 when SEL became part of Lithuania and when the question of citizenship of local inhabitants arose. Citizenship was acknowledged to persons who lived in the territory of Lithuania as defined in the Soviet-Lithuanian Peace Treaty (1920), which established the eastern borders of Lithuania. In 1939, when the Vilnius region became a part of

³³ The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. 1991. “Law on Citizenship” (Lith. “Lietuvos Respublikos pilietybės įstatymas”) (No. I-2072). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.21133?jfwid=-19pnqb7ht1>.

Lithuania, citizenship was acknowledged only to those inhabitants whom the state's governments held to be the region's autochthons. As a result, one-third of the region's inhabitants became aliens. Thus, the 1991 Law on Citizenship remedied this injustice. In 1991, legal scholars justified such a decision by arguing that in 1939 "not everyone managed to acquire documents confirming the citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania" (Sirutavičius 2017: 264, my translation into English).

To sum up, major problems that impeded the restitution process in SEL were of the following types:

- Problems related to several items of legislation predating the acceptance of the Restitution Law in 1991, passed either by the last Soviet Lithuanian government (the Law on Privately Owned Farms (1989)) or the newly independent Lithuanian governments (the law "On the extension of farmer land parcels (1990)). These laws began the distribution of land for private ownership before the restitution process had started and would later hamper the implementation of subsequent laws important for restitution.
- Problems related to numerous changes in the 1991 Restitution Law. Different governments tried to reprogram the law according to the interests of different societal groups these governments sought to represent: the reformist right sought to represent the interest of landowners/city dwellers, while the former communists advocated for the interest of the former rural nomenklatura and those who worked the land. Competition between the two groups resulted in amendments of the Restitution law that would contradict each other. This would have a stalling effect on the restitution process over the whole country. The law's provision to allow the relocation of land rights further complicated the restitution process as different owners were pitted against each other.
- Problems related to land restitution in SEL. One of such issue was the expansion of Vilnius city initiated in 1991. The city borders were expanded at the expense of the surrounding rural districts, which, as already mentioned, were mostly populated by national minorities. This caused tension because enlargement of the city took place before returning land to those who had owned it before collectivization. The illegal activities of the government's trustee in the Vilnius district who distributed land for private construction to city dwellers before restitution was carried out only increased the tensions. Further, restitution of land in those territories of Vilnius which were attributed to the city after 1995 proceeded following the provisions of the Restitution Law on how the land should be given back in rural areas. Again, this order benefited the development of Vilnius city (as well as the interests of its inhabitants) but not the local owners: if one's land had formerly been

in the rural territory and was later assigned to the city, and if this land had become occupied, one was only able to get land without compensation in rural areas elsewhere from a free land fund. This caused tensions because the value of land in rural and in urban areas differed significantly. Therefore, the sprawl of Vilnius city during the years of independence revitalized the urban/rural divide in the region. The rural part of the local population, which, as previously mentioned, was composed of a large number of people belonging to ethnic minorities due to various historical circumstances, experienced limited benefit from this sprawl.

- Lithuanian Poles live compactly in several districts of the south-eastern part of the country, mostly in Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts. Initially, land restitution was implemented by municipalities under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture. Thus, after the end of direct governance, which was introduced to counter autonomist movement in the region, local inhabitants regained the right to elect their local self-governments, which would have been responsible for the implementation of the restitution process. However, throughout the years of independence, the implementation of the restitution process only became more centralized. From municipalities, the implementation of restitution shifted to county administrations and later to the National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Another major problem that impeded the restitution process in SEL was caused by the historical legacy of street-plot settlements, which in SEL survived during the interwar period (because SEL at the time belonged to Poland so was not affected by land reform conducted in Lithuania). The specific nature of these villages required a separate methodology on how to organize restitution in the territories formerly known as street-plot settlements. Yet, preparing this methodology took time and a set of rules on how to conduct it was prepared only in 1994.
- Finally, changes in Lithuanian citizenship regimes mattered in the context of the restitution policy. Lithuanian citizenship was granted to all persons and permanent residents, as well as their descendants, who had lived in the territory of Lithuania between 1919 and 1940. This was important to Poles because ownership rights to land could only be restored to citizens of Lithuania.

4. FRAMING RESTITUTION (TOP-DOWN PERSPECTIVE)

This chapter analyses what role the category of ethnicity played in regulatory documents of the restitution process and whether land restitution diverged in any substantial ways in south-eastern Lithuania (SEL) in comparison to the rest of the country.

This chapter approaches the question of the ethnicity-property nexus from top-down perspectives, and analyses how the relationship between ethnicity and changing property regimes (land) was structured from the perspective of policymakers and political elites. Here, with the help of Mitchell Dean's (2010) model of the analytics of government, I examine how, in the context of land restitution policy and using Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann and Thomas Lemke's terminology (see Chapter 2), "lines of force that make certain forms of behaviour more probable than others" were created and "how people are invoked to move within these lines" (Bröckling et al. 2011: 13; as cited in Teghtsoonian 2015: 6). I argue that restitution in (south-eastern) Lithuania was planned to be colour blind, and members of every nationality were to be treated equally. This was because restitution was borne from a critique of the collectivisation policy that had been carried out by a totalitarian state. Restitution sought to remedy the Soviet-caused injustice, by freeing people from collective ownership and restoring their property rights. The policy however was born as a compromise between different parts of the post-Soviet elite: the reformist right prioritized the interests of previous owners, and the former communists prioritized those who worked the land (Poviliūnas 2008; Norkus 2014).

However, closer examination of how restitution was practised, revealed that minorities would sometimes find themselves in disadvantaged positions (e.g., at the beginning of restitution, 'Polish' documents proving one's right to ownership were rejected for a certain period). This relates to the second argument pursued in this chapter: actual restitution (as opposed to restitution intended by laws and policy debates) demonstrates that, despite ostensibly being colour blind, restitution was carried out in such a way that it did not bring justice to ethnic minorities of SEL. In the second part of this chapter, I re-analyse the restitution of property rights to land in SEL through the lens of the "nation" to map the ways the restitution process was embedded in national ideas. The mapping is done through analysing such secondary sources as international documents and the works of other scholars as well as interview materials. After this re-analysis, I argue that because restitution was driven by national nostalgia and because it was perceived as a political rather than economic or social problem, the reform failed to achieve

one of its main goals – providing justice to those who had suffered from the Soviet regime. Restitution had an ethnic and/or social blind spot because in its practical implementation it treated applicants of different ethnic and/or social backgrounds with unequal conditions.

4.1. Analytics of Government Regarding Land Restitution

As mentioned in the theoretical part of this research, Foucault did not develop an explicit method to facilitate research on governmentality. Among those who aimed at filling this methodological deficit was Mitchell Dean, who developed a perspective called “the analytics of government” – a type of study interested in an analysis of specific conditions under which particular regimes of governmental practice – a “fairly coherent set of ways of going about doing things” (Dean 2010: 31) - emerge, operate, and are transformed. In addition, it seeks to identify the sources of the different elements which constitute these practices, and also the way these elements are “assembled into relatively stable forms of organization and institutional practice” (Dean 2010: 31). Dean notes that within any given society one can find different regimes of practice (e.g., punishing, curing, mental health, etc.) and that these “regimes involve and link up particular institutions so that we can talk of a ‘criminal justice system’, a ‘health system’, a ‘social welfare system’ and so on” (Dean 2010: 31).

However, these regimes of practice are not identical with institutions or systems. For example, although regimes of punishing practices can find central institutional support in prisons, the regimes that define how punishment is practised in certain societies may also affect what happens for example in families or schools (2010: 31). Dean notes that the

regimes of practice give rise to and are informed and reshaped by various forms of knowledge and expertise such as medicine, criminology, social work, therapy, pedagogy and so on. Such forms of knowledge define the objects of such practices (the criminal, the unemployed, the mentally ill, etc.), codify appropriate ways of dealing with them, set the aims and objectives of practice and define the professional and institutional locus of authoritative agents of expertise (Dean 2010: 32).

Because regimes of practice depend on various forms of knowledge, they can be associated with and become objects of explicit programmes – “deliberative and relatively systemic forms of thought that endeavour to transform those practices” (Dean 2010: 32). Therefore, according to Dean, “regimes of practices, while having a material and institutional locale, exist in the milieu of thought, one feature of

which is these programmes of the reform of conduct” (Dean 2010: 32). Yet, Dean notes that “these programmes do not exhaust the intelligibility of these regimes of practices” (Dean 2010: 32). Regimes of practices have an intrinsic strategic logic, which cannot be “read off in particular programmes, theories and policies of reform”, and which “can only be constructed through understanding its operation as an intentional but non-subjective assemblage of all its elements” (Dean 2010: 32). Therefore, any analytics of government should be aware of a need to distinguish

between the strategy of the regime of practices and the programmes that attempt to invest them with particular purpose. These programmes are internal to the workings of a regime of practices and not their raison d’être. The critical purchase of an analytics of government often stems from the disjunction between the explicit, calculated and programmatic rationality and the non-subjective intentionality that can be constructed through analysis (Dean 2010: 32).

Dean argued that the main strength of the analytics of government is that it does not reduce these regimes of practices to “an order or level of existence that is more fundamental or real” (e.g., institution, structures, ideology or even programmes), but treats them as having their own ontology (Dean 2010: 33).

The analytics of government envisions a type of analysis interested in how we are governed within different regimes as well as the conditions that give birth to such regimes. Dean defines four dimensions, based on “how” questions, of such an analysis:

1. *characteristic forms of visibility, ways of seeing and perceiving*
2. *distinctive ways of thinking and questioning vocabularies and procedures for the production of truth (e.g., those derived from the social, human and behavioural sciences)*
3. *specific ways of acting, intervening and directing, made up of particular types of practical rationality (‘expertise’ and ‘know how’), and relying upon definite mechanisms, techniques and technologies*
4. *characteristic ways of forming subjects, selves, persons, actors/agents (Dean 2010: 33).*

This chapter analyses regimes of practices that sought to govern property relations regarding land in Lithuania after the breakup of socialism along the first three dimensions of the analytics of government as defined by Dean. The fourth dimension of the analytics of government is replaced in this inquiry with the empirical analysis of data gathered through interviews with persons who sought

to have land returned, and the results of this analysis are provided in the following chapter.

4.1.1 Analytics of Government: the Problems Restitution Sought to Solve

Examining fields of visibility directs the analysis towards asking how certain strategies present the space in which action is sought to solve certain problems and achieve certain objectives. Guidance on how to start analysing fields of visibility can be found in the work of Stephen J. Collier. In his work on post-Soviet reforms in Russia, Collier suggests that the “first methodological orientation that we can draw from Foucault: to study liberalism and neoliberalism not as ideologies, hegemonic projects, or governmental rationalities but as forms of ‘critical reflection on governmental practice’ (Foucault 2008: 321)” (Collier 2011: 18). Such an approach, Collier argues, is interested in how “thinkers took up particular historical situations and recast them as problems of thought: the Physiocratic response to the economic difficulties of Absolute monarchy; the German ordo-liberal response to the legitimacy crisis of the post-Nazi state; and, most relevant for my purposes, the American neoliberal response to the rise of the social state” (Collier 2011: 18). Similarly, Collier approached the

Soviet government as a distinctive formation of biopolitics, the result of a specific and original response to the most basic problems of modern government: How should the state govern living beings? How should it manage adjustments between population, production, and social welfare provisioning? And I examine neoliberalism—in its initial formulation and in the Russian reforms it made thinkable—as a form of reflection that arose precisely in response to the problems of the social state, and a source of proposals for criticizing and reprogramming the social state (Collier 2011: 19).

The field of property relations was viewed and problematized in several ways in Lithuania after the collapse of socialism. The reformists saw the property relations extant at that time as an instance and product of the Soviet totalitarian state. Collective property was seen as one form of subjugation and enslavement. Such a view is illustrated by the following statement from a 1989 speech, given at the conference organized by the Lithuanian farmers’ movement (Lith. “Lietuvos žemdirbių sąjūdis”) Vytautas Knašys, who at the time was Minister of Agriculture

[t]oday, we can and must condemn collectivization as a form of genocide. Is it necessary to reorganize collective farms and Soviet farms? To allow free farmers,

members of cooperatives and joint-stock companies to establish their farms? Yes! At least once in socialist Lithuania, let people choose how to work and live. And there is no need to destroy anything. Let there be good public farms. Without destroying what was created, let's take a step forward. Let's pave the way for partial cooperative and shareholders' ownership. Let's ease economic restrictions on the private initiatives, as well. Let's help them, by drawing on the experience of the more advanced countries (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 420, my translation into English).

A similar position was held by Eimantas Grakauskas, who between 1988-1992 was one of the main founders and organizers of the Lithuanian farmer's movement:

[t]he current so-called public farms, collective farms—forced tenant communes and Soviet farms—state manors, as social institutions, are economic structures of exploitation and coercion unprecedented in the world. [...] Therefore, such “public” farms are in crisis, they are degrading and immoral. These processes, just like many others, call for a public moral condemnation of the forced collectivization and its consequences of the past 40 years, as well as a public statement and announcement of the existing social economy's death.

There should be two main directions of the new agricultural policy and economic strategy: 1) privatization of land and property, based on the general denationalization program of the Lithuanian economy, and 2) introduction of new forms of farming, while also maintaining the real and necessary levels of agricultural production... It should be said that reform is a long-term process that will need to be implemented gradually. A transitional period is needed, i. e., no one must be allowed to suddenly and recklessly start destroying the currently existing farms, and I also believe that that will not be the case (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 420, my translation into English).

The newly independent state, the reformists maintained, should restore the institution of private property to remedy the injustices the Soviet state had wrought upon those whose property was collectivized, thereby laying the foundation for a new society. The restitution law, as described in 1991 by the speaker of the Parliament, Vytautas Landsbergis, was

one of the important fundamental laws that confirm the continuity of our state and emphasize the illegality of what was done after the annexation of the Republic of Lithuania. This is a matter of principle. And, as its consequence, some of the former owners may expect restoration of justice. Only some. A very large part [of

owners] will probably not see the restoration of real justice, they will be compensated depending on the circumstances. But at least there will be some recognition, in principle, that the expropriation was, after all, unjust and that people need to be compensated in one way or another. That is how I see the meaning and significance of that law (my translation into English).³⁴

In other words, the land should have been given to those who lost it due to Soviet rule.

The former communists viewed the field of property relations differently. This part of the Lithuanian political elite held that the land, first and foremost, should be given to those who work it. This is because the latter political camp was more interested not in restorative justice, but the productive aspect of land ownership. The holders of this “pragmatic” view criticized the reformists for their “destructive” approach. They did not agree that the legacy inherited from the Soviet government should be condemned and rejected. Consequently, they opposed the destruction of the collective and state farms that had emerged through Soviet times. As Algirdas Brazauskas, the last chairman of the Lithuanian Communist Party and the first President of an independent post-socialist Lithuania, would later remember:

[t]he Lithuanian agricultural complex consisted of organizations of economic enterprise, research institutions, and thousands of able production organizers and agricultural specialists. A base for animal breeding was established. In terms of the intensity of agricultural production, Lithuania was among the leading countries in the world. It seemed that independent Lithuania, having reinstated private land ownership, would be able to intelligently reorganize this powerful potential according to the model of cooperation prevalent in the West. Unfortunately, the majority at the Supreme Council cared for the countryside not in the economic and social, but in the ideological and political way. Voices of reason were overshadowed by patriotic slogans, competence was almost declared as another national enemy. Propaganda clichés were crafted: that the chairmen of the collective farms were feudal lords, oppressors of farmers, and opponents of independence; agricultural specialists were seen as feudal butlers (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 433, my translation into English).

³⁴ Transcript of the 64th Seimas sitting, 1991 June 18. While considering the draft law “On the Procedure and Conditions for the Restoration of Citizens’ Ownership Rights to Preserved Real Estate” (Lith. LR įstatymo “Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turtą atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų” projekto svarstymas”). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/TAIS.251789>

The prime minister of the right-wing government in 1996, Gediminas Vagnorius, whose government initiated the land restitution reforms, later acknowledged

I would like to go down in history as a person who liquidated the collective farm system. By the way, I have to share this honour with the Supreme Council, the legislators, as well as with you, who were in the Supreme Council. Of course, the collective farms were liquidated under the law 'On Privatization of Agricultural Property'. It was a good law and it was not difficult for me, as the head of the government, to enforce that law (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 431, my translation into English).

Summing up, it would be possible to say that the reformist right was preoccupied with restoring the rights to previous owners and that the post-communist right was interested in what would be made of the land after it became someone's property. As described by Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, when it came to restoration of property rights, different political parties prioritized different social groups: the conservatives prioritized restitution and interests of former owners, whereas interests of land tenants, reorganization of old economic agricultural structures, and creation of new ones were prioritized by social-democrats (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 436).

However, to say only this much would be an oversimplification, because the reformists also possessed their own vision of what kind of rural economy should be created through the land reform and restoration of land ownership rights. Their vision was that of small family farms dominating the rural economy. This vision was also supported by such important international actors as the World Bank, who often served as tutors to the new post-socialist states in their transformation into western-type capitalist Western democracies.³⁵ In contrast, the former communists

³⁵ As noted by Ilkka Alanen, "In the division of labour between the IMF and the World Bank, it seems that the drafting of an agricultural reform policy has been left to the World Bank. The same neo-liberal plan was proposed for the agricultural reform in all former socialist countries, even though nearly all developed countries have trade policy and subvention mechanisms in place to support their agricultural sectors (customs duties, import levies, etc.). The key recommendations document considered in this article is the World Bank report 'Food and Agricultural Policy Reforms in the Former USSR' (The World Bank, 1992). The only in principle distinctive feature of the agriculture plan was that it recommended the replacement of the large-scale farm system of the Soviet era with a family farm system since family farming was postulated more effective for its lower 'transaction costs'. However, these large-scale farms, whose ownership was restructured through the distribution of ownership shares, were assigned a temporary cushioning

advocated for big farms, which were seen as potentially more productive. The reformist right advocated the development of the rural economy based on small farms because this was seen as undermining the social and economic power of the rural nomenklatura, in particular the former heads of collective farms. The post-communist right sought the opposite – to preserve the nomenklatura’s power. As described by Antanas Poviliūnas:

[t]he main goal of some Sajūdis activists was to restore the pre-1940 agricultural system, leaving no room for the transformation of state and collective farms into corporate production structures of a market economy. After its establishment, the Lithuanian Farmers’ Union was initially dominated by farm managers and moderate scientists; later, the management was taken over by people from the cities, mostly landowners’ heirs, who, when it came to land restitution, would not pay any attention to any objective circumstances. There was a sort of an attempt to delete the Soviet period from the history of the countryside, since “it did not contribute anything of value to agriculture”. This aspiration was promoted and defended by former farmers’ heirs, who had moved to the cities several decades ago or had already been born there, and had no intention of coming back to the countryside for farming and restoration of their family farms. For most of them, land restitution meant only recovery of certain assets that could later, under favourable circumstances, be used appropriately. In the meanwhile, the reclaimed land could be leased to actual farmers. Landowners from the cities hoped to make a living by renting their land to farmers (or their cooperatives).

The radical proponents of the reform hoped that restoration of land ownership and other property rights, as well as privatization of the Soviet-era property and transformation of state or collective farms into private structures of the market economy would defeat the opposing social force—former economic activists of the party. In addition, this path was promoted by foreign experts, too (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 403-404, my translation into English).

The result of the discussion between the two major political camps that would take turns in governing Lithuania was partial restitution.

role in the transition. In the longer term all corporatist business organisations and all employee-owned large-scale farms, such as co-operatives and stockholding companies (ibid., pp. 75–77), were deemed inappropriate for agriculture (‘more conservative’). Furthermore, the plan was to privatise the land and non-land assets held by former Soviet farms in the standard neo-liberal way as quickly as possible in mutual synchronisation, to do away with all subsidies and to force enterprises to adapt their production to the market economy (ibid., p. 47)” (Alanen 2009: 82).

4.1.2 Analytics of Government: Restitution's *Techné*

The second dimension of analytics of government is concerned with the technical part of the government and asks such questions as: “by what means, mechanisms, procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques and vocabularies is authority constituted and rule accomplished?” (Dean 2010: 42). According to Dean,

[o]ne of the key implications of this emphasis on government as technique is to contest those models of government that wish to view it solely – or even mainly – as a manifestation of values, ideologies, worldviews, etc. Those technical means are a condition of governing and often impose limits over what it is possible to do, e.g., in order to attempt to manage national economies it is necessary to use certain economic models and instruments. [...] This does not mean that government is purely technical, or that it is reducible to the technical aspects of government, or that it precludes discourses and rhetoric of value [...] (Dean 2010: 42).

As described by Antanas Poviliūnas, at the end of 1989, leaders of the Lithuanian Farmer's Reform Movement (Lith. “Lietuvos žemdirbių sąjūdis”) began formulating the steps, means, and mechanism for the implementation of the prospective agrarian reform. According to Poviliūnas, “[i]dealization of the pre-1940 life began, there were calls to restore the pre-war villages. Denial of even the obviously progressive changes that had happened before 1990 grew stronger” (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 405, my translation into English). Moreover, the attitude that sought to exclude the 1940-1990 period from Lithuanian history was becoming dominant. The reformers also tended to forget the fact that the countryside had been inhabited by a new generation of farmers, who had fostered agricultural culture and formed the economic and social face of the new countryside. According to Poviliūnas, “[t]he desire to take back land with all its improvements not for farming, but as a non-depreciated asset under the conditions of rising inflation, was becoming more and more prevalent” (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 405, my translation into English). Therefore, the restitution of land was not only about the creation of new farms, but also about profits from renting or selling the land. In other words, land was seen as a source of income (as mentioned in Aleknavičius 2013: 405, my translation into English).

Poviliūnas has also attended to the fact that the new generation of farmers differed from the pre-war one in terms of technology used, attitudes held towards farming, and farming ideology. Therefore, according to him, “[i]t was necessary to find ways to reconcile the nostalgia of family farming and the introduction of the foundations of a capital-oriented economy as in Western Europe in Lithuania”

(as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 405, my translation into English). However, as he puts it, no serious and comprehensive economic or social studies on which the concept of agrarian reform could be based were conducted to facilitate the reform. The developers of the reforms were not interested in research on economic and social aspects of the reforms. Moreover, research institutes relating to economic and social sciences were in crisis and their employees under attack for the research they conducted during the Soviet era (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 405-406). Poviliūnas drew attention to the fact that land privatization took place before any projects of land management (lith. "žemėtvarka") were started, and that "[l]and was being privatized as an asset, and not as functional means of production for prospective farms; this was done by dividing plots among several heirs and breaking up the pre-War farms" (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 410, my translation into English). Therefore, initially, the regime of governmental practices regarding the governance of ownership rights to land did not rely on such modern technologies of government as scientific calculations. What kind of knowledge was used to render the field governable then?

Poviliūnas cites lawyer and Chairman of the Parliamentary Agrarian Commission Eimantas Grakauskas, who, in one of his speeches to the Lithuanian Parliament, claimed that landowners, with their right to their property, are *current*, and not *former* rightful owners of the land in question. Grakauskas stated that the problem of property was not only economic and political, but also legal, and it demanded a political solution. In his criticism of such an approach, Poviliūnas stated:

[t]hat's it. Not by social or economic, but by political solutions. Forgetting that there were also legitimate landowners who, after withdrawing from agriculture, had accumulated their human capital during the Soviet era and did not even think of repaying the society for it. The Reformers were silent: they were no less indebted for their own accumulated human capital; however, they were not keen on raising the question of compensation. A tradition of family farms has also been forgotten: if a family member acquired an education, a profession, and settled in a city, it was considered that her or his part of the farm had already been paid for, and they could no longer make any claims on the farm. If they succeeded in settling and earning substantial annual income, they were expected to make capital investments to foster the farm, to help other family members acquire education and settle outside the farm, thereby remunerating for the help provided to them (as cited in Aleknavičius 2013: 407, my translation into English).

After Lithuania declared independence, the parliament, dominated by reformists, initiated a restitution process that aimed at giving back the land to its former owners. Such a decision had a few purposes: to bring justice to those whose property was collectivized and to legitimize the rule of a new government. To facilitate the process for those whose land was occupied as a result of the law on private farms and extension of one's farm, the Restitution Law was passed on 18 of June 1991, including a clause according to which, as stated in chapter 3, the previously owned land could be returned in kind according to where one worked or resided. However, in 1993, the law was amended by the former communist-dominated parliament. The new version of the same part of article 4 now stated that

[t]he land classified as land to be bought out by the state by Article 12 of this Law, as well as land which the persons referred to in Article 2 of this Law do not wish to reclaim at the place where it was formerly owned, is bought out by the state or compensated with a plot of vacant land equal in value from the state land fund (land is returned in equivalent kind) (my translation into English).³⁶

This constituted a lifting of the previous restriction on the transfer of one's land ownership rights according to one's place of residence.

The amendments included changes in the Restitution Law's article 2, called "Citizens Entitled to Restored Ownership Rights". While the previous version of the law declared that the bearers of the right to restored ownership rights were the children (or adopted children), parents (or foster parents), or spouse of the former owner, if he is no longer living, the amended law was supplemented with a provision which declared that the "[f]ormer owners of property or persons referred to in Paragraph one, Clause 2 of this Article may transfer the right to restitution of ownership of the remaining immovable property to their children (adopted children), parents (adoptive parents), spouse and grandchildren by a notarized contract."³⁷ Therefore, not only did the transfer of land become deterritorialized, but land ownership rights could also be transferred to a greater number of people.

³⁶ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 1993. "On Supplementing and Amending the "Law on the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property"" (Lith. "Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos įstatymo "Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turtą atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų" papildymo ir pakeitimo") (No. I-229). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.5546?jfwid=fhhu5mqv8>.

³⁷ Ibid.

During the sitting of the Seimas when the amendments to the law were adopted, the members of parliament had different opinions considering the above-cited amendments regarding article 4. Some considered it to be a continuation of the land nationalization process that started in 1940. A right-wing MP, Petras Algirdas Miškinis, addressed his colleagues in the Parliament in the following way:

[h]onourable members of the Seimas, I think that we have passed a very bad law. In my view, this is the consolidation of the land nationalization of 1940, and it is truly a tragedy for the rural people, as Mr Albertynas has said, and I agree with him. These amendments to the law severely restrict owners' rights and shatter the hopes of regaining property, taken away by Bolshevism, that many people have had for decades by now; they will cause instability in the countryside and turn the people against each other, and we will see their consequences very soon. I think the country dwellers will very soon be turned into peons of wealthy latifundian landlords. I believe that these amendments are unconstitutional and a gross violation of human rights (my translation into English).³⁸

A similar position was expressed by another MP from the nationalist faction, Alvydas Baležentis:

[h]onourable members of the Seimas, this law, which is now being passed, is a continuation and practical legalization of the land nationalization. I want to remind you that property is not a thing to be acquired in the parliament or in the Seimas, but by buying, donating, or inheriting land. Overall, the concept of property that is currently in use is very strange. Restoration of land ownership is related to such issues as whether the land will be leased, the ability to ensure the supply of feed, one's place of residence—city or countryside, —whether the person will buy a building... In a word, these are absurd statements that have no legal basis. I also want to say that most articles of this law contradict Article 23 of the current Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, which states that property is inviolable (my translation into English).³⁹

³⁸ Transcript of the 78th sitting of Seimas, 1993, July 15. While considering the draft law “On Supplementing and Amending the “Law on the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property” (Lith. “Įstatymo “Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos įstatymo “Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turtą atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų” papildymo ir pakeitimo” projektas (trečiojo svarstymo ir balsavimo tęsinys”). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/TAIS.236813>.

³⁹ Ibid.

The quotes illustrate the opposition between the different approaches to restoring land ownership rights. Some argued that the condition for ownership should be a contract, an act of gifting, or inheritance. Others emphasised the material nature of ownership rights and approached them in connection to economic activities and one's place of residence.

Others saw it as the best possible solution to combine the interests of various social groups and to correct the mistakes that the previous government had made regarding the restitution process. Mykolas Pronckus, an MP from the Democratic Labour Party (LDDP) – the former Lithuanian Communist Party – claimed that

[w]e are witnessing the painful necessity to move away from the chaos to which some people have entangled the entirety of Lithuania. The passing of this law, I think, is a certain balance of interests, it is a certain compromise. Some—on both sides—criticize it, say that it is bad; but if we had chosen the extreme options, the consequences, as far as I can imagine, would be very sad. That is why I am proposing to vote for this law, and time, I think, will be the judge of our actions (my translation into English).⁴⁰

His colleague, right-wing MP Benediktas Vilmantas Rupeika, had a similar opinion “[i]t sounds like a consensus has finally been reached in the Seimas at the end of the first session. The interests of the Left coincided with those of the Right, with which I congratulate us all, and vote against this draft” (my translation into English).⁴¹

The previously passed Law on Privately Owned Farms and the Law “On the extension of farmer land parcels,” as well as the provision of the Restitution Law which made land relocation possible, together brought many problems. Therefore, in 1996 the Restitution Law was suspended by the parliament dominated by the reformists who had returned to power. In 1997, a new version of the law was adopted. However, the main principle, that one could relocate one's land ownership rights, remained unchanged. Later, former prime minister Gediminas Vagnorius would remember that

[i]n 1997, we tried to change this provision and disallow the land transfer, but, during the vote, it was taken into account that part of the land had already been transferred, therefore it would have been unfair and illogical to change the existing order in the middle of the reform. As a result, the provisions of the 1991 Act were

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

*restored. Land transfer encouraged the officials to stall the land reform in order to firstly transfer most expensive vacant land to interested persons of their close circles (my translation into English).*⁴²

A few decades later, a prominent member of the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party, which later merged with the social democratic party, Gediminas Kirkilas, would recall that “the LDDP as well as other governments, tried to somehow fix the situation for better or worse, but the process was already gone. Because as soon as people were given the opportunity, they started using it” (my translation into English).⁴³ Kirkilas explained that the reason the party did not cancel these decisions to allow for relocation of land was that “at the time, the LDDP was accused of being former communists, opposed to a market economy” (my translation into English).⁴⁴ According to Kirkilas, between 1990 and 1992, The Supreme Council – Restoration Seimas had passed many fundamental decisions regarding the restitution of ownership rights and any attempts to question them was perceived as an act against independence.⁴⁵ Zenonas Norkus summed up the amendments in the following way:

[i]n the new (1997) wording of the Law on Restitution, one of the aims of allowing the transfer of land ownership was to facilitate consolidation of such land strips and establishment of single-family farms. In reality, this provision was mostly used by city dwellers to exchange parts of the land inherited from their parents or grandparents in their homeland for plots suitable for recreational farms near major Lithuanian cities, especially in the lake areas of Eastern Lithuania (Norkus 2014: 378, my translation into English).

However, in the context of this inquiry, the 1997 Restitution Law, and specifically its article 4, contained some new and important provisions, one of which was dedicated to the way land restitution should be carried out in former street-plot settlements:

⁴² Delfi.lt. 2017. Jurga Tvaskienė: ““Returning Land: Restoration of Justice Turned into Decades-Long Scandal” (Lith. “Žemės gražinimas: teisybės atkūrimas, virtęs dešimtmečių skandalu”). URL: <https://www.delfi.lt/multimedija/pamokos/zemes-grazinimas-teisybes-atkurimas-virtes-desimtmeciu-skandalu.d?id=75582991>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

[t]he land shall be returned in kind immediately. [...] In that part of the territory of the State of Lithuania where the plot system was still existent, the land shall be given back and compensated in kind according to the drawn-up land survey plans of the land reform. A plot of land equal in value to the one held previously shall, in the same manner, be transferred into the ownership of the former owner without payment.⁴⁶

However, as mentioned in chapter 3.2, the methodology on how to restore ownership rights to people who had land in former street-plot settlements had been prepared already in 1994. Therefore, it can be said that the partial restitution, which tried to combine interests of both those who worked the land and those who had possessed the land before the war, was a compromise between the reformists who perceived the land ownership problem as political, and the former communists who approached the problem first and foremost from an economic point of view. The governments also tried to address specific problems the process of restitution encountered on its way, e.g., restoring land ownership rights to those who had possessed land in former street-plot settlements.

4.1.3 Analytics of Government: Restitution's *Episteme*

The third dimension of the analytics of government is concerned with the episteme of government and is interested in the forms of knowledge that arise from and inform the activity of governing. Here, researchers might ask "what forms of thought, knowledge, expertise, strategies, means of calculation, or rationality are employed in practices of governing? How does thought seek to transform these practises? How do these practices of governing give rise to specific forms of truth? How does thought seek to render particular issues, domains and problems governable?" (Dean 2010: 42). At the same time, Dean emphasised that "thought" is something relatively rare. It has a particular time and place and takes a definite material form (a graph, a set of regulations, a text, etc.). It is this connection of government and thought that is emphasized in the hybrid term "governmentality" (Dean 2010: 42). Moreover, Dean draws our attention to the fact that "[o]ne of the features of government, even at it is most brutal, is that authorities and agencies must ask questions of themselves, must employ plans, forms of knowledge and

⁴⁶ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 1997. "Republic of Lithuania Law on the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership of Citizens to the Existing Real Property" (Lith. "Lietuvos Respublikos piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turta atkūrimo įstatymas") (No. VIII-359). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.44404?jfwid=fhhu5mqv8>.

know-how, and must adopt visions and objectives of what they seek to achieve” (Dean 2010: 43).

The way that the government of independent Lithuania agreed on the mechanisms of restitution has previously been analysed. I will further analyse whom it saw as the target audience of the restitution policy. This audience changed depending on which political force was in power. On July 25, 1991, the Parliament passed the “Law on Land Reform”, which defined the aims and objectives of the reform. Article 10 of the law defined who had priority for purchasing the land. Originally, article 10 declared,

1. During the implementation of the land reform, land shall be sold for private owners according to the following order of priority:

1) to persons who have worked for a minimum of 5 years in an agricultural enterprise which is presently being reorganized. Deportees and former political prisoners who possess a private house on the said territory shall also have this right, regardless of their present or former place of employment;

2) to persons residing on the territory of the agricultural enterprise which is being reorganized;

3) to farmers who wish to expand their farm holdings to the size prescribed by paragraph 1 of Article 9 of this law;

4) to deceased farm owners’ grandchildren, who are returning to the land with the intention to farm, and to other citizens of the Republic of Lithuania.

2. If several prospective buyers wish to establish a private farm on a single plot of land, and if these prospective buyers have equal priority rights to purchase this plot, the land shall be sold by auction. In such cases, the buyer must immediately pay an amount of money exceeding the nominal price of the land (my translation into English).⁴⁷

In other words, the article stated that the priority to acquire land as private property would be given to those who had worked the land or had lived on the territory of an agricultural enterprise under reorganization, but also to those who were political prisoners or deportees, those who wanted to extend their farms, and the grandchildren of previous owners who were keen on returning to villages with the purpose of starting to farm.

⁴⁷ Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. 1993. “Law on Land Reform” (Lith. “Lietuvos Respublikos žemės reformos įstatymas”) (No. I-1607). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.2718?jfwid=>.

On July 15, 1993, the former communist-dominated parliament changed the law on land reform by amending Article 10. The list of those who could acquire land under the reform was expanded from five categories to eleven different categories. The first five categories confirmed by the new edition of Article 10 were the following:

- 1) *persons who had the right to acquire land for a private farm;*
- 2) *persons living in rural areas who reclaim their land in kind in that area;*
- 3) *persons who were allowed to use the land according to the Law on Privately Owned Farm (1989), although at the time the usage of this land was not formalized (Lith. "iforminta"), as well as other persons residing in rural areas whose land was given to other persons to use according to the Law on Privately Owned Farm;*
- 4) *other persons reclaiming land in kind;*
- 5) *residents recovering land of equivalent nature held on that former agricultural holding and in the surrounding area (my translation into English).⁴⁸*

Thus, it can be seen that the former Communists prioritized the residents' rights to acquire and work land. Political prisoners were next in line:

- 6) *political prisoners and deportees living in the countryside, or their children who reclaim land in that area in an equivalent kind. If these persons live in an urban or urban-type settlement, only a part (not more than 2 ha per applicant) of the land held in the rural area of that region may be returned to them at their request, with remuneration for the remaining part (my translation into English).⁴⁹*

Thus, the principle that the priority to acquire land should be given to those who at the time lived on and worked the land in their place of residence applied to political prisoners and deportees as well.

On November 25, 1996, a new Parliament dominated by the reformist right who had returned to power after four years gathered for its first session. The Parliament suspended the law on restitution, and on July 2, 1997, amended the Law on the Amendment of the Law on Land Reform. The Preamble of the new Restitution Law passed in 1997 emphasised that "the laws, imposed by the foreign state, by which the occupational powers had seized from the citizens of the Republic of

⁴⁸ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 1993. "Regarding the supplementation and amendment of the Law on Land Reform of the Republic of Lithuania" (Lith. „Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos žemės reformos įstatymo papildymo ir pakeitimo“) (No. I-230). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.5548>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Lithuania the property possessed by them, ceased to be in force” and that “the rights of ownership acquired by the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania before the occupation are not revoked and have continuity.”⁵⁰ Thereby, the law clearly stated that the decisions of the previous government were illegal and that the rights held by the citizens of pre-war Lithuania were to be restored. The Preamble once again reminded that “the restoration of continuation of the rights of ownership is based on the provision of the 18 June 1991 Law [...] on the Procedure and Conditions of Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property - the existing real property shall be returned to citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, and in the event it is impossible to do so, they shall be compensated properly.”⁵¹ This clause meant that Lithuania chose not full but partial restitution, as the law held that in case citizens are not able to get back the land, they can be compensated for it.

Unlike in its previous version, the 1997 version of the Restitution Law contained a definition of an owner, by which the law meant, “the person whose real property was nationalised under the laws of the USSR (Lithuanian SSR) or which was otherwise unlawfully made public, and to whom the rights of ownership to the existing real property are being restored according to this Law.”⁵² Interestingly, victimhood, comprising an important part of the definition of the owner, held that he was a victim of the Soviet regime.

Article 10 of the 1997 version of the “Law on Land Reform” declared that

[i]n implementing land reform, the land, forest and water bodies, located in a rural area shall be returned as-is, or transferred or allotted without payment to the property by the Law on the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership of Citizens to the Existing Real Property and also this Law, as well as by selling by this Law, to citizens the boundaries established in the survey plans of land reform, in the following order:

⁵⁰ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 1997. “Law on the Amendment of the Law on Land Reform” (Lith. “Lietuvos Respublikos žemės reformos įstatymo pakeitimo įstatymas”) (No. I-1607). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.44405?jfwid=779zkm690>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 1997. “Republic of Lithuania Law on the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership of Citizens to the Existing Real Property” (Lith. “Lietuvos Respublikos piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turtą atkūrimo įstatymas”) (No. VIII-359). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/949193f215a011e9bd28d9a28a9e9ad9?jfwid=fhhu5mqv8>.

- 1) returning to owners in kind;
- 2) allotted without payment to property of citizens, whose families were moved into the territory of the Republic of Lithuania after 1939, from farms, possessed through the right of ownership in the then territories of Poland and Germany, namely, those plots of land, onto which these families were moved in the course of being transferred into the Republic of Lithuania;
- 3) land plots are allotted without payment on an equivalent basis to those held previously (to be increased for up to 100 per cent) land plots for citizens, who are the volunteer fighters of the struggles for independence of 1918-1920, participants in the resistance, political prisoners, deportees, persons who have received the Order of the Vytis Cross, and also their spouses, parents (adoptive parents), children (adopted children), if the land they wish to recover, falls within the territory designated for an individual farm or a peasant farm;
- 4) land plots are allotted without payment on an equivalent basis to those previously held (increased up to 30 per cent) land plots for citizens when the land they desire to recover falls within the territory designated for an individual farm or a peasant farm;
- 5) land plots are allotted without payment on an equivalent basis to ownership by citizens now using the land (increased up to 30 per cent), who shall agree to vacate the land used for an individual farm, the recovery in kind whereof, is desired by its owners.⁵³

The law defined new categories of people whom the law addressed, the owners. It can be seen that the category of deportees and political prisoners, highly prioritized in the original version of the law, and later pushed down the list by the former communists, reappears on the top of the list, and is even expanded to include citizen volunteer fighters from 1918-1920, as well as anti-communist resistance fighters and their family members. Further additions were the categories of owners whose land was occupied by those who had acquired the land according to the Law on Privately Owned Farms and the law On Extension of Farmer Land Parcels, and those owners who acquired land according to the two laws mentioned but would be willing to give it to its previous owners in exchange for a bigger parcel of land elsewhere. In all cases, the rights of “owners” were prioritized.

Of particular interest here is the second category, of people who were moved to Lithuanian territory after 1939. This category refers to the agreement on the resettlement of the population signed on 10 January 1941 between the USSR and Germany, and the secret protocol based on which persons of Lithuanian descent

⁵³ Ibid.

were forcibly transferred from the territory of the Republic of Poland occupied by the German Reich (Suwałki Region) to the territory of the Republic of Lithuania occupied by the USSR.⁵⁴ The agreement was a result of the Treaty of Non-aggression and its secret protocol of 23 August, 1939, signed between Nazi Germany and the USSR, and the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty of 28 September 1939 and its secret protocol. The category thus had the implicit consequence that among those who were given priority to acquire private land were persons of Lithuanian descent. This is the only, albeit inexplicit, “ethnic” category in the law.

On 6 June, 1991, the Parliament during its 58th session was debated the draft of the Law on Land Reform. MP and member of the parliamentary Agrarian commission, Petras Poškus, argued that the successful functioning of the law depends on how well it is understood by the people. Therefore, the land reform should be thoroughly discussed, and implemented without rushing to dismantle the previous regime, but with a transitional period:

[i]n the former socialist system, those leaders, those local kings, used to say that this is the land of all of you, and now it will be owned by the state. Just don't you think that we are big supporters of the collective farm system. I work on a good farm with the best production rates in the area, some of the best in the Republic. But I also see the evils of that system. Why? The point is that people will know that it is not them but the state that owns the land, and their attitude to work will not change. Therefore, this should also be clarified, more emphasis on this is needed, when talking to local people. Because we can pass the best law ever, but it will, like most of our laws, remain unimplemented. Therefore, I would say that this should be discussed even more broadly. Perhaps, temporarily, until the transitional period lasts, collective ownership of (...) community land should also be allowed (my translation into English).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 2010. “Resolution on the Persons Transferred to the Occupied Territory of the Republic of Lithuania from the Occupied Territory of the Republic of Poland on the Basis of the Agreement on Resettlement of 10 January 1941 Between the USSR and Germany” (Lith. “Dėl asmenų, perkeltų į okupuotos Lietuvos Respublikos teritoriją iš okupuotos Lenkijos Respublikos teritorijos pagal SSRS ir Vokietijos 1941 m. sausio 10 d. susitarimą dėl gyventojų mainų”). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.375044?jfwid=-779zkm4ai>.

⁵⁵ Transcript of the 58th sitting of Seimas, 1991, June 6. While considering the draft law “Consideration of the draft Law on Land Reform of the Republic of Lithuania, adoption of the draft, and consideration of the weekly agenda” (Lith. “LR žemės reformos įstatymo projekto svarstymas, projekto priėmimas, bei savaitės darbotvarkės svarstymas”). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/TAIS.251780>

According to Poškus, the problem regarding the optimal size of the farms, on which the opinions of MPs differed, would be solved by the forces of the market.

[t]he most dubitable part of Article 10 is the size of the farm. There are different opinions. Some say: let the farmer have as big a plot as they can manage. We know that, in other parts of the world, farms tend grow to 120 ha and more. This, of course, should be the case in the future. But it seems to me that, in the future, it will all come to order naturally. Now, perhaps, we really should not increase the size of plots so that more people, who want land, would get some, and, in the future, there will be competition and the truly industrious farmers will automatically increase their areas at the expense of those who will go bankrupt. And one does not have to be a prophet to know that small farms will go bankrupt. Because the practice of the world and the examples from pre-war Lithuania show that life will make a selection here. Just like now, public farms under same circumstances show different results. Even in the same region, some produce up to three times more than their neighbours. The same will be true for [individual] farmers (my translation into English).⁵⁶

The statement illustrates that even the former chairmen of collective farms who eventually became politicians relied on the principles of the market, e.g., competition, when thinking about the new forms of land management and criticising the previous socialist order.

4.2 Restitution's Problems, Rationales and Technologies in the Context of the Nation

This section seeks to re-interpret the previously presented analytics of government through the lens of the nation. As has been argued in the theoretical chapter, the nation is a useful lens through which to analyse governmentalities, because these often operate in a national context rather than in a vacuum.

4.2.1 Land Restitution Through the Prism of the Nation

In the present section I argue that the reprogramming of Soviet Lithuania took place by seeing the inter-war nation-state as a model to follow. Successful economic reforms were seen as a way to integrate the Lithuanian Polish minority, and land restitution was considered a means to achieve this goal. However, regarding the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

land, there were debates on what kind of economic reforms should be taken, and what kind of modernization the country should seek. This chapter, therefore, shows not only what meaning land (restitution) was seen to have on state–minority relations, but also the meaning which land played in national imagination at the time of the reforms.

Considering the national context in which the criticism and reprogramming of the Soviet governmentality (described in the first part of this chapter) took place after the end of the Cold War, it should be mentioned that the new political elite which brought Lithuania to independence propagated the idea of the restoration of independence and Lithuania’s return to the West. Because of this idea, independence was not simply declared in 1990, it was restored. As soon as the parliament voted on the restoration of the state’s independence, the constitution of 1938 – the last constitution of interwar Lithuania – was restored and then suspended. On March 11, 1990, The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, emphasizing the continuity of the independent state of Lithuania and its constitutional order, adopted the law “On the Reinstatement of the 12 May 1938 Constitution of Lithuania.” However, Lithuanians were not the only ethnic group making political claims at that time.

During the early stages of independence, there were tensions between the ethnic majority and the Polish minority concentrated largely in the country’s south-eastern provinces, largely due to aspirations of autonomy raised by some members of the Polish minority. This might have been the reason that at the beginning of independence, Poles were seen as having been a privileged social group under the Soviet regime. This status of having been privileged was perceived as the root of many minority-related problems, including the autonomy movement. On June 6, 1990, the Institute of Philosophy of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Sociology and Law published a report titled *Sociological aspect of Poles’ problem in Lithuania* (Lith. „Lenkų problemos Lietuvoje sociologinis aspektas“), written by Eugenija Krukauskienė.⁵⁷ The report seems to have been important, as it was presented to the Supreme Council, cited among its members,⁵⁸ and, having in mind the episteme dimension of Dean’s model of the analytics of government, it can be said

⁵⁷ Published in 1991 in the magazine “Akiračiai”. See Krukauskienė, Eugenija. 1991. “Lenkų problemos Lietuvoje sociologinis aspektas / Eugenija Krukauskienė.” Akiračiai, 1991, No. 1 edition.

⁵⁸ For example, as documented in the transcript of the 85th sitting of Seimas, 1990, June 19, the report was mentioned during the discussions of the political situation of south-eastern Lithuania, regarding the autonomy movement. URL: https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/rs/legact/TAK/TAIS.251302/format/MSO2010_DOCX/.

that the report played a role in forming politicians' knowledge about this part of Lithuania's population.

The report stated that "[a]s the historical experience of Lithuanian-Polish coexistence shows, the more legal and illegal (the occupation between 1919-1939) privileges Poles acquired in Lithuania, the more they became isolated from Lithuanian life, the deeper the conflict between Lithuanians and Poles would become" (Krukauskienė 1991, my translation into English). The document suggested that granting any privileges to Poles would only deepen the conflict and hinder the integration of Poles.

However, the report mentioned some factors that might have inspired the minority's wish for autonomy, one of which was what the authors of the document called "the narrowness of the minority's interests":

[o]ne of the main grounds for the ideas of autonomy in the Šalčininkai district is the narrowness of the inhabitants' interests, i. e., their interests begin and end in their own "yard", encompassing such topics as domestic life, salary, size of pension, supply of goods, etc. Therefore, those who promise a better life find support here, while the higher ideals like freedom and independence are incomprehensible to the majority of the residents of non-Lithuanian districts. Therefore, one of the main tools that can distract them from the idea of autonomy is actual social assistance (Krukauskienė 1991, my translation into English).

The report did not compare Poles in Lithuania with ethnic Lithuanians, and presented narrow interests as specifically Polish features. Poles are constructed as backward people who are unable to understand "higher ideals" and think only of their tiny interests, which then makes them prone to being manipulated by politicians seeking autonomy.

The scientific document illustrates well what Brubaker meant by the "nationalizing state", for it clearly states that the Lithuanian state should be for Lithuanians first and that minorities can develop their national culture only insofar as it does not threaten the majority's dominant status:

[t]he right of the Lithuanian nation to establish its statehood cannot be juxtaposed with the idea of Lithuania as a territory inhabited by people of different ethnicities. A distinction must be made between the concepts of 'equality' and 'equalization' [Lith. "lygiava"], both in economic and in political life. The main way of consolidating a nation's rights in its ethnic territory is legalization of its equality to other nations that exist in the world. Every nation has the right to have a place where it would be the main nation and where it could realize its national consciousness with all

the necessary legal guarantees. Cultural life of persons of other ethnicities [Lith. "kitataučiu"] must be developed as much as and in a way that it does not endanger the culture of the core nation and does not promote the isolation of persons of other ethnicities from the main nation (Krukauskienė 1991, my translation into English).

The report proposed means to combat the Polish minority's aspirations for autonomy, among which the main ones were policies that would concentrate on solving the minority's social and economic problems:

[s]ince material well-being, compared to spiritual things, is prioritized in the structure of the orientation of the local Poles, the Government should pay most of its attention to this. Compared to other regions of Lithuania, their social situation is not too bad and many negative things that exist are the result of their own negligence (e. g., some villagers do not have toilets etc., as observed during the expeditions). However, it should be understood that this is the part of the Lithuanian population that wants to enjoy goods without feeling and realizing that the economic situation is closely related to politics, that independence is pursued not only in the name of ideals of freedom, but also for economic improvement. Therefore, most of them lean towards the preservation of what was before, towards the preservation of the USSR, without even knowing what is going on there, e. g., how one ensures the supply of food and so on. Perhaps it would be worth considering how to give them a 'better morsel' without hurting other inhabitants of Lithuania too much, so that the proponents of autonomy would not be able to talk about how the new government does not take care of them. [...] This sort of care would be noticed and would have a greater effect than additional cultural privileges in comparison to other ethnicities. The latter privileges, as already stated, may also have an opposite effect on the development of mutual relationships. In July 1989, when the research was conducted in the Šalčininkai district, only a couple of people raised the idea of autonomy. When asked about how the situation in the district could be improved, Šalčininkai residents suggested raising salaries, supplying more goods, improving their domestic lives, supplying them with church press, etc. (Krukauskienė 1991, my translation into English).

The idea of giving Poles a "better morsel" to win their loyalty to the state has been documented by the historian Vladas Sirutavičius (2017). According to him, disbanding locally elected local councils, supportive of autonomy, was seen as a way to democratize the region, by eliminating the pro-communist and Moscow-loyal elite from political life (2017). However, direct governance was seen as a way to speed up socio-economic reforms, e.g., in the restoration of private ownership

rights to nationalized property, including land. To describe the outcome of such reforms, Sirutavičius quotes a Lithuanian journalist who was popular at the time: “Poles will see that the Lithuanian government enforces the law of privatization without violating the minority’s interests. [...] When they become owners, they will not want to remember the Bolshevik times” (Sirutavičius 2017: 251, my translation into English). The most important thing was to

‘cure’ Poles from Soviet nostalgia and, the thought was, ethno-political problems will get solved naturally. Finally, the third aspect – direct governance should have prevented tendencies of autonomization (that is the spread of the idea of national-territorial autonomy), thus eliminating threats to the state’s territorial integrity (Sirutavičius 2017: 251-252, my translation into English).

In other words, restitution should have helped to create conditions for members of the minority to be able to build a good life in independent Lithuania and be less interested in calls for autonomy. However, as it is now known, intentions to focus on improving the minority’s situation through economic means never turned into a strategy. Similarly, no means of positive discrimination in favour of Poles regarding restitution had ever been applied. This might be due to the idea that it was dangerous to grant Poles any special status or treatment, as mentioned in the above-presented report.

The idea of the restoration of independence informed land restitution policies, the order in which they were enacted, and influenced both the macro-level form as well as micro-level arrangements regarding restitution. Regarding the micro-level arrangements, the influence of the idea can be seen in the 1997 version of the Restitution Law, whose preamble declared that the law was passed “taking into consideration the judgements and rulings of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania of 1994-1996 and the limit of 150 hectares set by the land reform in 1922-1940.”⁵⁹ The provision demonstrates how the idea that post-cold war Lithuania was a continuation of the pre-war country affected even the particular details of the reform.

On the macro level, the restoration of independence and the inter-war type of a nation-state found an expression in visions of a future Lithuania that would be based on small family farmsteads as it was during the interwar period. Indeed,

⁵⁹ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 1997. “Republic of Lithuania Law on the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership of Citizens to the Existing Real Property” (Lith. “Lietuvos Respublikos piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turtą atkūrimo įstatymas”) (No. VIII-359). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lit/TAD/949193f215a011e9bd28d9a28a9e9ad9?jfwid=fhhu5mqv8>.

at the beginning of independence, land played an important role in the national imagination. According to Rawi Abdelal, the issues of the land market and national meanings in post-communist Lithuania were closely tied (Abdelal 2004). Soon after its independence, the country rejected the East and oriented itself towards the West in its foreign economic policies. The same trajectory was taken regarding policies of the land market, which at the time was still in its formative stages (Abdelal 2004, 111-112). As soon as Lithuania decided to start talks about joining the EU, debates began about the possibility of foreigners buying and owning land in Lithuania. Such discussions, according to Abdelal, also reflected broader debates about Lithuanian national identity (Abdelal 2004: 115). The 'reintegration' with the West, however, encountered challenges from its inception. Politicians soon discovered that joining the EU would require making amendments to the state's new constitution, which at the time forbade non-citizens from owning land in the country, as the EU was pursuing single European market policies. As noted by Abdelal, land played an important role in imagining what Lithuania was and who was a Lithuanian. Moreover, at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, agriculture made up one-third of Lithuania's GDP, compared to approximately one-fifth of the GDP in the other Baltic republics (Abdelal 2004: 117).

These two factors may partially explain fears over foreign citizens purchasing land in Lithuania. Farmers were particularly sensitive about selling agricultural land, because they were afraid of competition with foreign economic actors. They argued that since land in Lithuania was cheaper, foreigners might buy it for speculative purposes. Second, the restitution process was not yet complete, therefore farmers demanded that the sale of agricultural land should only be allowed after the restitution process was over (Abdelal 2004: 120). Less worrisome seemed the plans to sell non-agricultural land. However, there too were concerns that granting such rights to foreigners may cause threats to national security, as land could be purchased by Russian nationals or citizens of other unfriendly regimes.

Nevertheless, fear of foreigners buying land existed in parallel to desires to become a part of the western world (Abdelal 2004: 117-118). After long negotiations, politicians finally managed to reach a consensus, and in 1996 the state's constitution was amended to allow the purchase and ownership of non-agricultural land for business purposes by foreign citizens of member states of the EU, NATO, and OECD, while citizens of Russia and other former Soviet republics were denied this right. The same kind of restriction was put on the sale of agricultural land (Abdelal 2004: 122).

Abdelal cites several participants of the discussion regarding the right to sell agricultural land and the above-mentioned constitutional amendments. Ramūnas Karbauskis, a wealthy farmer and politician who in 2002, during the discussions

on selling agricultural land to foreigners, said “[i]f we speak about the sale of land to foreigners, it is necessary to say that it is not the question of how much the land will cost in one or two years. It is the question of whether there will be at least one Lithuanian farmer” (as cited in Abdelal 2004: 121). Andrius Kubilius, a prominent member of the Lithuanian conservative party and Deputy Speaker of Seimas between 1996 and 1999, claimed that “[t]his amendment is the necessary condition for Lithuania to become a modern state. The centre of Europe cannot remain a province of Europe” (as cited in Abdelal 2004: 119). Thus, we can see that during the discussion over constitutional amendments, politicians representing different ideological positions all encouraged moving towards the West, breaking ties with the East, and building a modern European nation-state.

However, land was important not only to farmers but also to the Polish ethnic minority. According to Vesna Popovski, land reform was a frequent subject of debate within the Polish community, and according to some prominent minority politicians such as R. Maciejkianiec, who during the period 1990-1992 was the Chairperson of the Polish Faction in the Lithuanian Parliament, it was the main cause of discrimination felt by Poles (Popovski 2000: 118). Prolonged discussions over land reform in the Parliament hampered the restitution process. Popovski quotes Erevistas Raišuotis, a Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party MP, who argued that

[b]etween the two World Wars quite a lot of people came here and we cannot acknowledge their right to the land.’ This position ‘hurts only Poles because there were no Lithuanians in this region between the two World Wars’. The Poles saw an ethnic dimension in it and the LDDP government, aware of this complaint, continually emphasised the fact that land was limited. They argued that they inherited all these problems from the Sajudis government which rushed into land reform without thinking it through. Raisuotis stated, ‘The present government was aware of all the problems and, therefore, decided to introduce a project for each single village. This means that the reform will be sorted out by 1998 (as cited in Popovski 2000: 119).

Yet, as shown in this research, it was not finished as predicted by Raišuotis, as different governments continued changing the course of reforms based upon their priorities.

To sum up, the reprogramming of Soviet Lithuania took place by seeing the inter-war nation-state as the model to emulate. Tensions between Lithuanians and Poles arose due to some of the minority leaders declaring intentions for the establishment of national autonomy. Successful economic reforms were seen as

a way to integrate Poles and to reduce the threat of autonomy. Restitution was considered as one of the means to accomplish this. At the same time, there were debates over establishing a land market in Lithuania. These debates provide a context that is important in understanding what kind of modernization the country's elite sought and what was the meaning of land at that time for Lithuanian society. Because it was considered to be an important part of national identity, restrictions were put on foreign citizens acquiring land in Lithuania (especially to citizens of non-western countries). However, were there any restrictions on citizens of non-Lithuanian ethnicity to acquire land? As shown in the previous parts of this chapter, the laws relating to restitution established no such restrictions and there were no explicit systematic efforts to discriminate against ethnic non-Lithuanians during the process of land restitution. However, we can still ask whether ethnic minorities were treated equally during the practical implementation of restitution, as opposed to merely how it was planned or described in laws.

4.2.2 International Evaluations of Restitution and Governmental Responses

In the present subsection, I argue that international reports issued between 1997 and 2008 by the Council of Europe's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights continuously emphasized problems that members of minorities living in SEL had while seeking the restitution of land. The government's response to such observations was based on the argument that the restitution process was carried out according to the principle of treating every citizen equally. The answers provided to the Committee emphasised that the responsibility for problems with the restitution process lay not only on the country's institutions but also on individuals who were seeking restitution of their land. This, I argue, demonstrates that in the eyes of the government, the reform's design was without any deficiencies, and problems were due to external reasons, defined by corruption or lack of involvement on the side of those who were seeking restitution.

In 1997, the Council of Europe's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights issued a report, *Obligations and commitments of Lithuania as a member state*, on how the government of Lithuania was following the obligations it had committed itself to by joining the Council of Europe. The report contained an "Introductory Memorandum of the Committee on Legal Affairs & Human Rights" prepared by rapporteur György Frunda. The document included a section on "Administrative reform and restitution of property issues". This part of the report mentioned several issues related to minority rights and land restitution.

First, the report noted that in 1995 the government had expanded the boundaries of Vilnius city, as requested by the city council (see chapter 3). The report mentions

that the step was taken ignoring the protest of adjacent municipalities, densely inhabited by minorities, who argued against the city's expansion until the restitution of land was completed on the territory. The report, however, acknowledged that

[d]ifficulties in the restitution of property to people residing in the adjacent regions – including ethnic Poles in respect of the regions surrounding Vilnius – and raised from the change of boundaries of the major cities were (at least partly) addressed when in May 1995 amendments were adopted to the 1991 Law on the Conditions and Procedure for the Restoration of the Citizens' Ownership Right to the Remaining Immovable Property according to which the procedure established by this law was also applied in respect of property rights to land which was included in the administrative boundaries of larger cities and towns after the entry into force of this law. Following these amendments, the entire previously owned land could be returned, and not only a part as before the amendments.⁶⁰

Despite its positive effect, the amendments, as described in chapter 3.2, had some flaws, as applicants whose land or whose relatives' land in villages or cities was already occupied could not make a claim for land in kind in those same villages or cities. One was only able to get back land in kind elsewhere in rural territories, where the market value of land was lower. Such a policy, therefore, benefited the development of capital, but not the interests of residents, who very often were of minority origin.

Third, the report clarified that the inclusion of the Polish-populated regions into Vilnius city created difficulties for their resident farmers because the conditions for using agricultural land within the city borders were less favourable due to higher land taxes. Finally, the report mentioned additional problems faced by Poles in the "Vilnius region", which had its roots in "the specific pre-war history of the region". As stated in the report, after the adoption of the Restitution Law in 1991, institutions responsible for implementing the policy rejected documents issued by the Polish administration during the interwar period. According to the report, the documents were rejected based on "the argument that such an administration was, in the Lithuanian view, unlawful in Vilnius and its region" (my translation into English).⁶¹ Indeed, in a footnote of his seminal book on the relations between Poles and Lithuanians on one hand, and Lithuania and Poland between 1988 and 1994 on the other, Sirutavičius mentions vice-minister Zenonas Juknevičius, who in his

⁶⁰ Council of Europe. Rapporteurs: Mr Andreas Gross and Mr João Mota Amaral. "Obligations and commitments of Lithuania as a member state" (Doc. 7896). URL: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=7826&lang=en>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

correspondence to the government in 1992 argued that the “documents issued by the Polish state institutions in the interwar years regarding the granting or purchase of land in the Vilnius region *from the state fund* [emphasis in the original] may not be used as documents proving property rights” (2017: 258, my translation into English). Sirutavičius concludes that

the Lithuanian government declared that documents, by which the so-called colonists, i. e., persons who moved to the Vilnius region after 1920, acquired land from the government of the time, were invalid. This was probably an attempt to emphasize the occupying nature of the Polish government in the Vilnius region and its illegality (Sirutavičius 2017: 258, my translation into English).

The authorities’ decision not to accept the documents issued by the inter-war Polish government had long-term consequences, for, while Poles were waiting for the state to accept their documents, land restitution continued. Thus, by the time the owners of the minority background had ‘returned’ to the process, the general amount of land to be given back had shrunk as it had been distributed to other Lithuanian citizens.

While Brubaker (1996) spoke about nationalizing state nationalism based on claims that post-socialist nations were weak, due to Soviet policies, and therefore needed remedial action by the state, the example of rejected property documents shows that the source of the perceived harm could be older, predating the Soviet occupation. The fact that it was Lithuanian residents whose documents were for a while rejected, shows that the perceived harm could be associated with a part of the state’s population, and not only with external forces.

However, the report mentions that “[i]n May 1993, the government broadened the range of documents certifying property rights to the remaining immovable property in this region and allowed people who no longer retained such documents to prove their ownership in court.”⁶² According to Popovski, “[t]he LDDP [...] decided that ‘all different types of documents, with the holder’s name on it, issued between 1920–1939 are valid.’ The Sajudis government argued that the documents concerning land ownership should have been issued in 1940, the year after Lithuania regained the Vilnius region” (Popovski 2000: 118-119). Therefore, the more pragmatic position of the former communist-dominated government prevailed over the more nationally-oriented reformists. The above-quoted report states that discriminatory practices ceased and that persons were provided an instrument (the court appeal) to resolve their issues. However, although it is clear

⁶² Ibid.

that the issue was collective (the report discusses the effect that restitution process had on minorities in the region), the given tools allowed the resolution of problems on an individual level.

Six years later, on 25 September, 2003, the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities published its opinion on Lithuania. Here, the Committee attended to "the problems indicated in regard to the implementation of the law on the restitution of land (dating from 25 July 1991), which particularly affect persons belonging to national minorities living in the Vilnius area."⁶³ The document mentioned that in the view of representatives of the Polish minority, although the Restitution Law accords priority to returning land to its original owners, a significant number of plots of land were given to persons from other parts of Lithuania. The original owners, most of whom were Poles, meanwhile were still waiting to have their cases resolved. The Council's document stated that

*[t]he Advisory Committee is aware that these difficulties, which are often encountered in countries in transition, do not generally affect only persons belonging to national minorities. The Advisory Committee nonetheless urges the authorities to ensure that these persons do not suffer discrimination in the implementation of the legislation concerned and that solutions are found to those problems.*⁶⁴

Therefore, the report documented problems caused by the provision to allow the transfer of land to those who resided in territories other than those where land was owned previously. However, as presented in chapter 3, minorities residing in SEL experienced changes in their social status but did not migrate much from the region. Therefore, we can assume that initially, such provisions might have been less relevant to them. Yet, throughout restitution, they became relevant in a negative way when owners of the minority background experienced the effects of the transfer of land, as people from other parts of the country started moving their land rights to the region.

In its response, the Lithuanian government explained that restitution of real property at the time was underway and emphasised "that neither a person whose rights of ownership may be restored, nor the property or the procedure of restitution of the rights are in any way related to persons belonging to national minorities; i.e., the restoration of the rights to ownership is not related to a person's

⁶³ Council of Europe. 2003. "Opinion of Lithuania". URL: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008bed4>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

ethnicity.”⁶⁵ This is in accordance with the document analysis presented in the analytics of government part of this chapter (section on restitution’s *episteme*). Further, the response stated that “[t]he procedure and conditions of restoration of rights to ownership are being applied in the same manner everywhere in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania, regardless of whether a particular area is or used to be densely populated by a national minority.”⁶⁶ The government thereby made assurances that the same rules guiding the implementation of the restitution policy were applied countrywide, treating no regions with exceptions. Further, the government’s response noted that “[t]aking into account the fact that some citizens due to various circumstances failed to submit the necessary documents proving that they are descendants of the owner before the deadline expired, the deadline was extended till 31 December 2003.”⁶⁷ In other words, the government’s position was that the restitution was a colour-blind process, where every person was treated equally, irrespective of their ethnic background. The response emphasised the government’s goodwill shown to persons who ‘failed’ the requirements of the process. Thereby, the government implied that problems with land restitution had origins in individuals’ failures. This corresponds to the previously mentioned situation regarding the state’s decision to provide persons with individual instruments, e.g., court appeals, to solve their collective problems. Perhaps it would be possible to say that the privatization of land coincided with the privatization of responsibility for one’s success in the restitution process.

In their second opinion on Lithuania adopted on 28 February, 2008, the advisory committee noted the positive developments concerning the restitution process in relation to minority rights: “[t]he Advisory Committee was informed of the efforts made to accelerate the process of land restitution. In this respect, the Advisory Committee welcomes the adoption [...] of a Governmental programme aimed at the completion of the land reform and land restitution by the end of 2007 [...].”⁶⁸ However, despite this positive tone, the report also drew attention to the fact that the problems noted in the first monitoring cycle persisted.

⁶⁵ Council of Europe. 2003. “Comments of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Framework Convention) in the Republic of Lithuania”. URL: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008c951>

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Council of Europe. 2008. “Second Opinion on Lithuania”. URL: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008c1a6>

The report cited data provided by the Seimas Ombudsperson, according to which, while on average 55% of lands had been returned to their former owners, only 23% were restituted in the minority-populated Vilnius area. At the same time, the representatives of such national minorities as Poles and Tatars complained that plots of land in the region were further assigned “to persons from other regions of Lithuania who allegedly are not the former owners of the land in question.”⁶⁹ The report informed that “[t]he representatives of the Polish minority informed the Advisory Committee on some shortcomings that they considered likely, in the long-term, to give rise to changes in the ethnic composition of the population, and to have a negative effect on the preservation of minorities’ identities” and that it “could have a significant long-term impact on the composition of the population of the region” as well as “the participation of minorities in the decision-making”⁷⁰ process. Therefore, this suggests that certain minority-related restitution problems were stalled.

The Lithuanian government’s response to such concerns included restating that the land reform, initiated after the state declared its independence, was still underway:

[a]fter reestablishment of Lithuania’s independence, a land reform was started in Lithuania that continues up till now. The implementation of the land reform carried out on the basis of property restitution was started upon adoption by the Supreme Council of several laws defining the framework of the land reform in July 1991. These laws provided for the relocation of land, or the restitution of land in equivalent kind, which also remained in subsequent laws.

The relocation of land or the restitution of land in equivalent kind means that it is possible to relocate a land plot of equal value from the pool of free land, therefore, the land plots owned by devisees of the land held in their patrimony may be occupied by migrants only in the case that the responsible institutions which implemented the reform applied the requirements of laws in the wrong way.⁷¹

In other words, the government maintained that the design of the reform was without any deficiencies, and in case of problems, they were the result of the mistakes

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Council of Europe. 2008. “Comments of the government of Lithuania on the Second opinion of the Advisory committee on the implementation of the Framework convention for the protection of national minorities by Lithuania”. URL: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008f52b>.

made by particular institutions. This adds to the previously mentioned individual responsibility in submitting documents at the right time, which authorities viewed as a source of the limited progress of the restitution process in SEL.

Regarding the changes in the ethnic composition of the region's inhabitants, the government explained these changes in the following way:

[a] major part of the land of local residents has been sold, since with the improvement of the economic situation, a need to build private homes emerged. This need especially grew in the capital of Vilnius and its vicinities. Therefore, an increasing number of different nationality persons settle down in Vilnius district. Thus, the national situation of residents is gradually changing. The reasons of these changes are economic.⁷²

The government also noted that “the total plenitude of national minorities in Vilnius and its vicinities has not reduced during the last year.”⁷³ Therefore, the government suggested those changes in the ethnic composition of the region's population were due to residents' economic activities.

Here a short digression regarding the methodological treatment of secondary sources should be made. Both of these documents, the report and the official response, should be treated with a grain of scepticism. First, we can ask who has access to complain to international institutions. From the cited document we can see that the report represents minority political leaders' opinions. Therefore, one has no reason to doubt that the estimation of land restitution was provided by representatives of the minority's political leadership. Yet, at the same time, one does not have a serious reason to take their opinion regarding the course of land restitution in SEL for granted. Neither does one need to treat the position presented by the state's officials as objective. As mentioned in chapter 3, the suburbanization process which started with the arrival of independence had an ethnic character, when better educated and wealthier persons of Lithuanian background started moving to the adjacent territories of Vilnius city. Therefore, the argument that members of the minority sold their land upon a free contract, does not take into consideration the possibility that contracting parties might have been unequal (status and class-wise), and that this inequality might have impacted the contract.⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ As mentioned previously, restitution relied on several techniques – transferring land, expanding the list of types of applicants for land restitution, and methodologies on how to return the land in the former street-plot settlements. Implementing restitution this way created fertile ground for so called “conclusion purchasing” (Liet. “išvadų pirkimas”),

The estimations of the course of land restitution in SEL outlined in Frunda's report should be evaluated in the context of the rest of the data.

Nevertheless, one of the main conclusions that can be drawn from the above-quoted documents is that even though during the restitution process, aimed at undoing Soviet misdeeds and restoring justice, ethnic minorities were treated equally, such treatment, as revealed in the accounts provided by international observers, hurt minorities, whose members had tried to use the independence-brought-opportunity to get back their family's land which had been collectivized by the Soviets.⁷⁵ Such treatment provided no room for attending to problems specific to the region and its different social and/or ethnic groups.

when a profiteer would find an owner who has not yet had their land returned, and offer to buy the rights from him. Due to the complicated nature of the restitution process, minority members (but not only) would sell their rights to land or the land which had been given back to them. The price they would get paid for their land (rights) would be below market. However, by participating in these semi-legal economic activities, owners would get at least something. Yet, it would be a gross oversimplification to assume that people did this simply of their own free will.

⁷⁵ The fact that worse prepared citizens needed to participate in the restitution process on equal terms with others is reminiscent of what political theorists have called "inclusion without solidarity" - guaranteeing equal rights to participate in activities of market society (trade and consume), while at the same time staying indifferent to issues of disadvantage" (Kymlicka 2015: 7). Indeed, research on sovereignty and political belonging in post-Soviet Lithuania confirms that "exclusive inclusion" – a term used by anthropologists Neringa Klumbytė and Kristina Šliavaitė – of national (ethnic) minorities "played an important role in defining political belonging to a post-Soviet sovereign state" (2021: 1, my translation into English). By the term "exclusive inclusion", these authors mean, certain public discourses, policies or laws, which had "exclusive" effect on national minorities as their members were "categorized in terms of ethnic and social or political difference and attributed or declined specific rights" (Klumbytė and Šliavaitė 2021: 1, my translation into English). One example of exclusively inclusive state policies might be the state language policies, which had an exclusionary effect on "national minorities because they prioritize the majority language competence as a major linguistic principle for coexistence in society. Linguistic integration served as an exclusive inclusion of national minorities" (Klumbytė and Šliavaitė 2021: 3, my translation into English). This relates to the topic of historical justice for citizens of Lithuania, including members of its minorities. As demonstrated in the 3rd section of chapter 4, restitution sought to remedy injustice to all the owners who had suffered from land collectivization under Soviet rule. The laws that provided legal ground for such policies were indeed colour blind (with minor exceptions), and all the citizens were treated equally and inclusively. However, from the works of Lithuanian scholars we know that in the official narrative of Lithuania's history, the sufferings of the Lithuanian ethnic group receive greater

4.2.3 Cases When Ethnicity Was Explicitly Involved in Restitution Process

Further, I argue that despite the equal treatment assured in the state's laws regulating the restitution process, there were cases when it was possible to identify discriminations against Poles during the restitution process. Nevertheless, these cases were not systemic, they were rather exceptions than tendencies, and too much focus on them can overethnicize the whole picture of restitution in SEL.

It was previously mentioned that in the government's official responses to international reports, there were attempts to place responsibility on minority individuals for problems related to restitution. However, state officers also bore responsibility. As described in Chapter 3 (section 3.2), over the years of independence the process of restitution became more and more centralized, transferring issues related to restitution from the sphere of competence of municipal governments to the district governments and finally to the National Land Service at the Ministry of Agriculture. In 2001, Lithuanian authorities were considering territorial reforms of the state's administrative counties. The state was considering transferring some county competencies to municipalities and to merge counties into bigger administrative units. However, in 2001 a deputy governor of Vilnius County, Arvydas Klimkevičius, gave an interview to one of the major Lithuanian periodicals "Respublika", saying that some of the county competencies might be transferred to municipalities only after "certain processes are finished."⁷⁶ The article elaborated on Klimkevičius' position in the following way. In his opinion, the subtleties of the Vilnius region need to be taken into account when implementing land reform and education programs. Failure to assess these problems in the Vilnius region, unlike in other regions, may have negative political consequences. According to Klimkevičius, it will be possible to hand everything over to the municipality when there will be no problems with education in Eastern Lithuania in the Vilnius region.

mention that those of other ethnic groups. As argued by the historian Violeta Davoliūtė, the sufferings different citizens of Soviet Lithuania experienced during the years of occupation were nationalized after socialism. For instance, regarding the official policy of memory of deportations, the narrative of deportation in Lithuania is "Lithuanized" (Davoliūtė 2016). And although in 1941 members of other ethnic groups, e.g., Jews, experienced deportation as well, Davoliūtė has argued that in Lithuanian public life the historical experience of Lithuanian Jews is associated mostly with the Holocaust, and that of Lithuanians with deportations (Davoliūtė 2018). Therefore, it is quite possible that officially colour blind restitution policy might have had some ethnic blind spots and in this sense was marked by exclusion.

⁷⁶ Respublika, 2001, May 17. Genė Karlienė's article.

These statements show how a high-rank state officer treated land restitution and education issues as tied, suggesting that handing over restitution questions to the municipal sphere of competence should be done upon certain conditions. Knowing that Šalčininkai and Vilnius district municipalities were under the control of the Polish minority party, Klimkevičius' statement might be interpreted as a call to trade increased education in the Lithuanian language for a greater say in restitution to the minority-party-controlled municipal governments. The reason to interpret Klimkevičius' statement in this way lies in the fact that, as my experience studying Lithuanian Polish minority issues suggests, education in SEL is a highly politicized issue for both the Lithuanian majority and the Polish minority. Besides this, the article was shared with me by my expert informant, Zenon, who suggested that the article may help me to get a better understanding of the government's attitude towards minorities in the restitution process.

Zenon – a former civil servant/officer who was directly involved in the land restitution process between 2001 and 2004 – was rather critical about civil servants' role in restitution. He shared with me a draft of a speech given by him at the IV Congress of the Polish minority party, held on 16 June, 2001. The speech reflects Zenon's assessment and opinion of the situation as a specialist civil servant at the time:

[w]ith regard to civil servants undertaking agricultural reform (after all, the employees of the agricultural regulatory services are classified as civil servants in services), it should be noted that among them we will see the same people who worked for the previous government, most of whom have been practising agricultural reform for ten years. Each of them has their work style and their working methods. Many of them have one feature: to hinder rather than help people regain their patrimony. The working methods often used by such officials are very refined (my translation into English).⁷⁷

Zenon added that sometimes it was hard even for him to keep officials accountable:

[m]ost complaints related to land restitution come from Vilnius and Trakai districts, as well as Vilnius city residents. Some of these complaints, if addressed to me, end up on my desk. I will be frank, I do not always succeed in finding common ground with officials outside my administration who represent at all costs those who

⁷⁷ Here and further based on Dariusz Malinowski's translation into Lithuanian. My translations from Lithuanian into English.

refuse to agree with citizens' arguments and uphold their previous resolutions, even though the candidate is one hundred per cent right (my translation into English).

Yet, the problem was not only civil servants, but also a broader and systemic one. In Zenon's words:

[b]y the way, as many as 4210 persons (26,416 applicants) (sic) expressed a wish to transfer land to Vilnius district, 2245 persons (17 thousand 790 applicants from Trakai district) to Trakai district. A political solution is needed for all processes to be scrutinized. On the other hand, control can be carried out at the request of the inhabitants of the areas themselves.

The issue of financing agricultural reform. Vilnius County was poorly funded throughout the year, and today there is a chronic lack of funds for everything. Meanwhile, to prepare agricultural regulation projects for the street-plot settlements in Šalčininkai district, 1,800,000 litas alone is needed. Meanwhile, in the first half of this year, 3.5 million litas were allocated to the whole county' (my translation into English).

Therefore, the informant emphasized the need for greater scrutiny and monitoring in parts of what this research has defined as SEL, marked by the highest interest in transferring land as well as among the poorest financing of the restitution process when compared to other parts of the country. The speech mentions that greater control should be exercised by the locals, but towards the end, the text's author admits that the minority members' poor knowledge of the state language is a significant obstacle. As stated in the speech, since "the population of the province often demonstrates a low level of literacy it is powerless and unarmed against many hostile officials."

Yet, it is important to mention that in Zenon's view, part of the responsibility for the poor results regarding restitution should be taken by the regions' inhabitants:

[t]he process of land restitution also largely depends on the claimants themselves. Unfortunately, some of our people living in the Vilnius region sacredly believe in a nanny state and expect the favour and honesty of officials. And in life, the opposite is true. The best example of the mentality of a farmer in the Vilnius region is the Šalčininkai district, where the least amount of land has been returned so far, but it must be admitted that there are also the fewest related complaints (Zenon, Interview no. 4).⁷⁸

⁷⁸ English translations of excerpts from the research interviews here and below are mine.

Therefore, Zenon emphasized the responsibility locals should take in their affairs.

Further, I tell a story which may serve as a hint that both officials and the local population share responsibility for carrying out restitution in SEL in a way that benefited local landowners. The first part of this story – the officer’s responsibility – leads back to the above-mentioned report which touched on some of the restitution problems related to the expansion of the borders of Vilnius city. The city’s local government claimed the expansion was needed for the development of the city. However, according to Polish NGOs, e.g., the Union of Poles, the land was given to members of parliament as well as members of the army and judiciary for individual construction, which made the local community feel cheated (Popovski 2002: 119). A similar problem relates to the unlawful activities of the government’s commissioner in the Vilnius district. As previously mentioned, in the late 80s – early 90s, some members of the Polish minority’s elite attempted to establish Polish territorial autonomy based on Vilnius and Šalčininkai municipal districts. Therefore, the Lithuanian government dissolved the ‘rebellious’ municipal councils and replaced them with the central government’s appointed commissionaires. In the Vilnius district, such a commissioner was Artūras Merkys. More than two decades later, during a conference called “Challenges to the state’s territorial integrity twenty years ago and today”, organized in the Lithuanian Parliament, Merkys recalled the process of land restitution in the Vilnius district:

[o]n the one hand, there was an urgent need to gather the owners with proper documents and return the land to them. On the other hand, before the Soviets expropriated the land, street-plot settlements had still existed in the Vilnius district, and now there was neither reason nor possibility of restoring them. Thirdly, the situation was complicated by the fact that there were many collective gardens in the Vilnius district that needed land; moreover, many plots were public land—settlements, roads, yards, railways, and so on. In addition, the Soviet era, and especially the creators of autonomy, had yet another powerful spring compressed: the growing capital’s expansion and construction of individual houses had been artificially halted. The work was started by allocating individual plots to the city residents through the administration of the government’s commissioner, and to locals—through the elderships⁷⁹. During the 1.5 years of direct governance of Vilnius district [...], over 5000 plots were formed and distributed for individual construction, of which about 2000 were distributed by autonomous elderships. [...] I understand why we were criticized by the autonomists, who categorically did not

⁷⁹ Eldership – an administrative division which is specific to Lithuania.

*want new, independent, and non-autonomist residents to move in (my translation into English).*⁸⁰

Thereby, during an official event in the state's parliament, A. Merkys has indirectly admitted his illegal activities, for in the name of the fight against the "autonomists", he distributed land to Lithuanian settlers from Vilnius city, while local people, most of whom were Poles, needed to wait to have their property returned. During the research, my attention was drawn to the activities of Merkys by my informant Zenon.

Decisions made by Merkys led to increased tensions in the region, which sometimes reached dangerous levels of escalation. Vesna Popovski mentions an incident in the village of Gudeliai, during of which, as described by one Lithuanian Polish MP Artur Plokszto, cited by her,

the Army came and started shooting at the villagers who complained because they had heard that some houses were to be built in their village. After this event, which the Army described as 'manoeuvres', the 'people from the city' started to build houses because they had been issued permits during the Sajudis government (Popovski 2000: 119).

What is interesting is that Plokszto describes the wrongdoers as "people from the city" and not as Lithuanians. Thereby, he drew the line between the two conflicting sides along the rural-urban divide and not along ethnic lines. This supports the idea that, like the Polish minority, Lithuanians too should not be seen as an internally homogeneous ethnic group, and that in the course of restitution neither the majority nor the minority acted as single coherent groups.

In one follow-up letter, I asked Zenon whether he knew about the incident mentioned in Popovski's work. He sent me a link to an article, where the story of Gudeliai was described from the perspective of people who participated in community resistance to the above-mentioned illegal activities.⁸¹ Situated on

⁸⁰ Alkas.lt.2011. "A.Merkys.DirectgovernanceinVilniusdistrictandunfinishedworks" (Lith. "A. Merkys. Tiesioginis valdymas Vilniaus rajone ir nebaigti darbai"). URL: <https://alkas.lt/2011/09/22/a-merkystiesioginis-valdymas-vilniaus-rajone-ir-nebaigti-darbai/>. The speech was read at the conference "Challenges to the Integrity of the State Twenty Years Ago Today" held at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 21 September 2011 to discuss the problems of south-eastern Lithuania.

⁸¹ Here and further kurierwilenski.lt 5 April, 2013, Stanisław Tarasiewicz, "Gudele - the story of one cross" (Pl. "Gudele — historia jednego krzyża"). URL: <https://kurierwilenski.lt/2013/04/05/gudele-historia-jednego-krzyza-2/>.

picturesque hills surrounding the local lake. Gudeliai is one of many settlements near Vilnius. At the beginning of the 1990s, members of the state's new elite, e.g., prosecutors, government officials, military officers, police commissioners and other representatives of the Lithuanian government, started building their houses in the settlement as, in 1992, Artūras Merkys had arranged over 60 hectares of land in Gudeliai for this construction. At first, these plans were objected to by the local government because it opposed the transfer of land for the construction before land restitution was finished in the area. But this did not prevent the construction from starting. As described in the article, published in 2013 by a local Lithuanian Polish newspaper, "the sense of the harm and injustice suffered was above the innate humility of the peasants near Vilnius. So, they decided to fight" (here and further – my translation into English).

The article mentions Mr. Valerian and his neighbour Józef Korsak, who appealed to various officers, demanding that the case be investigated and the government's decision be revoked as illegal. But their efforts were fruitless. Further, the article mentioned a Mrs. Eulalia, who, inspired by her husband's stubbornness, started contacting local people to convince them to resist the construction. Acting as community organizers, they achieved this, as the article describes, "[f]rom then on, every time bulldozers and excavators went into the field, an alarm was raised in the village and people stood in the way of the machines, got into the baskets of excavators. And so, day after day, night after night. Construction works were blocked. However, no good news was coming from the offices." The newcomers, whose plans were hampered by the protests of locals, started organizing too, and as a result on April 27, 1993, a clash between the locals and new settlers took place. Police and army intervened. According to the article, police arrested Mr. Valerian and some other participants, "while the soldiers, shooting in the air in a row, pressed on the protesters."

After those events, the case of Gudeliai's inhabitants became famous all over the country and abroad, and authorities, according to Mrs. Eulalia, "had no choice but to withdraw." Protestors were taken to court. However, it was found that the decision to transfer the plot of land for the construction of houses in Gudeliai was illegal, and the court ordered the work to be suspended. Mrs. Eulalia's husband, Mr. Romanowski, also mentioned that "Then the land was returned to us very quickly. We had no problems, and no one told us that any documents or something else was missing." He also expressed his belief "that the example of land restitution in Gudeliai proves that most of the problems faced by local Poles applying for land return are artificially created by Lithuanian officials." The article also mentions that after the victory in the struggle for their land, the Romanowski family, according to the old Polish custom, placed a cross in front of the entrance to Gudeliai.

To sum up, cases of outright discrimination existed, yet they should be seen rather as exceptions than trends. Moreover, the mentioned instances of conflict, it seems, took place between members of minority and majority ethnic groups, yet the participants also framed the happenings as a conflict between townspeople and local peasants, or a conflict between the elite and powerless ordinary people.

So far, the argument that the land and land restitution policies might have been somewhat nationally embedded was supported with data from various secondary sources. As previously mentioned, the information provided in these sources should be approached with a degree of scepticism and treated as suggestive. However, the argument finds support in data collected during some of my expert interviewees of Lithuanian origin, some of whom acknowledged that during the implementation of the restitution policy there were explicit attempts to limit the Polish minority's rights to have land returned in the territories where they or their relatives once possessed it.

During my interviews, I asked my informants to share their opinion about the above-mentioned idea of Sirutavičius (2017) that one way to pacify the Poles and ensure their support for Lithuania's independence and simultaneously to dissuade them from the idea of Polish territorial autonomy was through successful land reform. To my surprise one of my informants – Povilas, a scientist and former state officer responsible for implementing the restitution policy – answered that “[a]t the beginning, it was the opposite.” He explained that because it was thought that there were too many Poles, there was a need to have more Lithuanians settling in, therefore “there was some document or a piece of legislation prepared... I do not recall, but I know that it had started to be implemented... to allocate 2 hectares of land per person.” I asked whether these people would be Lithuanians, to which my interviewee answered: “Lithuanians, who were moving to the territory around Riešė. Later there were disputes, and perhaps the decisions were annulled...” I asked whether this might be related to the decisions made by the government's appointee in the Vilnius district, and my interviewee answered that “it might be”.

The interviewee was not the only person who shared a concern that in some cases the restitution policy was mixed with attempts at Lithuanization of the south-eastern region. At the beginning of an interview with Kristupas, a Lithuanian activist working in an organization aimed at defending the rights of landowners, he told me, without being directly asked for it, that some disgraceful things occurred during the restitution process. Kristupas gave an example: one high-ranking official at the Special Investigation Service once told him that the instructions for how to conduct the restitution policy (e.g., transferring land) included the plan “how to take Poland”, by which, according to the research participant, the officer had meant the “Vilnius region”.

Finally, the same story was reported by another interviewee, Teodor – a 53-year-old former journalist and minority politician from the Vilnius district. Well aware of the minority problems, including issues related to land restitution, he explained that in the Vilnius district the restitution was marked by serious tensions, because “although it should not be, it was a national issue... that Poles felt discriminated against by our government.” Teodor added that people “saw what was happening, they saw the injustice. They saw that their land, the land that they had possessed, they were not able to get it back. And those who had not had it, they were getting it free of charge and building homes for themselves.” The informant added:

I will quote to you [the above-mentioned activist protecting the rights of land owners], whom you mentioned. Once, on TV, he said that the amendment on real estate, which turned land into movable property, had been passed specifically because of the Vilnius district, so that influential people could make a profit. On the other hand, maybe he didn't say it this way, but I think it was an attempt, not by everyone, but first and foremost by the Conservatives, to just sort it out in some way too... Using administrative means, they wanted to disperse the densely populated national minority, so that there would not be too many Poles in the Vilnius region and it would be possible to relocate more people of Lithuanian origin to this region. They pursued two goals, both a commercial one, and politicians had a political goal... They thought that if the people here... if the councils did not govern either, maybe there would be some autonomy related things here... Maybe, I think so. Although it is known that, afterwards, there were no such dangers here. The political issue and the commercial one got intertwined. That's why... the main reason why it all happened (Teodor, interview no. 19).

Therefore, the premise that the process of land restitution in SEL might have been affected by national ideals was supported by some of the experts of Lithuanian and Polish origins interviewed for this research. Finally, the premise that nationalizing state practices might have been an outcome of the restitution reform initiated by the post-socialist government as an attempt to reprogram the Soviet state and create a land market, finds a grain of support in the above-presented account of the minority politician from Vilnius district.

To sum up, although it can be said that restitution in particular, and land issues in general, were shrouded in the idea of a nation, the influence that national ideas and sentiment had on the restitution process were sporadic and not systemic, as the laws did guarantee equal opportunities to all owners irrespective of their ethnic background. Equal treatment was tied to the idea of remedying injustices wrought by the Soviet government and undoing its legacies, e.g., collectivisation. Despite

some sporadic instances of unequal and unfair treatment (e.g., rejecting property documents issued by interwar Poland, distributing plots for private construction while restitution in territories surrounding the capital was not finished), the restitution process was meant to be colour blind. Moreover, as some of the sources analysed in this chapter and reflecting the minority's perspective on restitution suggest, the conflict between members of Lithuania's majority and minority populations would be framed as between local "peasants" or "farmers" and civil servants abusing their powers. Although restitution was embedded in the idea of the nation, the idea about possible outright discrimination on an ethnic basis was expressed only by a few of my expert informants. The variety of categories used to frame the restitution process from the minority members' point of view, as well as the tendency that nationalization, in Brubaker's sense, occurs on the mezzo level, will be demonstrated in the following chapter. The following chapter deals with personal accounts of the restitution process provided by people who had sought to have their or their family's land returned. Their stories will serve as a base for evaluating the findings of the analysis of secondary data which has been outlined in this chapter.

5. NEGOTIATING RESTITUTION (BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVE)

This chapter has several aims. First, to analyse the research data collected through interviews with informants who sought to have land restored in SEL, to find out whether and how ethnicity is constructed and employed in personal accounts of land restitution. Second, to map the effects land restitution in SEL had on the reification of group boundaries regarding the ethnic majority and minority groups (with a focus on the Polish minority group) in south eastern Lithuania. The ethnicity part of the nexus is examined by taking a relational approach (Barth 1969), and the task of defining ethnicity is left to the research participants themselves. This is done on the assumption that ethnicity should be viewed as a product of social interactions, in the case of this research, structured by property (land). To avoid methodological nationalism, ethnicity is understood as a cognitive category (Brubaker 2004). This choice makes the research more attentive to whether my informants themselves used the category of ethnicity to frame the restitution process.

Several arguments are presented in this chapter. First, I argue that based on the experiences of the participants in the restitution process that were interviewed for this research, political decisions in SEL regarding the restitution policy led to the re-emergence of pre-modern forms of land management. The land propertization process (Sikor et al. 2017) in turn led to the development of what K. Verdery has called the plasticity of land (1994, 2003) during post-socialism. Moreover, the outcomes of the restitution process in this region contradicted initial policy aims, e.g., to eliminate collective property by reinstating the institution of private property. Second, although the process of land restitution in SEL was framed by its minority members in ethnic terms, ethnicity did not appear as a master category. Moreover, ethnicity emerged as a multi-layered category, as minority members of the restitution process emphasised such different aspects of ethnicity as kinship and localness. Third, members of the ethnic minority elite tended to support the process of land restitution through the ethnic prism more than ordinary participants in the restitution process. Nevertheless, the multi-layeredness of ethnicity as observed in the restitution process together with the attempts at such a framing by the minority political elite amounted to a limited impact on the mobilization of the group on ethnic grounds.

5.1 Land Restitution as Process: Elasticity of Land

Further to the above, in this section I examine the outcomes of post-socialist transformation with respect to land restitution in Lithuania's south-eastern region in what once used to be street-plot settlements. This research reveals that land restitution in these settlements comprises one of the most complicated cases of post-socialist decollectivisation in Lithuania. For this reason, former street-plot settlement cases of restitution are here treated separately. Further, such cases can be approached as both an unexpected product of post-socialist transformation as well as a factor that impacted land restitution in (south-eastern) Lithuania. The restitution in these settlements marks land's elasticity (Verdery 1994, 2003), visible through the accounts of restitution as described from the natives' point of view.

The process of land restitution was initiated by the independent government of Lithuania, and it had unexpected results in some parts of the country. One of these was the re-emergence of street-plot settlements. Further, I explain how the restitution process brought these settlements back from the nonexistence they had been relegated to by Soviet collectivisation. As shown in section 4.2, restitution was shaped by the idea of restoration of the state's independence (hence a mention in the 1997 version of the Restitution Law's preamble declaring the law was passed by taking into consideration "the limit of 150 hectares set by the land reform in 1922-1940"). With respect to property, the restoration of independence suggested a return to the status quo before the Soviet occupation and collectivisation. But in SEL this meant a return to the status quo as it was during Polish rule. As mentioned, because SEL was under Poland's rule, the Lithuanian land reform, which among its many aims sought the elimination of the street-plot settlements – a legacy of the 16th-century VoloK reform – bypassed the region. Once the political decision was made to restore land ownership rights and return land in kind to persons whose land had been collectivised during the Soviet period, the legacy of street-plot settlements re-emerged.

How exactly did these settlements shape the restitution process in SEL? The legacy was a problem to policymakers as well as those who planned its implementation. During an interview with Povilas⁸² – one of the architects of restitution policy – it was explained to me that the street-plot settlements posed a problem because of different land management legacies – one that remained from interwar Lithuania and a second that was characteristic of interwar Poland:

⁸² All names of the research participants here (and previously) have been changed for the reason of anonymity.

P: ... we could have done it according to the old order... to divide, but then we had to do it first under the old order and then ... then to do it under the current restitution order...

Researcher (Hereinafter – R): By 'the old order' you mean the 1922 land reform in Lithuania?

P: Yes, according to that reform, but in the Vilnius region. It should have been done... it was not even started according to the Lithuanian law, it was done according to the Polish law. Hence, in a word, neither this nor the other way fit, that's why that methodology was created (Povilas, interview no. 9).

The methodological guidelines were prepared to resolve issues related to the restoration of ownership rights to land formerly owned in such settlements. As a result of these, the street-plot settlements would become a source of problems to policy planners.

To those who sought to have land restored, the problem took another shape. A total of seven of my informants had land which was to be resituated in former street-plot settlements (Appendix, Table 1 and Table 3). The hardships that occurred while trying to get back land in former street-plot settlements were well described by one of my informants Sara, an elderly woman and a former pedagogue from Vilnius who was seeking the restoration of her family's land in a territory which before collectivisation had been a street-plot village and which during the Soviet period was incorporated into Vilnius city, whom I had a chance to interview at the beginning of my fieldwork.

The interviewee contacted me via Facebook saying that she had an interesting story to tell and complaining that for years she had been trying to get her land back but authorities kept giving it back only piecemeal. At some point in our conversation, she said: "But I would like to get back to politics. What should I think of the state which whipped me back into the collective farm? I don't know who and where is the director here, perhaps he sits in the Parliament if such laws are being passed?"



Illustration 1: street-plot settlement, mid. XVI cent. Taručionys village (Alytus dist.), 1845.
Source: Aruodai information system for Lithuanian heritage⁸³

To understand what the informant meant by saying that the state had put her back into a collective farm, we need to look at the methodology prepared for land restitution in street-plot settlements.

The land once owned in these settlements was in the form of long and narrow plots (Lith. "rėžiai"), characteristic of these types of villages. These plots, claimed by people whose parents had owned them before collectivization, were small and inappropriate for farming (some of my informants would point out that, tied in such a plot, cows could easily enter neighbours' plots). However, some applicants would insist on getting exactly these plots of land, because they knew it belonged to them. Perhaps in the uncertain times of transformation, such knowledge was an important thing. Such applicants were older, remembering where their land was and insisting on getting what was theirs. However, these applicants would often have no documents stating exactly where their land was and so were unable to establish borders of individual land plots. Land surveyors would return land in former street-plot settlements in the following way: they would put the land

⁸³ The illustration is taken from: Features of Merkinė history [Lith. Merkinės istorijos bruožai]. Vilnius, 2004: 176. URL: <http://old.aruodai.lt/archeologijal/aprasai/kaimaviete.htm>

together into one huge parcel (e.g., 140 hectares), and make all the applicants, who might number fifty former inhabitants of the village or their offspring, into co-owners of this parcel. Technically, the land would be returned and land surveyors would be able to mark it as another resolved case. Practically, no one would know where exactly their land was within the parcel. In case someone would like to sell their parcel, they would need to get permission from the other co-owners. Such was the situation described by my informants – both experts and those seeking restitution.

As is well-known, post-socialist development was not a linear process. Sometimes, regarding value re-creation, decollectivisation meant demodernisation – without access to modern farming, people returned to traditional farming methods (for example, without being able to buy a tractor they returned to manual land cultivation) (Verdery 2003). In the case of the restitution of land in former street-plot settlements, we can observe different types of demodernization: the process whose main purpose was the restoration of the institution of private property, resulted in the reintroduction of some sort of collective property, where people owned not the actual land but only some rights to it. It was this situation which some of my interviewees, like the informant above quoted, referred to as the “return of collective farms”.

Simultaneously, the results of land restitution in street-plot settlements are reminiscent of what Verdery described as the elasticity of land (1994, 2003). As in Lithuania, the process of restitution in Romania sought to recreate the situation of property ownership as it was before collectivisation, but now for a society that existed several decades later. According to Verdery,

[b]y erasing the grid of property from the landscape, by removing the boundaries that immobilized land – by removing, as it were, the tacks that held the placemats to specific sites on the table – socialism engendered a landscape with elastic qualities. Given the political decision to restore prior ownership rather than simply to distribute land, this elasticity kindles dissension and opens wide spaces for manoeuvre by the village and commune elites charged with re-imposing a grid (1994: 1073)

She spoke of “land that moves, stretches, evaporates – of land that acts” (1994: 1073), and argued that besides being fixed, land can be elastic. Some of the reasons behind the post-socialist elasticity are rooted in the behaviour of the previous regime with respect to property. According to Verdery, in communist Romania, the government

treated it as a movable rather than an immovable good, as aggregate quantities rather than concrete qualities. Abstracting ownership from particular clods of earth

into figures on paper, they shuffled those figures insouciantly among social actors. Land under socialism became a matter of totals manipulated in the interest of "the whole," irrespective of the particularities of prior ownership rights (not to mention those of plan-resistant local soils) (1994: 1093)

Yet, there was an important difference regarding the enactment of elasticity between the restitution processes in Lithuania and Romania. As noted by Verdery,⁸⁴ in Romania, the politics of elasticity was authorized by local and commune commissions, whose members "look for hidden land, hide land themselves and stuff claimants into the rubber sack of the state farm corporation, adjudicate among competing claims from past exchanges, profit from ambiguities in the distinctions between remnant state property and the property of disbanded collectives, and have to cope somehow when the limits of elasticity are reached" (1994: 1101). Commission members could benefit from the distorted distribution of knowledge about where and what things were possessed in the past. They could influence the decision-making process by "suddenly 'remembering' that X never had land in the field whose ownership Y is contesting with him, and they can occupy lands (rather than pool them for redistribution) because they know where there are fields that no one (or no one important) is claiming" (Verdery 1994: 1101). Verdery concludes that the blame for corrupting the process of decollectivisation often fell

⁸⁴ In her book *The Vanishing Hectare* (2003) (particularly the chapter "How Hectares Vanished: Decollectivisation in Vlaicu") and in her article "Seeing like a mayor: Or, how local officials obstructed Romanian land restitution" (2002), Verdery argued for seeing like a mayor rather than the state, and suggested that decollectivisation in Romania was not hampered by the state run by former communists interested in preserving the former regime. According to Verdery the story of land reform carried out in Romania reveals the difference between the laws passed by the central government, and the way these laws were implemented by the local government. The reform was hampered by the fact that after the Communist party lost the monopoly on power, there was no authority that could establish order. The collapse of central power resulted in a void that was filled by lower-level branches of authority, which, already somewhat autonomous during socialism, now gained even more independence. According to Verdery, the erosion of the central government's authority was only exacerbated by the local government, which was responsible for the implementation of the restitution policy, and the local government in fact impeded restitution policy in Romania. Here the story of post-socialist decollectivisation in Lithuania diverges from that of Romania's, for as mentioned in chapter 3, restitution in Lithuania was taken out of the hands of local government and transferred to the competence of counties and later to the NLS under the Ministry of Agriculture. Thereby, "mayors", including those in municipalities governed by minority parties, had limited means to foster restitution in their respective regions.

on members of the commission who were too well-positioned not to take advantage of their situation and therefore “[t]he transformation of land in Romania parallels the transformation of Soviet-style socialism overall in that the most valuable asset is political capital: a position of authority and accompanying connections can be used to acquire economic resources” (1994: 1101). From Verdery’s analysis we can conclude that, although the elasticity of land originated in communist policies, the conditions set by the new governments of the independent post-socialist states led to policies which furthered the elastic treatment of land, even though, as described in chapter 3, and in contrast to the situation in Romania, local governments in Lithuania had limited space for manoeuvre to influence restitution policy.

In post-socialist Lithuania, elasticity manifested in several ways. First, it occurred through turning land into a movable object, as described in chapters 3 and 4 (see the section on the techné dimension of restitution). As demonstrated in these chapters, some of the provisions within the 1991 law “On the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property” provided for the possibility to move rights over land. Although this law allowed moving claims over land from where it was once possessed to a place where at the time of restitution one resided, later, as a result of the 1993 amendments passed by the former communists who had returned to power, the law allowed for compensation “with a plot of vacant land equal in value from the state land fund (land is returned in equivalent kind)”,⁸⁵ in case a person did not want to acquire the land where it was once possessed nor in the area where they resided. Thereby, the restriction of transference of one’s land ownership rights was lifted, and it was possible to make claims on land irrespective of where one lived. The next government, dominated by the right-wing parties, amended the law on restitution again, but the provision allowing the transfer of land remained. According to Norkus (2014), this provision benefited townspeople, as it allowed them to exchange land they had inherited in various parts of Lithuania for land closer to commercially more attractive parts of Lithuania, such as the capital Vilnius and its surrounding districts. This is reminiscent of Burneika and Ubarevičienė’s (2016) analysis presented in chapter 3, where the authors suggest that the suburbanization of districts surrounding Vilnius has an ethnic dimension, with wealthier Lithuanians pushing out the region’s rural inhabitants who often tend to be ethnic minority members living in the suburbs.

⁸⁵ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 1993. “On Supplementing and Amending the “Law on the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property”” (Lith. “Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos įstatymo “Dėl piliečių nuosavybės teisių į išlikusį nekilnojamąjį turtą atstatymo tvarkos ir sąlygų” papildymo ir pakeitimo”) (No. I-229). URL: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.5546?jfwid=fhhu5mqv8>.

In both cases, we can see that the winners of these processes are townspeople, predominantly of Lithuanian origin.

However, the elasticity of land was particularly characteristic of land restored in former street-plot settlements. As mentioned, the restitution of land in such areas had resulted in the re-emergence of some sort of collective ownership. In practice, this often meant that land was returned as a merely potential property: the land was both returned and not, because on one hand the ownership rights were restored, while on the other hand people were not able to use these rights because they did not own the land as a clearly delineated personal possession. The following story told by one of my informants, who had sought to have land restored in a former street-plot settlement, well illustrates the aforementioned virtuality of land.

Wiktor – a late-middle-aged man, a former doctor and an active member of the local Polish community – met me at his place in Vilnius, where we sat to talk about his experience with land restitution. His wife later joined us for the conversation. I was recommended to meet Wiktor by his brother, whom I had met in Poland where he lived. The brother explained that restitution is a family matter, and as Wiktor lives in Lithuania, he took the whole issue into his hands. Wiktor's wife, as I observed, assists him in his struggle with various bureaucrats and state officials over the restoration of ownership rights. When in the early 90s Wiktor submitted the documents for land restitution, the answer he received from state institutions was that the land in question had already been legally acquired by another person. The land Wiktor tried to get back was at a former street-plot settlement which over time had become incorporated into the territory of Vilnius city. The state institutions argued that Wiktor was not able to make claims for the land because he was not able to describe the borders of his plot. As Wiktor explained, no proper land reform was carried out in the region before the war and landowners were requested to provide documents that could prove their rights to the land. This was a typical problem faced by many of my informants. During the interwar period, the order of tsarist times still applied, when the landlord would allocate a certain area of land to the village and the area would be owned by all the inhabitants of the village. And although every person knew where the borders of their own plot were, these parcels were not documented. More than fifty years later, during decollectivization, this still posed a problem for people like Wiktor. Land restitution started in 1991. The rules on how to return land in former street-plot settlements were passed by the state several years later. During this period, people like Wiktor lost time, as they were not able to participate in the restitution process.

During our conversation, Wiktor expressed regret about this because at the beginning of restitution, between 1989-1991, the Vilnius district which was formed based on Wiktor's street-plot settlement was still not heavily urbanized:

“[s]uch densely built neighbourhoods did not exist yet. However, it was decided that [restitution] in the areas where new constructions were taking place was not allowed. However, the entire vacant area was to be divided among those applicants who applied for the entire village.” We can assume that the decisions explained by Wiktor were due to the government’s preference for the city’s development. Wiktor expressed his negative opinion that the territory of the former village was built upon between 1991-1993, that is, before the special methodology for street-plot settlements was prepared and before people were able to get back their land. As Wiktor explained, in the case of their village, 50 ares of land was divided among 200 “applicants” and “the formerly owned land is being handed out to us in square meters.” Wiktor expressed his amazement that the officials responsible for restitution had not been able to find the previous owners of these tiny pieces of land which later were offered to other people. Again, this corresponds to Verdery’s insights on vanishing hectares in post-socialist Romanian restitution. However, Wiktor said, “the strips suddenly appear somewhere. Since at the beginning it was not possible to plan everything ... perhaps ... and what they created was virtual property.” When I asked Wiktor to explain what he meant by “virtual property” he asked his wife to bring a document from the NLS and give it to me.

The document was a 2018 decision stating that the institution “decides to restore property rights to the share of immovable property which equals to 0.0018 hectares of land and belongs to the citizen X and the value of which is 86 euro.” After I finished reading the document out loud, the research participant drew my attention to the fact that what he had was only the property right, not the property. To my interviewee, the message which the document sent was the following: “what I have in this plot of land is only the right to land, not the land”. Although such a description was given only by Wiktor, it also applied to other informants and their stories of land restitution in former street-plot settlements. Wiktor’s wife explained that due to the absence of documents the NLS cannot tell where the borders of those 18 square meters should be drawn. Another parcel to which Wiktor’s rights were restored was equal to 3 square meters, while in total he claims one hectare of land in what is now Vilnius city.

Finally, a controversial aspect of the perceived return of kolkhoz should be mentioned again. Indeed, due to its specific nature, many informants framed land restitution in former street-plot settlements as the return of kolkhoz, where people were forced into collective ownership. Sara was among the first persons to share their land restitution story with me. She described part of her experience in restitution as a return to “a big kolkhoz.” During the conversation, Sara told me that her case was complicated by the fact that there were many applicants for the restoration of ownership rights in her former street-plot settlement. She mentioned

another former street-plot settlement, Buchta, which today is a part of Vilnius and where one of my informants, Lucja – an approximately forty-year-old woman, a Lithuanian Pole from Vilnius who suggested meeting for an interview at a Polish restaurant – tried to have her land rights restored: “[a]nd here it’s a street plot one... and you know, a feature of the street plot village is... It’s good when there are fifty or twenty heirs... some villages are dying... or, for example, there was Buchta here, near Vilnius, by the Gariūnai market... so there were few of them [applicants], they have been handed out... they sat down and that was that.”

The “kolkhoz” metaphor was used not only by informants who had sought land restitution, but also by those minority public figures with expertise in restitution issues. During the interview with Zenon, he explained the nature of the problem people faced when trying to reclaim land in former street-plot settlements in the following way:

to restore land ownership in a street plot settlement... it is possible to make a single project, say, according to the village. But the decision must be made by the institution... [pause] although, in general, according to the legal requirements regulating the land reform, the area needs to be cadastral. Well, but if you take a village in, say... even if the land is restored in a cadastral area, the surveyor still goes through the villages and investigates. Thus, the problem in a street plot settlement is ... where there were already clear plans and parcels, not plots, where people would provide documents and would make a claim ‘my land is here’. The surveyor would measure according to those borders as precisely as possible, would prepare the documents, and a person would get back their land without problems. And here it was more like a collective farm ... all the people from that village needed to be gathered (Zenon, interview no. 4).

Finally, Lucja used somewhat similar rhetoric in describing her restitution case. One of the ways to compensate people for those cases when it was not possible to return land in kind was to provide them with financial compensation. However, this would normally be very small. Lucja called such compensation a deprivation of land:

[w]ho is clairvoyant among us? By 2003, 9 ares had been returned to [my] mother. Mom knew there was available land and didn’t want to write [the letter]. However, since she had not written it then, today she cannot ask for anything. Although there is enough land in the Vilnius district. Lithuania wants to announce that it has returned the land. For money. Which means that it simply took the land away. Land tax are, usually, calculated according to the market price [smiling] I am

angry, but there's nothing to do. I am still hoping that a more humane law will be passed (Lucja, interview no. 29).

Further, she compared the restitution process to the second nationalization of land:

during the restitution, letters were being sent. A citizen could express their will to transfer the land from the city to the district. With such a letter, one needed to address the Vilnius City Land Management Department, where the letter came from in the first place. A person could express such will until 2003. Had they done so, they could have transferred the land to Šakiai, Tauragė, where ever there would be vacant land. But if a citizen had not written such a letter, then they are, presently, not able to do anything. [...] The state came up with the idea that the compensation for 1 ha of land in Vilnius was 3 thousand euros. 1 are there costs a lot more. To me, it is another land nationalization (Lucja, interview no. 29).

To sum up, the land restitution process in SEL meant the re-emergence of such types of land management as street-plot settlements. This was due to the political decision to return property rights to the situation which had preceded the Soviet occupation. The re-emergence of street-plot settlements impeded and slowed down the restitution process. At the same time, in combination with legal contrivances for turning land into movable assets, it serves as an example of the post-socialist elasticity of land, as described by Verdery (1994, 2003). It seems that post-socialist land restitution had become a continuation of the processes initiated by the Soviet collectivisation. Verdery assumed that the roots of the elasticity of land should be looked for in the communists' treatment of land as a movable object. Surprisingly, the same treatment of land became characteristic of post-socialist governments seeking to expunge the Soviet legacy. The decision to allow transference of land could be interpreted as a prime example of such treatment (and a source of the elasticity of land) in post-socialist Lithuania. Restitution of land in former street-plot settlement and its unintended results, including the re-emergence of a sort of collective ownership and virtual property, serves as a good example of the elasticity of land that was characteristic of SEL in particular.

However, the restitution of land in street-plot settlements had a further ethnic dimension, because due to previously mentioned reasons (Chapter 3), such settlements were inhabited by people of Polish origin. Therefore, it is possible to assume that land restitution in such territories negatively affected the life chances of minority members more than people in other parts of the country, who were predominantly members of the majority ethnic group. Yet, the question is whether

and to what degree land restitution was interpreted through an ethnic lens or whether, to use Brubaker's terminology, it was seen among minority members of the region as "nationalizing".

5.2 Constructing Restitution: Ethnicity as *the* Frame and *a* Frame

The present section argues that throughout the interviews with people who sought to get back land in SEL, ethnicity emerged as one possible frame through which to interpret people's personal restitution experiences. Understood as a cognitive category in the sense that it was used to interpret experiences of the surrounding world and its processes, ethnicity was used to frame the process of restitution which had lasted in some cases for as long as three decades, yet it did not appear as a master category. Below, I demonstrate that although some of my informants interpreted land restitution through an ethnic lens, to other informants ethnicity was either not important or important only in certain respects.

Before embarking on further investigation into these issues, I want to briefly discuss several aspects that complicated the bottom-up part of this research, which was based on interviews with those who had sought land restitution. First of all, we should acknowledge that propertizing projects (Sikor et al. 2017) took time and were painful. To many of my informants, land restitution was a long and painful process. Consider the above-quoted informant, who complained that for her land restitution meant a return to what she perceived as a collective farm. In the middle of our conversation, she acknowledged that the topic of land restitution is taboo at her home because she had suffered too much from the topic to talk about it any more. She admitted that before meeting me she had inspected my Facebook profile. Only after finding that we had "common friends" did she decide that it was safe to talk about these issues with me.

Similarly frustrating was the restitution case of Jadwiga. I had met her through her daughter, whom I knew from one of my previous research projects on Lithuanian Poles. Jadwiga, a retired woman from Vilnius, had been trying for a long time to get back her land in a settlement which over time had become a part of Vilnius. This settlement too was once a street-plot settlement. According to Jadwiga, those who were a bit more assured (Lith. jargon "naglesnis") or capable of hiring a better advocate managed to get back their land quicker:

[y]ou know, some people shouted, some cursed in the room, Jesus... those who were more assertive... And one of our neighbours took the case to the court. Yet, he hired a good advocate and got back the land among the first ones. He was more orderly. Later, interestingly, in Nevėžis some gardens belonged to the kolkhoz. Then

homes were slated to be built there? And for whom? The prosecutor. People did not get it [land] (Jadwiga, interview no. 15).

Therefore, in some cases, the process required decades of constant efforts of knocking at the bureaucrats' and land surveyors' door and dealing with their reluctance to solve the case. At the same time, people had other issues to care about (e.g., raising children, dealing with their poor health, lack of money, and drinking spouses).

Yet, for other interviewees, this was an extremely painful topic – so painful that they wouldn't even agree to participate in an interview. During the fieldwork, I got to know that one of the most complicated situations regarding the land restitution process was to be found in a certain settlement located in one of the Vilnius district municipality's elderships. A tiny part of the settlement, however, belongs to both Vilnius city and the eldership, and therefore borders the capital. The territory was once a street-plot settlement. I decided to visit the eldership hoping to be able to interview someone from the local administration, assuming they would have some important information to tell. Before the visit, I contacted one person who used to work as a chairman of a Union of landowners and who at the time of my planned visit was a chairman of the local community. During our conversation, which was short because the person refused to meet for a full interview, I was told that she was already fed up with the topic. She lamented that their community's land had been taken away from them, and that despite their fight the locals were given a "few square meters" of land each (reminiscent of the elasticity of land discussed in the first part of this chapter). It's painful when 30 applicants need to share 6 ares of land, she explained. The informant told me that their land was taken from them and that she got tired of fighting. In her opinion, the fact that land is movable property in Lithuania in large part answers the main question of what's wrong with restitution. I was told that local inhabitants would get a few square meters each and that the whole process was bringing pain to its participants. She mentioned a case where 30 applicants would receive six ares of land only. She suffered a lot, she said. In other words, she said that the process was unjust and that she fought for a long time and that the problem received a lot of attention; however, neither she nor the others benefited from this attention, therefore she did not want to return to this topic. Finally, she also said that she had helped a lot of people get their land back and that this caused her some harm (yet she did not explain, what kind of harm). The informant said she still had land to be returned and she therefore would refrain from talking. The community chairman was not the only person who refused to share their experience in the restitution process.

When I went to the settlement's eldership hoping to find someone who was more open to talking about their experience, the reaction to the invitation to take part in the research was similar. First, I contacted the elder. However, he told me that as he was not local, there was not much he could say about the troubles that people face in his eldership regarding restitution. Instead, he suggested talking to a worker "who was local, knew more than him, and besides she hadn't received her land yet". Yet, when we went to her cabinet and I explained to her the reason for my visit, she refused to be interviewed. The bits and pieces of the information that she however shared, shed a light on the following story.

The officer, a young woman, possibly forty years old, had regained land in a street-plot settlement where her parents had owned five ares of land. But the city of Vilnius has declared that area as a so-called "green area", where no activities can be performed. High-voltage wires also cross the land, and so is not worth much. However, one needs to mow and look after it every year. Asked if she knew anything about the cases of land restitution in street-plot settlements, the officer told me that she knew about it and printed out a document issued by the national register centre. She raised her hand with the document and told me this was an 18-page document listing all the co-owners of one plot. Then she underlined her father's name within the document and noted that he owned five ares of land in a common plot in the village in question. The beginning of our conversation was very tense. By the end of the conversation, she had become milder, took the 18-page document and told me that, regarding those five ares and the way they are returned to her father, the informant said: "I understand it, but how do I explain it to my parents?"

The village is divided between the city and the district. Her father's plot is to be found in the urban part of the village. Yet, the officer also mentioned that some of the settlement's residents who had regained land in the city part of the settlement had regained it according to the order of land restitution in rural areas, meaning that it was reserved for agricultural use and so was valued similarly to rural land rather than other land in the city. As mentioned in chapter 3, due to value differences between urban and rural land, land restitution was perceived as a loss of potential wealth. Her father still has fifty ares of land to be given back to him. 30% of this amount still has to be given back in Vilnius district, and 70% of those fifty ares in Vilnius city. The plot is one. Their restitution case is managed by the Vilnius district municipality as well as the Vilnius city section of NLS. In Vilnius city, according to her, plot formation was stalled, unlike in the Vilnius district where the process had moved forward more successfully. She maintained that perhaps the district officers are keener to find necessary solutions. It needs to be mentioned that Vilnius district for decades has been governed by a Polish minority party and it might be that this

is the reason why restitution in Vilnius district had been faster. On the other hand, land restitution in the Vilnius district is supervised by the NLS. According to the informant, there are more such divided settlements around Vilnius and often the part of the settlement which belongs to Vilnius city can be found abandoned, while the part which belongs to the district is developed.

The informant expressed the opinion that in street-plot settlements such an order, when several owners own one plot, is made on purpose so that people can never solve their problems. However, she did not clarify who might be held responsible for this. The informant explained that she didn't want to talk because restitution had been going on for a long time, much has been talked and written about it, and, according to her, the community didn't expect that this would change anything. This was a painful topic, which she was unwilling to go into further. She also told me she has experienced enough psychological violence regarding the efforts to get back their land. Yet, she was not willing to specify who was responsible for it.

Therefore, for some people who refused to take part in this research, restitution emerged as a very insecure, precarious and painful process. Talking about it and trying to analyse it after 30 years of an unfinished process or perpetual trouble seemed pointless. Some of the persons whom I attempted to interview and who refused to take part in this research were officers or community leaders. Their position may also be at least part of the reason for their unwillingness to share their experiences. As mentioned in the methodological part of this research, finding informants for this research was not an easy task and these few brief conversations give a glimpse of why people refuse to share their restitution experience. In the following, I analyse data gathered with people who agreed to take part in this research and share their restitution stories. I zoom in to explore ethnicity and/or other frames people use to interpret and construct their restitution experiences. I also attend to circumstances under which ethnicity gets mentioned as one of the possible frames or as the primary frame through which to talk about land restitution in SEL.

5.2.1 Kinship Based Solidarity

For many of my interviewees, their family was the locus of the solution and the mitigation of the land restitution process. They would either receive support from their family or would themselves support their family members during the process. Indeed, land restitution was a family matter, and the solidarity people showed to each other often went primarily along kinship lines. Therefore, kinship was used as an important category in framing the restitution process among many

of my informants, and it was family, not ethnicity, that very often emerged as an important form of solidarity.

The following section shows how sons and daughters, who often would be members of a better-educated generation of their families, would help their parents to regain land. One of the main motivations behind the decision and determination to participate in the land restitution process was the responsibility they felt for their relatives, who had come to own the land through their hard labour. Some of my informants sought to regain land (often the land of other family members too) in order to consolidate it, thereby resisting the fluidity of land after socialism. In some cases, the restitution process would trigger people's interest in their family history (much like some of my informants' interest in the local history of their place of residence, or a need to preserve such history). Another important thing that analysis of interviews has revealed is that restitution, which often was a long and tiresome process, was like a relay race, where one family member would exchange efforts with another in the long run for regaining the family's land. Once regained, the land would be worked together with family members, sold, or worked to assist one's family financially. Some of the informants sought to transmit land-related values to their grandchildren. Nevertheless, land was also a source of conflict among family members. However, even this fact shows that restitution often revolved around the core of the family.

Several informants said they helped their parents to get back their land because they were better educated. Being educated allowed my informants to navigate the rules and procedures of restitution faster. Sara, already quoted above, for example, said that she was the only literate person in the family, therefore the whole burden fell on her. She started the process with little information about the land previously owned by her relatives. She only knew that her grandfather had some land in a former street-plot settlement which nowadays is a part of Vilnius city. When the process started, Sara needed to find relatives who could bear witness to her land rights. Although she managed to find one aunt, more relatives were potential applicants for the family's land. Assuming that her other relatives were already engaged in the restitution process, together with her son, they found a lawyer and paid her to "fix" the restitution documents. As Sara explained, she was better educated and therefore better equipped for acquiring necessary information, therefore she was quicker to kick off the process. Later, she learned that the other relatives had done nothing to initiate the process. After realizing this, she called one relative, to whom she felt closer, to inform her about the court process over the land. That is how other members of the family learned about the land, too. Sara was critical of them because of their passivity, saying that they did not hear anything about the land and were waiting for someone to tell them about it and

do everything for them, just like under socialism. She knew that her mother – heir to her grandfather's land – had several sisters. They had some offspring, but they, according to her, did nothing during the decade of the restitution to regain the land and, as she said, "my position was that I would take the land and distribute it among the relatives."

While telling her restitution story and the way this process shaped her relations to other members of her family, she recalled reading stories about how land restitution sparked serious conflicts within families and that these conflicts would sometimes even lead to fratricide. Thus, I got an impression that by comparing her story with such cases, Sara tried to diminish her agency with respect to conflict with her own family members, by saying that it was the land that had ignited the conflict. Later, Sara also told me that when she was at court, she was slightly dishonest and had told the judge that she did not know her aunts. And she did this so that the land would not, as she said, "disappear". This was perhaps because she did not trust her aunt's offspring who would inherit the land which had belonged to her grandfather and her mother. Sara also told me that she did not want to let her mother be hurt (Lith. "nuskriausta"). She explained that her mother was the oldest child in the family and that she was a hard-working person and she worked the land (Lith. "apdirbinėjo"). When Sara's grandfather died, her mother was 18 years old. However, throughout the whole process, Sara learned that, as a granddaughter, she can also claim her grandmother's – the wife of her other grandfather's – land. Her aunt (father's sister) had already filed all the necessary documents and getting back the land was not complicated. She shared this land with her father's sisters. Sara finished her story by saying "thus I have, finally, consolidated the land" (Lith. "Aš ir... galų gale aš surinkau žemę"). Her effort, therefore, could be seen as an attempt to fight the elasticity of land after socialism.

During our interview, she would accuse important politicians of getting back land and thinking about their families, but not letting her do the same:

My first thought was that I did not receive... it was not allowed to form [parcels] and live, according to grandpa Landsbergis... You may worship him, and I respect him as a politician, because he did a lot, but what's bad with him is that he thought about his family, and I was not allowed to think of mine (Sara, interview no. 3).

When I asked her what motivated her to continue the restitution process and not give up, she got touched and said that her mother came from a poor and hardworking family. She knew that her grandfather had bought the land so that his family would be able to make a living. This led Sara to the decision that she could not give up on the land and that she needed to regain it. Today, she needs

to sell bits and pieces of the land (small amounts of land were given back to her in different parts of the city) and because of this she feels emotionally hurt:

S: My mom is from a family ... I can't talk without emotions [nearly crying] about what motivated me. My grandfather... grandmother gave birth to fifteen children. But they did not survive. Their life was hard. I remember that, in the early 50s', I was six years old, I was probably so receptive and I remember well that I would come to see my grandmother. We lived a little better already, you know, those were already different times. The father was very hardworking. And then I decided that... he bought that land to feed [us] and I can't give up on it. I have to reclaim that land. Then it was twenty ares at the beginning, only twenty ares for... one could... Yes, I understood... I don't know, I didn't care... at least twenty ares. And I went as far as... to regain what belonged to me. According to... I just, you know... my kids already live better. Everything is fine. Everything. Well, I always... for me selling it... every [piece] is a knife [almost crying] but I have to...

R: Every meter, right?

S: Yes. A knife to the heart. It's still so emotional you know... I am hurt [Lith. 'nuskriausta aš'] Emotionally. Because such [plots] have been formed... I could [have] a piece... and in that one... now in one with forty-two... here, everyone's resentment is' (Sara, interview no. 3).

As already mentioned, at the end of our conversation Sara admitted that land restitution is a painful topic in her family. It is a taboo topic at home. Usually, her blood pressure jumps up when the conversation turns towards the topic and she only agreed to talk about this because of my interest in her story.

Education was an important factor in the restitution case of Adela, a young woman, possibly in her thirties, who at the time of our interview lived abroad. The restitution process was started by her parents. She told me that her parents don't speak Lithuanian well, therefore, besides starting law studies, another reason that allowed her to help her parents was learning the language. This allowed her to accompany her parents during the visits to various bureaucratic institutions responsible for the land restitution process. When asked, what motivated her to actively engage in the process, she said that it was a feeling of duty to help her parents. Thus, although she was much younger than Sara, it was the same feeling of responsibility towards one's family members which pushed her to take an active stance in reclaiming the family's land. Her parents were not that young anymore, they did not know the language well, and were a bit timid, therefore she felt that it was her duty to help them. In both cases, the fact that informants were better

educated than other members of their family was an important factor: education meant that the informants were better equipped to participate in the process.

Somewhat similar was the case of another already mentioned research participant. Lucja, who responded to my call to take part in this research, published on social media. At her suggestion, we met at a Polish restaurant in Vilnius. Lucja took over the issues relating to restitution from her mother. Her mother too did not speak Lithuanian well, and asked her daughter to visit various bureaucratic institutions for more information on restitution. She regretted that when her mother died the amount of land they managed to get back was little. Bigger parcels were given back only later. As Lucja explained during our conversation,

[o]wnership rights of strangers would emerge under odd circumstances. Of course, the laws on transfer of land were passed. I suspect that the houses started to sprout either because of the transfers or because of the connections one might have had at Lazdynai eldership. In those days, bribes would 'do the rounds'. I remember telling my mother, while she was still alive, where to go at the eldership, whom to talk to about the land. It was very non-transparent. My mom didn't, how to say, speak [Lithuanian] ideally, therefore she kept saying 'You go, Lucja, ask.' I remember what one could get for 2 thousand dollars. I remember the rates. It is a pity that my mother died and little was returned. Larger plots were later returned. Since it was a street-plot settlement, five plots of different sizes were given out – all to some relatives, whom I would not always know... and there are about twenty co-owners in this common pot. Because when a person dies, ownership branches out. My mother is no longer alive, her children and grandchildren are now her heirs. There are 5 plots of different sizes, and they belong to each of the twenty to twenty-four co-owners. We can't sell it. I am a co-owner of those five plots, just like the others. Up to this day, my mother is left with more than a hectare to be returned. It's been over twenty years (Lucja, interview no.29).

In Lucja's case, we can see the fragmentation of land which for example another research participant, Sara, had aimed to avoid. Together with such historical legacies as the problems stemming from street-plot settlements, the family can become a sort of trap that burdens the restitution process. Therefore, similarly to Sara's case, the family appears not only as a resource and a form of solidarity but also a source of tensions. Lucja's case is interesting in one more aspect. During my inquiry, I came across instances when people were motivated to get back their land by the pride they have in their family history and their rootedness in SEL. But Lucja's case suggests the reverse was possible too – land restitution might have

fostered an interest in one's family roots. In this aspect, Lucja's story stands out from the two accounts presented above.

Land was also a family matter to Michalina, an approximately fifty-year-old minority politician, whom I had a chance to get to know during another research project. In her case, the restitution process was initiated by her mother. She aimed at getting back the land that belonged to her mother's family, who after the war resettled to Poland. Yet, her mother did not leave for Poland and, when independence came, she was entitled to restoring her ownership rights to the family's land. Michalina told me that her family had some issues with getting back the land. A land surveyor, who was supposed to assist Michalina and her family in their restitution case, purposefully made them sign false documents, which later resulted in many problems in the court. She also thinks that her family was harmed, because, like many other members of the minority, they had lived here and were not able to get back their land. Michalina was also trying to reclaim her family's land. Yet sometimes the situation, as she put it, would remind her of banging her head to the wall, and the only way to solve it was through court. As a politician, she and her minority party tried to help "all people, although it is not clear how to help others when you cannot help yourself."

Like Sara, Adela, and Michalina, the previously introduced Jadwiga also wanted to get back her family's land. As mentioned, land restitution took time. Therefore, different family members would take part in this process one after another. Jadwiga had two small children and a drunkard husband. And the fact that she was unemployed and received disability-related benefits meant that she had time to deal with restitution issues.

G. was a land surveyor. I wrote requests, everything. I'd come, and she'd say 'What you came here for?' I'd say, 'I came for my grandmother, not for your land, for my land.' She said, 'Wait'. I said, 'How long should I wait?' Then I had a disability status, little children, and no money. And she said, 'Why are you so worried, your grandchildren will get it back.' And so it went for ten years. I didn't work, I was in a 'second group' of disability, I could go there to talk. Well and that's it, you'd come to B. [land surveyor] office, he stands up so courteously, looks at you with his beautiful eyes, and says, 'Don't worry, you will get it back'. I'd say, 'And why has the neighbour gotten it already?' And only later I was told, 'Don't you know what to do?' But I didn't have any money, I had a disability status, the kids were little, the husband was drinking, and I had nothing to give him. Later, in 1995, we appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court and were told that 'we have a right to it'. We went to B. again, and he stood up so nicely again. And we were again waiting. It's good that I was younger – my mother couldn't walk. It was my grandmother's land

and my mother had to do the walking [Lith. "turėjo vaikščioti"], but I had the power of attorney and I would do it instead. I was nervous... I told my daughter I did not want to talk... (Jadwiga, interview no. 15).

In the beginning, Jadwiga managed the issues related to restitution together with her sister, however, some time later her sister would pass the relay baton [Lith. "perdavė estafetę"] to Jadwiga. Her sister started to work, and as Jadwiga had disability benefits and lived with her mother, she took the burden onto her shoulders. Jadwiga told me that she always knew where her grandma had the land because she showed her where their plots were before collectivisation. Thus, memories about the property were maintained in their family. Asked what she wanted to do with the land, she told me that she planned to sell it for some money.

R: When did you first find out about where you used to have land? Had you always known that?

J: We knew it, because grandma was alive. She died in 2001. She, as the owner, should have had it returned to her, but it wasn't returned. We knew, because grandma told me. Showed me where our plots [Lith. "šniūrai"] had been. But she died before the land was returned. She transferred it [Lith. "perrašė"] to my mother, the mother couldn't do it, then we took over it from her. We had the documents from the archive proving that my grandmother had land, and everyone in the village knew who had had land and how much.

R: You mentioned that you have a sister and that she also took part in this process?

J: She was initially involved. She brought cognac [to the bureaucrats] at first and then said 'I have no health left. You go further.' She started working, I had a disability status. She lives in Rudamina and I live with my mother.

R: But with that land, you still can do nothing?

J: I don't worry about it. I live very well now, and you know when I started living well? When my kids went out to work. I live very well now. Now if I had to go, I wouldn't go. I would wait maybe for the grandchildren to reclaim it. I live only for myself now. Well, the only thing is that my mother is old, she is 89 now. I live well in free Lithuania. Previously, I had two little children, an alcoholic husband, who would give me no money, and a disability status. I wanted to get it [the land] back to be able to sell it, so that there would be at least some cents for me (Jadwiga, interview no. 15).

We can see that in all of the above-mentioned restitution accounts, family emerges as a resource, something to rely on during the restitution process. Younger, better

educated family members and/or those more fluent in the Lithuanian language would assist their parents. Yet education was not a necessary prerequisite to receive or offer support among family members. At the same time, acquiring land was in one's interest because it was seen as a resource to make some money to maintain the family.

The help of one's family members and land as a family matter was visible in a restitution account of Sylwia – middle-aged woman, white-collar worker, and small farmer from the Šalčininkai district. Her father reclaimed the land after the independence. When I asked her, how people would get to know the latest news about the restitution back in the day, when there was no internet, she told me that the information would mostly travel by word of mouth. However, personal features would play an important role. "My father was more progressive, he read the newspapers, he would say 'read, maybe there is something about the land that is important to us'", Sylwia told me. But when he and her mom suddenly died, the two sisters agreed that Sylwia's sister would move to their parent's house, and they both started farming. Their case shows that family provides resources not only for getting back the land but also for maintaining it productively.

Yet, as mentioned, land was often sought by people who lived in the city for economic purposes. Often, it was seen as a resource to make a living for a family. Tymoteusz, a middle-aged man from Vilnius city who responded to the research call which was published in the Facebook group "Wilno" (Lith. "Vilnius"), aimed at getting back his grandfather's land. He told me that his father had not been speaking with his brother and that they had not been communicating much with that part of the family, but the restitution process had brought everyone closer together and they had applied for their grandfather's land together. His mother managed to get back her land, albeit with difficulties. She was ill and Tymoteusz's family needed money. His mother sold the land after she took it back in 1995, but then they did not have to wait long to discover that land would become much more valuable and that they sold it for peanuts. When I asked Tymoteusz what were his plans concerning the land that he would get back, I was told that he would give it to his son who wants to live in the village.

However, in Tymoteusz's case, when trying to get back the land, family was not only a source of solutions but also a source of problems. Tymoteusz's cousin had convinced him that she could help him get back more land. He helped cover part of the expenses for a lawyer. However, soon the cousin was gone with the money, the court process is still not over, and now she does not answer his calls. Talking about his notorious cousin, Tymoteusz told me: "[t]hat's how Poles help one another. Lithuanians would not do that." As already mentioned, Tymoteusz was sceptical of the minority politicians complaining about Lithuanians who stole

the land from Poles. The quote adds to this scepticism and indicates that in this case ethnicity played no role as a source of solidarity in the restitution process, in turn suggesting that it only had a limited role more broadly. Yet, as the land had an economic aspect, the family's role too wasn't univocally positive: the land would divide members of the same family

Although it was not a part of this research focus, from the data presented above one can notice a tendency for gender to play a role in how seriously care for one's family is taken by daughters and wives. The case of Malgorzata, a 79 year old woman from Vilnius city, provides additional support for the observation. When asked if anyone from her family helped her in getting back the land, Malgorzata told me that her husband had called his cousin for help. They both have poor vision, though, which did not help when looking for necessary documents in the archives. Malgorzata's husband was, in her own words, not much of a help. When I asked her what she planned to do with the land after she got it back, she answered that she distributed it among her grandchildren, although other relatives had not supported her financially in her efforts. She has also retained a few hectares of land for herself.

However, Malgorzata's case is an interesting one, because the land was an important resource for making a living after the state became independent. The informant explained that, once she got it back, she immediately started cultivating it. Although she is already retired, Malgorzata still has livestock, cultivates the land, and declares it for subsidies. Malgorzata's story illustrates post-socialist restitution of demodernisation, as described by Verdery, and resembles substitutive farming under communism:

[i] tried so hard... my mother died... I took everything on my shoulders. If I'd get everything, all the land, everything, then I would make documents for children and grandchildren. The grandchildren are small. [asks if I have children] Once my son said, "I don't need anything", and his child responded: 'I will work, I will work the land.' And another child said, 'I'll be a farmer, buy me a tractor,' he's still small, he's 12 years old. He likes to ride combine harvesters. Well, the grandparents have to pass this sentiment on, because the land sustains us. What would I have done [without it]? My mother had a garden. When our trading enterprise was liquidated, my mother fell ill. She had a stroke. I came to the village where she lived. How to feed ourselves, what to live on? The garden. Mother had no pigs or cows. I planted some dill and took it to town to sell. At least I had some money for bread. Then I decided that ... I was standing [Lith. "stovėjau"] in the job office. But I did not use the money I got. I took 750 rubbles and bought a cow. I rented out the land and we

started to live well. There was milk and sour cream ... I bought the cow in 1996. In 1994, mother died. We have a cow to this day (Malgorzata, interview no. 27)

Thus, it did not surprise me when after our conversation Malgorzata gave me a jar of sour cream made by her as a goodbye gift. After her mother's death, Malgorzata took possession of all her property. She hasn't gotten all of the land, but if she did she would distribute it among her grandchildren. Malgorzata held the view that grandparents need to transfer their love for the land to other generations because the land is the food giver (Lith. "žemė maitintoja"). Thus, the family becomes a place where certain land-related values are transmitted from one generation to another. Therefore, if the story of land restitution told by Lucja demonstrates how land can ignite one's interest in family's history, the example of Malgorzata shows how land becomes a reference point for thinking about the family's future. In other words, it bridges the gap between different generations of the same family.

As mentioned, land restitution would resemble a relay race and its participants would often be members of the same family who would take matters over from each other when one of them ran out of strength. Like previously mentioned interviewees, Krzysztof, a sixty year old farmer from Vilnius who was recommended to me by the chairman of a local community, also acted on behalf of his family. He summarized his family land restitution story in the following way: during the Soviet times, his mother looked after her mother's sister. When she died, his mom inherited her aunt's house. However, at the time, they only owned the house and no land. Thus, when independence came, he sought to acquire some land. The law allowed him to have 25 ares of land around the house, and soon he managed to achieve this. Then, another legislation was passed, providing a right to reclaim previously owned land. Before the War, his family had 2-4 hectares of land. When they submitted the request, the answer was that the archives burned during the War and the only possibility to get the land back was if someone who had been alive before the War could testify to their right to land. Krzysztof and his neighbours started to look for the documents in the archives by themselves. The proof was found, but his mother had already given up the idea of getting it back. According to Krzysztof, at the time, those who withdrew from the restitution process, were able to get 15 ares of land in exchange. Krzysztof managed to convince his mother not to take these 15 ares and, instead, to get back the land that had been owned by their relatives.

When I asked if he had received any help from the Polish minority party, which aims at representing the minority's interests in Lithuania, he answered negatively and said that one only needs to trust his community and family. As a person worth trusting, he mentioned the leader of their local community, through whom I had got into contact with him. In the case of Krzysztof, this was the clearest expression that

in the process of restitution, solidarity, first of all, went along the lines of kinship and not ethnicity. During an interview, Krzysztof told me that together with his wife they were collecting signatures against Vilnius municipality's plans to expand the capital's territory. As has been described in chapter 3, the expansion of capital was of no benefit to the inhabitants of territories in surrounding districts. It was not beneficial for them either as members of a certain ethnic minority nor as a social group. Krzysztof and his wife also worked together against the municipality's plans to establish a dump close to their living place. The same dump to which another informant quoted above, Jadwiga, referred in her restitution story and which prevented her from getting the land back in its previous location.

A sentiment towards a place one calls home was an important source of motivation for families to gather together their efforts and ensure the land would not go into other people's hands. When I asked Halina – an elderly woman, a former doctor from Vilnius and one of my last interviewees – what she planned to do with the restored land, she told me that she did not want to sell it, because of the sentiments she had for the parcel. Her house, where she still lives, stands on it. Therefore, together with her daughter, they repurchased the land, which had previously been bought by her neighbours, from her brother, who had moved to Poland after the War and, as a result, lost his Lithuanian citizenship and was not able to claim the land. The neighbours also used to own a part of the house in which Halina and her daughter now lived, and where I was invited for an interview. In joint effort, her family purchased the land and the house to be sure that no strangers would be living nearby. Halina maintained that it is better to have a bad relative than a good neighbour, because, as she believed, sooner or later he will turn bad. Halina's story demonstrates how, for many of my informants, land restitution was a family issue, related to the theme of home and rootedness in a concrete place. Indeed, as mentioned in the second part of this chapter, many of the informants interested in land restitution would often mention the importance of localness, which emerged throughout the interviews as something that catalysed participants' efforts within the restitution process but also as something that was catalysed by the restitution itself.

In the interviews conducted with my informant, kinship would often be locally embedded. Lucja, the aforementioned housewife from Vilnius, also remembered the location of her family's land, in what had been a street-plot settlement and would later become a part of Vilnius. She recalled that the name of her native place changed and the Polish name was replaced with a Lithuanian one. The village became a part of Vilnius in a picturesque place located at the river:

[f]rom childhood, I remember walking down the street and that all my relatives were there. In the 90s, things began to change drastically. It used to be a village, but then it became a part of Vilnius. There used to be a village there, where my grandmother would grow strawberries. People grew vegetables, which they would sell at the Lazdynai marketplace. Later, houses began to sprout there, strangers appeared, who somehow got parcels there. Beautiful houses appeared, in contrast to wooden village houses from the early 20th century (Lucja, interview no. 29.).

From this account, we can see that the restitution resulted in a situation where a once native place was taken over by newcomers.

Wiktor's case – he had called himself the last citizen of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy – also illustrates how rootedness in locality is intertwined with family. During the interview, both Wiktor and his wife would argue that they were native to the place where they claimed their land. Wiktor argued: “[a]nd since I'm local and can name my ancestors until the 18th century ... And, as I say, I have more than two meters in the Verkiiai cemetery, we are in one grave. And now to treat me like that... listen – we live in the 21st century.” Thus, both Wiktor and his wife emphasised that they are rooted in a concrete locality. The roots are their family roots, and this is the reason that they expect their claims to be treated with respect.

Similar things were mentioned by Albert, a young informant and emigrant whom I interviewed in Warsaw. I got in contact with him through a Facebook group dedicated to SEL, “Wilenszczyzna”, after he replied to my post calling for interviews with people who are from the region and trying to get back their land. When I met him in Warsaw where he lives and works, we sat for an interview and he said that his “father is from Trakai, has always been, never left, never disappeared anywhere from Trakai, and my mother is from Šalčininkai [...] Besides, you know, the process is finishing already... I am looking at my father... he has a right to it... He never left anywhere... Pity he wasn't sent to Siberia” – Albert finished his thought ironically, referring to the privileged status that the deportees received in the restitution of their land rights, as discussed in chapter 4. Like Wiktor, during our conversation, Albert emphasised the rootedness of his family in a concrete place. From his account, I got the impression that he and his family were very much connected to the place where his family had once had land and lived.

[a] friend's father reclaimed the land where, during his childhood, the sauna stood. If you drive to Trakai a palace can be seen from the hill on the left side. It's called the Chocolate Factory Palace, which belongs to a chocolate lover settled in Trakai. The land down there belongs to an acquaintance, and a part of that land was sold to the chocolate lover. And directly across the street is my father's birthplace, X.

A foundation of a house and a hole in the ground, where the foundation remained. But we did not receive the land there. Instead, they gave us [a plot] next to it, because that parcel had been given to someone else already. There is a small Puntukas there, my father would bring us to the forest to show that stone. We have managed to reclaim that forest. He had had the idea even back in the Soviet times (Albert, interview no. 33).

To sum up, for many of my informants, their restitution stories were family stories. And often the solidarity people showed to each other went primarily along kinship lines. Zooming out, the importance of kinship may say something about broader changes in a society experiencing radical changes. According to T. H. Eriksen (2010), ethnic ideologies gain salience in times when kinship loses social importance. In societies undergoing modernization (e.g., through urbanization), ethnic ideologies offer security and the feeling of continuity – things previously provided by kinship. Therefore, according to Eriksen, nationalism could be called metaphoric kinship (2010: 129-131). However, from what has been presented in this section, we can see that during the restitution process it was not abstract ethnic ideologies but traditional forms of social organization which people could rely on. This could be seen as another aspect of demodernization as a side effect of restitution, as described by Verdery (2003). Second, the theoretical part of this research mentioned some criticism of Brubaker's anti-groupist methodology. C. Calhoun warned against underestimating the role certain collectives and solidarities can play in one's freedom to choose and make important decisions (2003a: 558). He argued that solidarity "may be a crucial condition of other choices. And the absence of solidarity may eliminate possibilities for choice" (Calhoun 2003b: 549). In the context of this research, he gives an interesting example to illustrate his argument, which is worth quoting at length:

[s]olidarity may, for example, be the basis of an effort to restrict allegedly 'free' market relations – for example by limiting the right of 'outsiders' to buy land held by members of 'local' groups. Absent restrictions, the apparently greater net freedom of choice – all the world is free to buy – becomes a radical loss of freedom to the locals (especially where these are less wealthy than most outsiders). That restrictions appear at first blush to be clearly reductions in freedom is an expression of the extent to which a certain liberal ideology is dominant and also the extent to which most of us are in positions of relative privilege and so can readily imagine ourselves primarily as buyers. But an approach to the world in which cosmopolitan diversity simply opens a greater range of consumer options is clearly a limited one. And, as evoking

this suggests, buying into some neoliberal discourses about freedom actually means celebrating the tyranny of the market (Calhoun 2003b: 549).

Indeed, the elasticity of land, described in the first section of this chapter, together with the lack of restrictions over transference of land within the state's territory, didn't serve minorities' interests. The equal colour-blind treatment hampered members of social/ethnic groups' efforts to get back their land. Yet, in the case of this research, Brubaker's anti-groupist methodology, based on the idea to treat ethnicity as cognition and groups as processes, helped in the observation that the solidarity which enabled personal choices and action lay within the kinship groups and not more abstract ethnic groups.

5.2.2 "Localness" as a Frame to Mitigate Conflicts

The present section looks at how informants of this research used the category of localness in narrating their individual experiences of the land restitution process. As already mentioned, for many of my informants, the restitution process was complicated, long and painful. In their accounts of the process, several informants of quite different social status (from members of minority intelligentsia to workers) were careful to tell their experiences less through the lens of a conflict and more through a lens of "happenings". In such accounts, negative things regarding restitution happened to them, and not was done to them. It happened to them as ordinary people, locals, who happened to be Poles or members of a minority group, living in a concrete part of the country (SEL). When something bad would be done to them, this would be activities of state officers or bureaucrats and not members of a certain ethnic group. Finally, in case informants would recall complaints that restitution of land to Poles was hampered by Lithuanians, they were quick to denounce it as unsubstantiated politicization. In short, I argue that localness emerged as an important cognitive category and a frame used to avoid conflicts, while ethnicity would be mentioned alongside it simply to state that ethnicity was a fact/circumstance and to disengage from viewing it as a source of conflict in restitution.

Regarding ethnicity, one tendency that became visible while analysing interview data was that informants would not mention ethnicity at all. Such was the case with already mentioned informants such as Sylwia, a white colour worker who lives and possesses land in Šalčininkai district, Michalina, a politician from the Polish minority party, or Katarzyna, a middle-aged informant from Vilnius – even though our meeting, as she had proposed, took place at the House of Polish culture in Vilnius and the interviewee, as I later got to know, was active in ensuring

that a prominent Polish figure from interwar Vilnius would be immortalized by hanging a plaque for him on one of the streets of Vilnius. It might be that for them an ethnic aspect of the issue was too obvious to mention at all. Yet, it may also be that it was simply irrelevant as well. Of course, there is always a possibility that an informant tries to give the interviewer what (s)he is looking for, and indeed each of my informants knew that I was interested in the “process of land restitution in the multi-ethnic SEL”, as it was mentioned in the call to participate in the research. However, during the interviews, I tried not to bring up the issues of ethnicity too much and thus not to impose an ethnic frame on the prospective conversation. I intended to let the interviewee mention things that were important to him/her.

There were other cases when ethnicity was mentioned briefly or instead of talking about “Lithuanians” or “Poles” as the main type of protagonists in the story of restitution, people would bring up the notion of “locals”. Through the interviews and personal accounts on restitution, “localness” emerged as an important category. The category did not replace ethnicity but would be used in relation to it. Moreover, the category was used to avoid (ethnic) tensions that might have occurred during the restitution. Further, I present and discuss some of the accounts that illustrate this tendency.

During an interview with Sara – the informant who complained about being put back to the collective farm again – I was told that the land restitution was unfair to “those who had always lived and possessed land here”. The informant directed my attention to this problem in the following way: “here I have to tell you and maybe, if you want, mention that... that the policy was unfair to those people who had always lived and had land here. I have to say that people, who had nothing to do with the reform in general, got involved in the restitution process.” Such unrelated persons, according to the informant, were, for example, architects of the process (they were responsible for forming/designing parcels). Thus, she referred to state officials and not persons of a particular ethnicity. I was also told that the restitution process was unfair to local people who happened to be Poles, but this was not because they were Poles, rather this was an incidental fact, and was not presented as being relevant to the process. At some point during our conversation, I was told:

S: And now you know I have to say that the majority were Poles. [says calmly and cautiously] In my village... I wrote a book about this village. [...] There is no politics. And as for the return of land – this was politics. I only wrote who had what amount of land, and why among the people were such... well, some of them were richer, others – poorer...

R: In the village?

S: In the village. And I wrote, who had what amount. More or less. I couldn't list them all. Since I had documents from the law enforcement agencies, I used everything in the book. Who had what amount, according to surnames. They were Poles. So, who got hurt in the end? (Sara, interview no. 3).

Further, Sara mentioned that locals did not have money, knowledge and they were Poles. A few moments would pass and Sara would add: “the majority here were Poles, because there used to be no Lithuanians here. Not because I would not like them, but because there used to be no Lithuanians here. This used to be a Polish village.” What is important here is that ethnicity is brought up to depoliticize the issue and to avoid ethnic tensions (consider, such phrases like “I have to tell you”, “land restitution was politics”, “there is no politics”). In the informants' interpretation, ethnicity emerges but it is not used as a cognitive category to frame the restitution process. Yet, at the same time, even though it is not used to frame the process, participants spontaneously raise it in order to avoid conflict, which is associated with politics. And it seems that in the context of restitution understood as conflict/politics, ethnicity/Polishness is perceived and used to state that this was not the reason for conflict.

This is confirmed by the informant's other remark that although Poles might think that they were mistreated by Lithuanians, the same Lithuanians during thirty years of attempts, were not allowed, according to Sara, to give back the land to people: “[e]verything went, you know, back and forth for almost thirty years... twenty-seven... and so what... A Pole thinks he was hurt... that it's Lithuanians who do not want... It's not Lithuanians... A Lithuanian sits where he was not allowed to sit... also, the land restitution process would take up thirty years, and here, in Vilnius, it's totally...” We can think therefore that the majority of Lithuania's population were willing to give back the land to locals, while responsibility for the failures in this process was due to bureaucrats and state officials of higher ranks who were not interested in the restitution of land according to the rules.

Another interviewee, Adela, a previously mentioned young Lithuanian Pole who at the time of our conversation lived abroad, described conflict or problem avoidance as an important feature of people who live in the region. In her case, “local” or “ordinary” people were identified as minorities. When at the end of our conversation I asked her whether there was anything she might consider worth adding, Adela said she was happy that someone decided to research the problems of the national minority:

[a]t first, I thought, how cool, that someone was interested in the situation of national minorities, particularly in an area where maybe a lot of people feel hurt

[Lith. "nuskriausti"]. We need to talk about this topic. Because there are many national minorities in Vilnius district and that land restitution in the Vilnius district affected almost everyone (Adela, interview no. 2).

In her description, minorities appeared as a group of people characterised by "wrong-doings" experienced by its members. And although it was a common situation, she thought that the minority problem – the way she framed the land restitution process in south-eastern Lithuania – hasn't received much attention. But when I asked Adela why she thinks that the topic of national minorities has not received enough coverage, she explained that this was because the people themselves are not willing to speak publicly about their problems and fight to have them solved:

[p]erhaps the biggest unpopularity lies within the fact that... yes, there is an opinion in Lithuania, that there is order, there are rules, or there is that latent order... to those with money [laughs] and people may simply not tend to talk too much about their problems and such things. Perhaps those ordinary people in the countryside or people in the district, who just... well, they don't have too much time to think and publicize such things, to fight for these things or somehow try to solve the problem on a larger scale. Because these are mostly ordinary people. For example, my parents – they would have never in their life come up with the idea to go somewhere, to say that there is a problem here, help us. That there are more people like them, because ... everyone is like mice in their wheels, trying to solve their problems and only think about themselves, and that is why... (Adela, interview no. 2).

In short, people try to solve structural problems individually. However, one may wonder what led people to choose such a strategy? The findings of this research suggest a possible answer may be limited resources, e.g., insufficient knowledge of Lithuanian and bureaucratic procedures, as Adela's case illustrates:

[m]y parents are quite... Well, not very, very poorly educated people, ordinary people living in the countryside, who do not speak Lithuanian, therefore they often suffer discrimin... well, there is discrimination, because it so happened that a person does not know...he's already 70 years old, and for all of his life he didn't have to know, but well... and the communication between a specialist and an ordinary person from the village, who does not know all those legal terms, processes, maybe does not understand everything that well, just goes and says 'give me, give me back my land'. While there are bureaucrats and somewhat unclear procedures and somehow this whole thing... (Adela, interview no. 2).

The informant used the story of her parents to illustrate the broader tendencies of ordinary rural people, who lack the resources necessary for finding one's way through a complicated process of restitution. As can be seen from the quote, the word "discrimination" was not pronounced till the end, and then when it was repeated, it was followed by a clarification that her parents (and other "ordinary" people of the same region) were not to be blamed for not knowing the Lithuanian language. The ordinary person, once again, remains a *tutejsz* – a local person, whom various issues befall, due to reasons he cannot control, e.g., changing political regimes, which introduce a new state language. This mentioned "discrimination" is something that happened to them as a course of historical changes and not something that was done intentionally. However, Adela also mentions the unsatisfactory communication of specialists with people of rural backgrounds. This recalls the words of the above-mentioned informant Sara, who complained about the behaviour of state officials during the restitution process. Yet in both cases, the boundary is drawn between simple people and officials, officers or bureaucrats. This suggests the boundary is drawn along the lines of rank/status and less along ethnic lines. Even though Adela mentioned the Lithuanian language and discrimination related to it, in her description it was a tool of communication and less of an ethnic trait.

However, from our conversation, I got the impression that Adela – a daughter of two Polish Lithuanian farmers and now an emigree – did not follow the strategy of keeping a low profile and trying to solve her problems individually. She was actively helping her parents to get back their land. Yet, the courage and willingness to help might have been inspired by the acquisition of resources necessary for taking part in the restitution process. As she explained, she started helping her parents with the process after the start of her law studies. The studies provided her with some knowledge and consequently with confidence to demand respective officers provide her parents with proper public service. According to her, the NLS stalled their case and things would start moving only when a tougher stance towards the servants would be taken:

[w]e wrote a complaint that everything is unfair, that it has been so many years since all the documents were submitted, that no one is saying what's next, why that land cannot be reclaimed. We then received a letter from the NLS, explaining that all this was due to too much workload and that the employees were not coping with everything. Well, then somehow things started moving very quickly. And, until then, everything 'hung in the air.' Still, there have been cases, when someone might have demanded more eagerly, or written complaints. If you don't complain, things

can simply stay put. Well, I see it that way. Because if someone is constantly going there, demanding, then things are moving (Adela, interview no. 2).

To sum up, Adela's account shows that, similarly to the above-mentioned case of Sara, problems that both informants and/or their parents have faced are framed less in terms of ethnic groups and more between a powerless ethnic social group (poor ordinary people from rural areas that happen to be members of a certain minority) and bureaucrats/public officers. Adela did not frame her family's story in ethnic terms, strictly speaking. And the portrait of locals that she drew referred to powerless people who want to have what's theirs but do not dare to engage in an open struggle for it with those in power.

A similar account was provided by Wiktor and his wife. The elderly couple left no doubts about their Polishness. They also made it clear that they are Lithuanian citizens and said that regarding the restitution, they don't want to complain, but, as I was told, if you push them, they will not stay silent:

W: I took part in the events of January 13 and so on and... this is my homeland; I'm not going to go anywhere, and if ...

Wife: Maybe we are not Lithuanians, but we were born here, we grew up here, we have a patriotic view towards Lithuania, we are not preparing to go anywhere... and children, and well this... it's a joy that our child studies here and isn't going to go anywhere... We are more a part of such patriots [laughs] so, we are neither trying to harm anyone, nothing like that absolutely, nor are there any [sentiments] that look, minorities here and there are oppressed. We are absolutely, we are only, as I said... we were nudged...and what we're doing is self-defence, we are defending ourselves only.

W: We don't want to give up our bite. (Wiktor and his wife, interview no. 34).

Therefore, it can be argued that although the couple are not "ordinary" people from a rural part of society (on the contrary – Wiktor gave the impression of being an educated and relatively wealthy person), they exemplify the same type of the minority member who, as mentioned by Adela, does not want to become involved in conflict and, similarly to Sara, does not want to be seen as a complaining member of the minority. In their own words, they just want to get their land back or not to give away what they know belongs to them.

Later in our conversation, I asked Wiktor what motivated him not to give up on trying to get back his family land, and his answer was "the family's pride". Moreover, Wiktor explained that as a local person, he does not want to be seen as inferior.

W: Family honour. Why do I have to lose my considerable property? Considerable one. And, I stress again, I am very hurt by the government's attitude, when it comes to talking about an aborigine of some sort. As an aboriginal. Australian Aboriginal. They come like this and look at me from above, as I have had a chance to communicate in 25 years, these officials, urėdninkai (Rus. "урядник"), as I call them, in the tsarist times. And they stand behind you at a certain height. And they don't see people, don't see people, they see their problem in business, how to distribute [the land]... "I have to give to Jonas, to Petras..." [...] And you see, since I'm local (Lith. "vietinis") and my ancestors can be named up to the 18th century ... And, as I say, I have my own more than two meters in the Verkiiai cemetery, we are in one grave, in one graveyard. And now to treat me like that... listen, we live in the 21st century!

Wife: Well, yes, grandparents and great-grandparents are all buried here. They didn't come from anywhere; they were born here. Some people ask: 'Where did you come from?' Some came from Telšiai, someone from Tauragė, and I was born here...

Wiktor: I am a real [emphasizing] citizen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Wiktor and his wife, interview no. 34).

Family honour played an important motivational role behind the decision not to give up on restitution by another previously mentioned informant, Albert, whom I interviewed in Warsaw. Albert explained that, for his family, ethnicity did not cause any problems in terms of restitution, because, in his native town, his parents are respected by the local community for their cultural and pedagogical activities. Honour was important in another sense. He explained that getting back the land does not mean any harm to anyone, because you only want to get back what's yours.

As the previous informants spoke about ordinary local people who simply want to be given what's theirs, and therefore their accounts could be interpreted as a wish to be treated with dignity, in the case of Wiktor – a respectable urbanite – we can talk about a member of an ethnic group who perceives himself as a local person and wants to be treated with honour. Among my informants, the overlap between ethnic group and status group, as defined by Weber (1978), seemed to be most strongly expressed by Wiktor. And, like the previous two informants, he also referred to the unacceptable behaviour of state servants towards local people.

However, there is something that distinguishes the localness of Wiktor from the localness of the previous two informants described above. At some point in our conversation, Wiktor's wife added that they even have their coat of arms, and he argued that he wanted "to remain a Lithuanian citizen, not an aboriginal person of some sort, not a tutejsz. Although I was called that also." A few things stand out

here – the family’s pride is the main motivator not to give up, and dissatisfaction with the government’s perceived treatment of him as an “Aboriginal” person who could be bought for a trinket. Opposing such a label, the informant even called himself a citizen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Both his dissatisfaction with the *tutejszy* label, which, as he still remembers, was used by persons with whom he needed to discuss the details of his restitution case in the turbulent 90s, and his identification with the Duchy model of Lithuanian Polish identity, point to the same historical phenomenon – an attempt to avoid friction between different parts of the modern self, composed by different identities.

Tutejszosc, according to T. Snyder, as mentioned in the theoretical chapter, was an early modern strategy used by local peasants to avoid national tensions. Yet, Wiktor’s identification with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania points to a type of Polishness known as *krajowcy* (translates from Polish as “natives”). According to Snyder, this type of “Polish culture in the old Grand Duchy was not seen as an ‘ethnic’ reality to be translated into political power by the energetic work of activists, but rather as a human quality whose representatives (whatever their ‘ethnic’ origins) set the terms of cultured conversation” (Snyder 2003: 54.). *Krajowość* and *tutejszość* or “nateness” and “local-mindedness” therefore could be seen as two sides of the same coin – attempts in a polite way to disengage from ethnic tensions. What differentiates the two is that *tutejszy* was a strategy common among peasants. Throughout history, *tutejszy* became a pejorative term to name someone who is pre-modern in the sense that he lacks national identity. Being called *tutejsz* might to some Poles, especially those with a clear type of self-identification, be an insult because it connotes inferiority and mistreatment. Just like calling native Australians aboriginal and then, when the ascription is made and the power of the superior is exercised, mistreating the natives.

After a short recourse to history, it is possible to summarize that the category of “local” was used to describe one’s own as well as collective experiences of restitution (local people, who do not want trouble, who just happened to be those who suffered the most, and who just wants to get what’s theirs). At the same time, it was used to legitimize one’s arguments for having his/her land returned and being treated with dignity and honour. In cases when localness was used instead of other categories of ethnicity (as Poles or Lithuanians) or minority, it was used to avoid tensions, to ground one’s argument for having his/her land restored in a particular place and to argue for dignified treatment of oneself. Here, honour emerges as an important factor regarding interviewees’ motivation not to give up on restitution, as well as in claim-making strategies. In all three cases presented above, the boundary is drawn between the officers and the people, and although the

people involved, we can assume, are of a certain ethnic background, the boundary is not drawn in ethnic terms strictly speaking.

However, the data gathered during the research shows that some interviewees were particularly careful about framing their troubled restitution experiences in ethnic terms and felt the need to emphasise that in terms of restitution-related issues, Poles were not treated in any specific way compared to members of Lithuania's majority population. These interviewees were critical of the minority politicians who would argue otherwise. According to the already quoted Jadwiga, a woman whose land at first was taken by the city to build a dump, the land was given back to those who were better connected with important persons, and ethnicity was not important here. The nature of her troubles was, as she explained, that her land appeared to be in the territory of the city:

[m]y father is from Zarasai, and they got it back very quickly. And we are in the city. And you know, I will say, some people say: 'oh, the Poles were not given land' – this is not true. Those who had access, who were a little richer... there is no difference here [...] whether someone was Belarusian or Tatar, it did not matter... what mattered... it's what some others say: 'oh, it was... well, those who had access... (Jadwiga, interview no.15).

The quote shows that the interviewee is aware of the usage of ethnic categories to frame restitution in ethnic terms. She, however, disagrees with the ethnic interpretation of the process, where members of the Polish ethnic minority are perceived as discriminated against. A similar position was expressed by another of my interviewees, the already-quoted Tymoteusz, a middle-aged man, unemployed due to health problems, whom I met at his private house in Vilnius, where he lives together with his wife. He stood up for "Lithuanians" and said that

those who curse Lithuanians are wrong. This is politicization [Lith. "politikavimas"]. And the Polish party did nothing. And to get back to the land, one had to walk that path endlessly. There were queues. I saw ordinary people crying and cursing Lithuanians, saying it was 'litvini' ['Lithuanians']. All this was propaganda, used by politicians. Including politicians from the Polish side. And as for the help – they did nothing. [...] As I said, people would say 'Lithuanians, Lithuanians'... and in the county [offices], there was a Jewish lawyer, a Russian head officer, and not too many Lithuanians. All the politicians said that... Everyone took advantage... (Tymoteusz, interview no. 26).

We can see that, like the above-quoted informant, Tymoteusz was also sceptical about minority politicians and people blaming members of Lithuania's majority population for all of the minority's troubles. Tymoteusz too was aware of the existence of other ethnic categories and even used them to some extent, but he brought up the ethnic background of certain officials just to prove his arguments that Lithuanians were not exceptionally villainous. In his account, we can once again see that such ethnicization of restitution is perceived as politics, ergo as a conflict, which the informant sought to avoid. This makes his interpretation similar to those described previously in this section. When asked how he would identify himself, his answer was "a local Pole", and he also mentioned that previously "we all were citizens of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania". Similarly, like Adela, he too was glad that someone was interested in topics pertaining to restitution. Moreover, he admitted that there were Poles who played the role of middlemen helping other Poles to get their land back: "[m]any Poles helped other Poles and were paid good money for this".

Tymoteusz's critical opinion about the negative attitude some minority politicians try to propagate among other members of the community might have been moderated by his personal positive experience with Lithuanians – even if they were adamant nationalists. During the interview, Tymoteusz said: "Lithuanians will not do this, they won't take away land or money from you. Well, maybe they will do this among themselves. Here lives X, from Y party. Her husband was my neighbour. He died from cancer. Was such a patriot of Lithuania, and... for some reason not remembered in Lithuania. We used to work together." Later Tymoteusz also told me that when his mother lay dying, it was his neighbour's wife, not Tymoteusz's relatives, who were Poles, who would come to look after her. Perhaps, due to his personal positive experience with Lithuanian nationalists, he had less reason to be suspicious towards them. During our conversation, Tymoteusz mentioned several minority politicians less affiliated with the minority party. Yet, asked whether he contacted them for help in solving his restitution case, he said no, because he was not "gramatnas" or not literate enough to write a letter. After an interview, we stayed friends on Facebook and a few times I was asked for help in writing official letters to public institutions due to Tymoteusz wife's pension. Like previous interviews, this one too shows that participants in restitution who had limited symbolic capital found it hard to participate in the process on equal terms with other persons, especially when lack of trust in one's competence was accompanied by the lack of trust in politicians representing one's ethnic group.

Finally, one more person who was interested in getting back her land but at the same time avoiding unnecessary conflicts was the formerly quoted Malgorzata.

When I asked whether she had heard anything of those cases from the time when the government would refuse to accept ownership documents issued in interwar Poland (as documented in Frunda's report, defined in greater detail in chapter 4), her answer was the following:

Oh, the documents that we have are in Polish. When I went to this Klimkevičius, who is a deputy at the municipality, at the county... here, at 'Vaikų pasaulis'... I went to see him, and he told me: 'What kind of documents are these, in incomprehensible Polish?' I got angry and said: 'What can I tell you? You sit here, and have a small flag here... Three flags.' And I said: 'This one's red, this one's yellow, and this one's of some other colour, but you are saying that it's black. And... how to prove it to you that... the documents were in the language of the government? There was Russia – there were documents in Russian, there was Polish government – there were documents in Polish, now – in Lithuanian, America will come – they will be in American.' And he only looked at me. I stood up and slammed the door. It was not me who made those documents. As was the government, so were the documents. And these documents were from the archives (Malgorzata, interview no. 27).

What stands out in this quote is Malgorzata's firm reaction to the rude behaviour of the official who did not like the documents she delivered. Malgorzata did not want to argue and simply left the office. She was an exceptional research participant because our conversation was carried out simultaneously using several languages – with me she spoke *po prostu* – a dialect associated with *tutejszy* – and I would reply in Russian or Lithuanian. She was the closest to a *tutejszy* type of person that I met during the research. And her words were that the language of the documents was determined not by her but by the government which was in power at the time, therefore the official should not blame her for having to read documents written in a language he did not like.

A historical example of *tutejszy* (or *krajowcy*) self-identification strategy, historically used for similar purposes, serves as a good example of how localness is used in relation to ethnicity to deescalate conflicts. Research conducted at the beginning of the 90s concluded that local identity still comprised an important form of self-identification among Lithuanian Poles (Korzeniewska 2013). Ethnicity would get mentioned to exit group conflict and sometimes also to denounce minority politicians for their conflictual policies. Recent scholarship on Lithuanian Poles' local identity suggests that localness does not necessarily correlate with ethnic identity, although people may combine these two forms of self-identification (Vyšniauskas 2021: 35). For example, the residents of Šalčininkai who consider themselves locals, distinguish such characteristics as living in the district and having

deep roots there, knowing languages spoken in the region, understanding the local culture and possessing material valuables (e.g., houses, ancestral graves, church records, etc.) in the region (Vyšniauskas 2021: 36). This research demonstrates that land can be one such valuable too.

5.2.3 Locals vs. Newcomers

The previous section argued that localness plays an important role in framing the restitution process, as the category constitutes an important strategy to mitigate conflicts. In the following part of the chapter, I demonstrate that in some cases the category of localness is tied to the category of other/newcomers or settlers, and it is this connection under which the category of localness acquires salience when interpreting the process of restitution. The dichotomy becomes more important in cases when informants demonstrate a stronger attachment to their native place. Below I discuss data gathered for this as well as my previous research on the Lithuanian Polish minority, to support the argument.

Despite all the previously mentioned attempts to frame the restitution process so that it would be possible to exit the conflict which it might cause, sometimes the category of ethnicity was used to interpret tensions between the locals (Poles) and the newcomers (Lithuanians). The above-cited moments from an interview with Wiktor, in which he complained that as a local person he has been mistreated by some state officers, remind me of another interviewee whom I spoke to for one of my former research projects on the strategies local Poles use to cope with the state's strategies to stall the solution of the minority's problems (Dambrauskas 2017). During an interview with Dominik (the name has been changed), a Lithuanian Pole and a businessman from Vilnius, possibly in his 40s - 50s, he emphasized that Lithuanians who move to the region sometimes display the wrong attitude towards locals, who they see as people who came from somewhere else and live in their – Lithuanian – land.

The conversation revolved around the topic of security as, at the time of the conversation, Russia's aggression against Ukraine was still uncertain. Dominik said that both Poles and Lithuanians should stand together in case Russia attacks Lithuania. However, Dominik complained of some of the Lithuanians' behaviour towards the local people of the region. In his opinion, there were attempts to push out Poles from the region they traditionally inhabit. According to him, this was done in the following way: "I am kidding a little bit, but to sell ten hectares of [land] in northern Lithuania and to buy sixty ares or even six ares here, and raise a flag..." By "flag" Dominik meant the Lithuanian historical flag, which can sometimes be seen raised in the backyard of newly built private houses in some parts of the

country. Dominik said that if you drive through the Vilnius district you can see these flags hanging in many places. Poles don't do that, but, according to him, "Lithuanians, who come here from Lithuania, have, for some reason, introduced a tradition among themselves, that they behave like American colonists on the Native American land... when they're building a house, they immediately raise a flag and leave it hanging."

According to Dominik, unlike in SEL he hasn't seen flags hanging in Jonava (a town in central Lithuania) to the north. Dominik pondered that "if you raise a flag among your Polish neighbours not only during celebrations but you leave it out every day and it hangs very high, probably you want to say something by this," and suggested that "Lithuanians build their new beautiful house between already older Polish houses, buy a big dog, a beautiful car, and, of course, raise a flag which must annoy everyone else. Not to bring everyone together, but to inspire conflict." Besides the rude behaviour Lithuanian newcomers demonstrate towards the locals, Dominik's quote suggests that Lithuanians demonstrate their higher socioeconomic status too. From Wiktor's and Dominik's accounts, we see that the category of localness reappears next to a trope of "colonizers". The flag raised is a statement of domination.

Yet, his criticism was followed by slight mockery at the Lithuanian "colonizers", which softened his critique. Dominik said that the Lithuanians who move here and start complaining that there's a lack of infrastructure (e.g., kindergartens) should blame only themselves because the source of their disappointment and frustration lies in their wrong expectations and disregard of the fact that the territory is inhabited by Poles:

[w]e had a discussion here with one man who had lived in Israel for probably ten years, and he was very angry with those typical Jews, Orthodox, who buy plots of land among the Arabs on purpose, and start building their own districts. And so it happens, that there are three hundred Arabs living somewhere, and one and a half thousand soldiers guarding them. Well, I think like that... he said it's too many... many soldiers on guard, and they create a problem, in principle, because of the same kind of conflict: over flags, religious service, the law... and today, when I hear sometimes that there, you know, in the Vilnius district, someone is crying that there are no Lithuanian kindergartens, you know. Forgive me, but there are no kindergartens, there are no schools, there are no shops, sometimes there's no public transport... Because where is the logic? You buy a plot of land, you know, [...] somewhere in the woods, build there a residential area, sell that land inexpensively to people who build houses and then... Also, one needs to be an idiot pumped with propaganda, you know: 'I will live near Vilnius'... A person starts living there, you

know, ten families. [...] There is no infrastructure, the nearest infrastructure is somewhere far away... and such person then says: 'I am a Lithuanian citizen, I am a Lithuanian, I am in my land, I want to have a kindergarten', he goes to the nearest village, and sees that there are two Lithuanians and one and a half thousand Poles. Does not matter if they are... maybe they're half Belarusians, half... but they are not Lithuanians, you know. And he starts protesting, loudly: 'How can this be!?' (Dominik).

Dominik thereby mocked and ridiculed members of Lithuania's majority population not to incite the conflict but to avoid it. Perhaps the context of a common threat mitigated his criticism. In the quote presented above, Dominik mentions the vague Polish identity, as he assumes Lithuanians think of local Poles, and says that whatever Lithuanians think of locals, they are not Lithuanians. He thereby demonstrated solidarity with his co-ethnics. The way he described the situation regarding Lithuanians moving to SEL reminded me of Sara's approach – to state facts and avoid usage of ethnicity as an argument to explain things: there are no Lithuanian kindergartens in SEL because Poles live here (Dominik), the majority of those who suffered from an unjust and complicated restitution process were not Lithuanians, but Poles, because they happened to live here (Sara).

However, the idea of localness also points to land as national territory. During the interview, Dominik also touched on some of the decisions made by the previous Lithuanian government, which hurt the political representation of the Polish minority in the Parliament. First, he mentioned the raising of the electoral threshold, then the expansion of Vilnius at the expense of the adjacent regions inhabited by Poles. Some of the territories that were connected to Vilnius city are non-urbanized even today. He also recalled a phrase once said by Vytautas Landsbergis that Lithuanians should register in the Vilnius district and the conservatives will win the elections.

Here Dominik refers to SEL as territory. Sikor, Thomas, Stefan Dorondel, Johannes Stahl, and Phuc Xuan To have noted that “[n]egotiations over value often connect with contestations over social identities, such as ethnic and national identities” (2017:12). The scholars drew on Deema Kaneff's research on how different types of social identity emerged in the restitution of agricultural land in Bulgaria (Kaneff 1998). According to this research, villagers who took part in the restitution of agricultural land held ethnic cohesion as a primary social value guiding the affairs of their villages. In turn, raising the salience of such ethnic identities has affected “people's evaluations of land claims as being either legitimate or illegitimate—in stark contrast to national legislation that accords equal rights to all citizens. In this way, land takes on value as ethnic territory, because the restitution of agricultural

land connects with contestations over social identities” (2017: 12). Finally, to describe Lithuanian settlers who come to live in this contested territory, Dominik used the term “new wolfs” – people who move to Vilnius and ask locals “how long have you lived in Vilnius?” (the same behaviour was mentioned by Wiktor’s wife in the above-cited excerpts of the conversation), letting Poles know that Poles have moved here from somewhere else, although his as well as Wiktor’s family has been living here for several hundred years.

Wiktor and Dominik were not the only ones who mentioned the colonial behaviour of Lithuanians in SEL. During an interview with Albert, a Lithuanian Pole and a second research participant whom I interviewed in Poland, where at the time of our conversation he resided and worked, I asked him for his opinion on the argument that land restitution in the region was complicated because of ethnic issues. Albert did not reject this possibility, and said that “[i]n many ways, the Polish organizations are right. Perhaps they are the Vilnius region and the city... In Trakai, exactly, only Lithuanians were in power. Poles had no influence. Antipathies could have been great in the Vilnius region. A person from Kaunas (Lith. jargon “kavenskas”) comes here and he does not want to take orders from a tutejsz...[laughs].” Thereby, he did not dismiss the allegation raised by the Polish minority party as unfounded, and agreed that ethnic tensions caused by increased interaction between the locals and the newcomers might have played a role during the restitution process. As in the case of his own family, Albert said that the village near Trakai where his family once possessed land had become an attractive site for “patriots from Vilnius”, who, just as observed by Dominik, move in, build their summer houses and raise patriotic flags in their backyards: “[t]here, the field over the pond. There are no signs where there was... there is a forgotten village, only now it is being re-inhabited. I went there – patriots, flags raised, you know, homesteads. It’s really good, you know, for those who have access to the lake, people tidy up their own territory, you know.”

The conversation with Albert was warm and, unlike the case of Dominik, the above-cited things were said without much bitterness in his words. The opposite occurred in a conversation with a former high-ranking Polish minority party member. I contacted him hoping to hear his opinion on how land restitution had gone in the multi-ethnic SEL. However, during the conversation, I was told that he is no longer active in politics and that he wants to leave this topic for others to comment on. He refused to share his opinion, yet briefly described the land restitution process in SEL by saying that it was an “official, predatory, and inhumane state policy to get rid of the Poles”. He added that “today, in the Vilnius district, there are houses with tall fences, and there are flags behind the fences.

This is colonization. What happened was colonization.” In relation to this, he also expressed his negative attitude to the transference of land.

The last interviewee who connected the complicated land restitution situation with ethnicity was the already mentioned Krzysztof, a middle-aged farmer from Vilnius city. I got in contact with him through a community leader of one settlement which is a part of Vilnius. After meeting Krzysztof, I got to know that he is from the same settlement as the above-mentioned Jadwiga, whose land was taken by the city government to establish a dump. When I asked Krzysztof whether he happened to hear and experience complications of restitution due to someone’s Polish identity, Krzysztof made a distinction between the region and the rest of Lithuania and said that in Lithuania the whole procedure was less complicated. He said that many elderly people were tricked. In his case, when a new responsible person was appointed, his restitution documents suddenly disappeared. Krzysztof said that, when documents would disappear, the officials would tell people that their documents had burned. Then, people would need to go to court and bring witnesses and neighbours with them who could testify their ownership rights. People would bribe the officials to find the documents for them and, according to Krzysztof, such documents would suddenly be found.

Krzysztof was convinced that his ethnic background was the reason behind stalling the restitution: “I am a Pole. I am convinced that this was, how to say, to give as little [land] as possible to the Poles. Although they were the owners. [...] Perhaps you’ve heard that the people were able to transfer their land here. The locals did not get back what was theirs. Allegedly, it was their own fault, because they failed to submit applications on time.” The informant mentioned land transfer – a process through which locals were deprived of their land. Interestingly, he thinks that the whole process was different in Lithuania – a hint indicating that the place he lives in is perceived as distinct from the rest of the country. However, the following excerpt from our conversations suggests that although Krzysztof was convinced that the restitution was biased against local inhabitants of Polish identity, it is not clear who were those that discriminated against Poles. When asked whether the officials, whom he encountered throughout the process, were of Lithuanian or Polish origins, Krzysztof said that there were officials of both ethnicities.

To sum up, analysis of data collected for this as well as for my other research on the Polish minority in Lithuania demonstrates that land (restitution) related issues would sometimes be framed through a dichotomy of local Poles vs. Lithuanian newcomers. In this dichotomy, the categories of ethnicity merged with the categories of locals and newcomers. In the context of this study, ethnicity as a cognitive category emerges most evidently in its use in this dichotomy. In other words, categories of (non)localness, ethnicity and territory were linked in narrating

personal experience in the land restitution process. Lithuanian newcomers and officers would be compared to colonizers in their inferior treatment of local Poles. In the case of this propertizing project (Sikor et al. 2017) land sometimes took on the value of an ethnic territory, important for maintaining the cohesion of an ethnic minority group, as some informants mentioned land transfer as a means to dilute the minority's population in the region.

Perhaps what magnified the dichotomy of locals vs. newcomers was people's attachment to their native places. Restitution ignited interest in the history of the locality where a person was rooted. Such was the case with Sara. During the meeting with her, she told me about the book she wrote about her village. Yet, she immediately added that there is no politics in it. By politics, she meant land restitution and, in her book, "there's no politics", she said. The book, as she explained, only contained information on who had what amount of land in the village, and why some of its inhabitants were poorer or richer. Sara acquired the documents during the restitution process and decided to use them to write the book. She asked for financial support for publishing the book from Lithuania minority party politicians, but received no help and decided to publish the book from her own money.

When during the interview I returned to the book topic and asked her whether she did it to somehow help others in their efforts to get back the land, her answer was no – the reason, by which she was evidently amused was that her village did not receive any mention in touristic descriptions or guides about Vilnius, although it was once a big settlement. Therefore, she decided to find out more information about the village and write a book about it. Yet, a few moments later she added "[a]nd I decided to do something for those people, for myself and my family." The result was a tiny book of which she nevertheless said she was proud. Thus, it can be seen how localness is intertwined with one's identity, family and the community a person belongs to.

Sometimes it was important not only to document the past, not simply to describe how things were and fill in the gaps of the history of one's family or the locality that one's family came from, but also to tell the things "right". When I met Jakub, a vivid elderly man from a small town in south-eastern Lithuania located west of Vilnius, I told him that my research aims to hear local people's stories. As I noted in my research diary, to such a question Jakub reacted by telling me about the new settlers who transferred their land to his town and moved there. He complained that someone from them wrote a book about the town. However, the book contained many factual mistakes. The mistakes were caused by the fact that the authors did not rely on primary sources i.e., testimonies of people who are still alive, but instead relied on information found in newspapers and elsewhere. After

the interview, Jakub took me on a tour around the town. We left the school where the interview took place and where he previously worked, and he showed me where the town's Lithuanian school was. We were strolling when he made a move with his hand and gestured towards a factory standing in front of us and said, "here is where our land was." During the Soviet times, the land was taken by the government and a factory was built on it. Yet, Jakub still remembers where it was.

Contrary to Jakub, Sara did not know where her land was. It was not occupied with factories, yet it was still unavailable to her. She recalled a situation when talking to an officer from a local section of the NLS, she heard that there is no land to be given to her in her native village, although Sara knew that the situation was the opposite. Rude and unhelpful and, as she believed, corrupted civil servants were only part of the problem she faced. Sara's land was to be found in what was once a street-plot settlement. All in all, she was to be given 80 ares of land that had formerly been owned by her mother and her grandparents. However, in her case, the land to be restored was divided into 21 parcels of different sizes, some of which were, as she said, only "one square meter". And, just a year before our interview, she received a land parcel of 9 ares (she was entitled to 12, but there were only smaller plots available, therefore she needed to pick from them), which was finally practically useable. She had to pay land fee for all her parcels, and Sara needed to sell some of them, because they were too small for practical usage. All in all, 121 parcels have been formed in her village. However, the co-owners do not know where their land is, only the buyers know that, as Sara explained. She also complained: "[w]hen I go to that village, to the street, here and there it is empty, maybe this is my land?" Sara's account illustrates that to have one's rights to the land restored in former street-plot settlements, as in the previously described example of Wiktor, means to have land is both virtual and actual at the same time.

The dichotomy of locals vs. newcomers corresponds to the findings of other research on the Lithuanian Polish minority. As mentioned in the previous section, localness played an important role in framing the restitution process as the category constitutes an important strategy to mitigate conflicts. The present section provided insight on what gives the category of local its salience. From the findings presented in this section, we can conclude that localness is tied to the category of other/newcomers or settlers. According to Vidmantas Vyšniauskas, in terms of the self-identification of SEL inhabitants, the dichotomy of locals vs. non-locals (or, in the words of Vyšniauskas' informants, between *miesjcov* and *przyjiezny*, or, translated from Polish, locals and newcomers) becomes relevant in the context of the shifting borders and territorial dependence of Šalčininkai region. To cite one of his informants, "[t]he government changed six times throughout my lifetime. And each government asks, 'who are you?' Therefore, it is better to say you are

local” (2021: 39). Vyšniauskas argues that, according to his informants, “locals” often pleased (Lith. “tiko”) every government and thereby would allow native inhabitants to avoid troubles their ethnic identity might have caused. As described by Vyšniauskas:

[t]he demarcation of the border was determined by the distrust of the locals in the newcomers. The latter often mistreated the locals, humiliated them, and took advantage of their privileged position. Locals did not expect mutual help from the newcomers. These people did not understand the local culture, did not pay attention to languages spoken in the area and, in the event of difficulties, often travelled back to where they had come from (2021: 44-45, my translation into English).

Therefore, it is locals’ distrust in and negative experience with newcomers which sharpens the boundary line between the locals and newcomers. The negative experiences of locals in relation to Lithuanian newcomers or officers encountered during the restitution, might have resonated with previously experienced hardships brought by previous major social, political and economic changes the region’s residents had lived through. And although, as shown in the previous section, localness might help mitigate conflict, it does not, because of its negative relation to newcomers, foster the blurring of group boundaries.

In addition, interpretations of the restitution process framed by participants through the dichotomy of local Poles vs. Lithuanian newcomers are reminiscent of some of the expert accounts presented in chapter 4, where the role of the Lithuanian titular nation-state in the restitution process was named as biased against the state’s Polish minority. The interpretations of restitution presented in these accounts comprise the nearest proof that, seen from the bottom-up perspective, the restitution process could be seen as an instance of nationalizing nationalism, as described by Brubaker (1996). Nevertheless, for participants and experts alike, such accounts were not dominant and were often vaguely articulated. Yet, even in such cases as those presented in this section, informants were careful about the possible conflicts their words together with ethnicity, as a frame to make meaning of restitution, could ignite (e.g. Wiktor’s and Sara’s accounts presented in the previous section). Furthermore, as shown in the second section of this chapter, it was kinship rather than ethnicity which, in times of social changes, provided a source of solidarity for trying to regain land in restitution, even, as narrated by some informants, as a form of relay race. Therefore, ethnicity was not a master category used to interpret the restitution process.

5. 3 Land Restitution and Ethnic Mobilization: How Did It (not) Happen?

Finally, the present last section of the chapter discusses the role that land restitution played in ethnic mobilization, pursued by political entrepreneurs of the Polish minority party, as revealed in interviews with people who had sought to get back their land, as well as minority politicians and activists. The data collected for this research suggest that the relationship between the interviewed minority activists/politicians and minority members are characterised by several features. First, minority activists and politicians emphasized the responsibility of their co-ethnics in the process of restitution and were critical of people's passivity in the restitution process. Nevertheless, minority activists and politicians created an organizational network to assist minority members in the restitution processes. However, in their accounts, informants interviewed for this research expressed criticism over the party's conflictual politics and accused politicians of politicizing the restitution issues for their own benefit. Among the most dissatisfied were the informants who demonstrated the highest degrees of self-identification as Poles. Thus, I argue that in some cases a strong Polish identity coexists with strong anti-minority party attitudes. Conversely, those less critical of the minority party (and more critical of the Lithuanian government) regarding the restitution, included those informants who either belonged to the party or were affiliated with it. Finally, I argue that, in addition to ethnicity not being the prime source of solidarity while seeking the return of land, my informants' critical opinion regarding the minority politicians' role in solving restitution-related issues might suggest that the political mobilization of Poles around the issue of restitution remained rather limited.

As claimed by the classics of nationalism studies, national communities are characterized by the horizontal relationship and ethnic solidarity their members demonstrate towards one another (Anderson 1991; Calhoun 2003). However, as noted by Sinisa Malesevic "the sense of ethnic attachment developed in the ethnic ideologies and myths of common ethnic origin comes into play or becomes sociologically relevant only after or during group political mobilization" (Malesevic 2004: 28). However, group formation is an uncertain process because it depends on particular circumstances under which ethnicity becomes a cognitively important category. Indeed, if, as noted by Brubaker, "group" refers to "a mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collective with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action" and if "category" "is at best a potential basis for group-formation or 'groupness'" (Brubaker 2004: 12), then distinguishing between categories and groups could allow us to "problematize – rather than presume – the relation

between them. We can ask about the degree of groupness associated with a particular category in a particular setting, and about the political, social, cultural, and psychological processes through which categories get invested with groupness (Petersen 1987)" (Brubaker 2004: 12). And if, as proposed by Brubaker, we treat groupness as an event, as something that happens, then we can stay "alert to the possibility that groupness may *not* happen, that high levels of groupness may *fail* to crystallize, despite the group-making efforts of ethno-political entrepreneurs" (Brubaker 2004: 12).

Attending to the results of political mobilization of the minority members in the context of land restitution is important because we can estimate the degree of groupness associated with the "Polish" category and discuss the setting (land restitution) and the political processes (the party's attempts to consolidate Polish voters) through which "Polish" categories become invested with groupness. Finally, we can ask why groupness happened only to a certain degree despite the group-making efforts of the minority ethno-political entrepreneurs, and thereby we can avoid an "overethnized" (Brubaker 2011) view of the restitution process.

To examine whether or not land restitution in SEL was used to mobilize Lithuanian Poles, I analyse how my informants described the role played in the restitution process by members of the minority elite, some of whom I had a chance to interview for this research (e.g., the minority politicians, journalists, former state servants and intellectuals).

As mentioned, some of the informants who sought to regain their land relied upon the help provided by their family members. However, some also received help from various minority activists, journalists or politicians. Some of my interviewees mentioned the radio program "Land return", broadcast on Lithuanian minority radio "Radio Znad Wili". Within the minority community, the radio station is associated with those public Lithuanian Polish figures that are rather critical of the minority party and its leadership. However, the program was led by journalists and/or former or future minority politicians (including members of the minority party EAPL-CFA), some of whom had expertise in land restitution issues. The idea behind the programme was that people were able to call live, share their problems, and receive advice on how to proceed further with restitution.

During the interview with Zenon, who was one of the chairs of this radio programme, I asked him how he came up with the idea to work there. He explained that he had experience in working with restitution-related issues (he had been a high-ranking state official and politician). People would contact him for help even when he was not in the service anymore. Therefore, he decided that his knowledge could still be of use. At first, he wanted to establish a consulting bureau at the House of Polish Culture, where he would provide consultations free of charge. However,

he was not welcome there, because, as he explained, he was not a member of the minority party, and the personnel of the House distrusted him and perceived him as a rival. Zenon explained that when he finished hosting the programme, he was replaced by a person whom he called incompetent for the job. More importantly, he emphasized people's general ignorance of important aspects of the restitution process: "[w]ell, there was also... here, it needs to be said that... a lot of it was people's ignorance... In Vilnius city, too... they saw that there would be no... it was not possible to return the land in that place... because there's a factory standing there."

According to the interviewee, people whose land was in such places should have understood the situation. However, they would insist on getting land there or elsewhere in the city, although, as the interviewee explained, according to the law, in Vilnius city, one was able to get a parcel without remuneration for construction, and the rest was compensated in different ways. In such cases, the law provided alternatives, and the interviewee, while still working as a host of the aforementioned program, would explain to people what else could be done in case land that was previously owned in Vilnius city was not available. However, the new host did not bother to explain the situation to people who lacked understanding of it, and instead, according to the interviewee, encouraged people to further fight for the land that was unavailable or to claim financial compensation according to the market value of the land that was not returned.

Zenon also criticized the minority party for not doing enough to help people get their land back. While in power within several governing coalitions of Vilnius city councils, the party managed the City development department. Yet, according to the interviewee, the minority politicians were still not able to take advantage of this to speed up the process of parcel formation and restitution in Vilnius city. During an interview with another journalist, Joanna, a middle-aged woman who used to provide public consultations for people seeking to regain their land, I asked her whether a lack of knowledge of the Lithuanian language might have impaired peoples' chances in the process. The informant answered that "principles always have a cost", and that "we're looking for someone to blame, but don't do everything we can." The journalist suggested that people have been able to learn the language already and thus avoid possible problems. She also mentioned people's passivity, suggesting they were waiting for everything to be done for them. This, according to her, was a remnant of the Soviet mentality, and those who were more active were better able to achieve their goals.

Similar views were held by another interviewee, Ludwika, a former state servant and minority politician who was helping people in their struggle for land. According to this informant, people did not know Lithuanian or the law, some were

also waiting and hesitating to start the restitution process. Also, as the informant put it, some people saw that there was no land to be given to them, because it was occupied with, say, factories. However, they were stubborn and demanded the land that was already occupied. Finally, the informant expressed her opinion that the restitution process was hampered by peoples' lack of general education. Bureaucrats would tell them to wait and they would wait, forgetting to register the documents they would hand in to the bureaucrats. The latter would then use this fact to delay the process. Therefore, the above-quoted members of the minority who worked as journalists, former state officers, and politicians emphasised the responsibility of their co-ethnics in the process of restitution. In their opinion, people did not do everything they could to get back their land.

Besides various minority individuals and their initiatives to assist their co-ethnics in the process of restitution, help was also provided by some of the minority NGOs, one of which was the Lithuanian Polish Lawyers' Union (Pl. "Związku Prawników Polaków na Litwie"). The organization provided *pro bono* legal assistance to people seeking restitution.⁸⁶ During a conference organized to celebrate 20 years of the NGO's activities, its chairman stated that thanks to financial support from the Polish state received via the Foundation Aid to Poles in the East, over the last 10 years the Union employed 5-7 lawyers and was able to provide free legal assistance to Poles seeking the return of their land.⁸⁷ The chairman explained that land restitution was one of the main reasons that the Union was established. At that time, there was discrimination in this matter – land ownership documents from the interwar period of the Second Polish Republic were not recognized. Many people had to go to court to establish legal facts or find alternative documents, so the primary goal of the associated lawyers was to provide these people with legal

⁸⁶ As defined on the Union's official description, "The main activity of the Lithuanian Polish Lawyers' Union is to provide free legal aid to the poor in Vilnius. The Union unites lawyers of Polish origin in Lithuania for the realization of the following main goals: to participate in the creation of the state of Lithuania based on the rule of law, to strive for the full realization of human rights and freedoms, to help develop the legal consciousness of the people, to participate in the development of the science of law and education as well as other activities." URL: <http://www.zppl.lt/index.php/lt/veikla>.

⁸⁷ zw.lt. 2017. "Doroszevska: The actions taken by the Lawyers' Union are an important guideline for us in Poland" (Pl. "Doroszevska: Działania, które podejmuje Związek Prawników, są ważną wskazówką dla nas w Polsce"). URL: <https://zw.lt/wilno-wilenszczyzna/ambasador-dzialania-ktore-podejmuje-zwiazek-prawnikow-sa-wazna-wskazowka-dla-nas-w-polsce/>.

assistance in their onerous efforts to regain their patrimony.⁸⁸ However, the help that the Union was able to provide was rather limited: since 2009 the Union has helped conclude the cases of approximately fifty people.⁸⁹ The president recalled that in 1996, at the time the NGO started its activities, many of the Polish minority group had not yet mastered the Lithuanian language, and there was a need for help in this area.⁹⁰ This statement confirms the previously presented cases where restitution participants faced troubles over the state language. He added that the Union also aimed to demonstrate that Poles did not only work in lower status jobs, such as cashiers or drivers.⁹¹ His statements therefore indicate that Poles were perceived as a lower status group in Lithuania, which supports the decision to approach ethnic groups as status groups.

The Union clearly played an important role in the minority's public life, as several of my informants mentioned that they would contact the Union and receive greater or lesser help from it, and recommended that I reach out to the Union's lawyers for more details concerning land restitution in SEL. The Union was in close cooperation with other Lithuanian Polish NGOs, most of all the House of Polish Culture in Vilnius, a hub where different Polish cultural and public organizations can work under one roof, and the Union of Lithuanian Poles, the largest Polish NGO dealing with various public issues and the preservation of Polish culture. Although working separately, all of these institutions – the Lawyers' Union, the House of Polish Culture, the Union of Lithuanian Poles and the minority party – formed a network, where members of one institution would participate in the activities of the other institutions. Such cooperation allowed for effective information sharing and provided an opportunity to form a network based on ethnic solidarity in restitution issues. Yet, in the following part of this section, I show that people were sceptical of the role that the minority's elite played in restitution.

⁸⁸ wilnoteka.lt. 2017. "20th anniversary of the Union of Polish Lawyers in Lithuania" (Pl. "20-lecie Związku Prawników Polaków na Litwie"). URL: <http://www.wilnoteka.lt/artykul/20-lecie-zwiazku-prawnikow-polakow-na-litwie>.

⁸⁹ wilnoteka.lt.[youtube channel] 2017. "20th anniversary of the Union of Polish Lawyers in Lithuania" (Pl. "20-lecie Związku Prawników Polaków na Litwie"). URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoI52ajdf1c&ab_channel=WilnotekaLT.

⁹⁰ zw.lt. 2017. "Doroszevska: The actions taken by the Lawyers' Union are an important guideline for us in Poland" (Pl. "Doroszevska: Działania, które podejmuje Związek Prawników, są ważną wskazówką dla nas w Polsce"). URL: <https://zw.lt/wilno-wilenszczyzna/ambasador-dzialania-ktore-podejmuje-zwiazek-prawnikow-sa-wazna-wskazowka-dla-nas-w-polsce/>.

⁹¹ wilnoteka.lt.[youtube channel] 2017. "20th anniversary of the Union of Polish Lawyers in Lithuania" (Pl. "20-lecie Związku Prawników Polaków na Litwie"). URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoI52ajdf1c&ab_channel=WilnotekaLT.

During the interviews, I asked my informants whether the party that claims to represent the minority's interests helped them in any way regarding the restitution issues? Below are some of the responses to this question. In the opinion of Jadwiga, the minority politicians, as well as local land surveyors, had no say in deciding and solving people's land restitution issues: "[t]hey had no voice, because everything had been [decided] from above. The land management office was near the Kalvariju [market], and the municipality office was there, too. They were all tied up. Our local land managers had no voice. They would do what they were told to. They would also be thrown a bone, of course." When I asked another of my informants whether the minority party had helped people to get back their land, Mikolaj, an elderly and rather wealthy businessman from Vilnius city who was recommended to me by a human rights activist and whom I met at his workplace place in Vilnius, told me that such politicians would be extremely busy. In case someone had received some portion of his land, politicians simply encouraged people to do things by themselves further: "I talked to everyone... they have many things to do, they have many people like me... thousands of thousands [...] They told me 'Mikolaj, you have already got a bit of this and that... do it yourself... go and do it yourself.' And well... well I did..." Here it needs to be said that he also used the service of the human rights activist who had put me in contact with him. The two persons knew each other well because Mikolaj would provide substantial aid to an NGO where our common acquaintance worked. To sum up, my informants believed that the party had no power or resources to help. Therefore, their reliance on the party's help was limited. Others however were indifferent to the party's help not because they saw the party as unable to help, but because the party had some other characteristics that they did not admire.

As already mentioned in this chapter's section on localness, Sara complained about the minority politician who, instead of helping to resolve restitution related issues, chose to escalate conflict over the original spelling of Polish names). Informants like Jadwiga and Tymoteusz were keen to denounce claims that Lithuanians were behind the failure of the restitution process when it came to Poles. Tymoteusz expressed his opinion that the minority politicians tried to hijack the restitution issue for their own benefit by convincing Poles that their problems were caused by members of Lithuania's majority population.

A similar opinion was expressed by two more informants. The first of them was Sandra, a student, and a politically active young woman from the Vilnius district. She had a very negative opinion about the minority party, saying that the minority politicians from her eldership did not care about the people who lived in her neighbourhood, and that they also differentiate between Poles and Lithuanians. Her relations with the elder were very tense. Sandra is a member

of the social-democratic party and an active person in the community. Sandra and her neighbours, some of whom are young mothers with children, live in a collapsing old house that was nationalized during the Soviet period and families were allowed to move into it. After Lithuania became independent, the building did not acquire a registration number and therefore today it legally belongs to no one. As the building is no one's property, people are hesitant to maintain it. Sandra accused the minority party of not registering the building and taking advantage of the situation because it is easier to manipulate people who live under precarious circumstances.

The second informant was the formerly mentioned Malgorzata. At the time of our meeting, she was waiting for a response from the Vilnius district municipality, which has been governed by the Polish minority party for several decades now, to her official request to provide information on why the restitution process of her land was stuck. She met me, because she hoped I would be able to help her. When I explained to her that I am only a sociologist, she told me that "sociologists are very significant." I got her contacts from our common acquaintance – a minority politician from another "Lithuanian" political party, who was helping to solve her land-related problems. When I asked Malgorzata, whether she received any help or assistance from EAPL-CFA, she told me that she knows the leader of the party very well. She attended many meetings with the representatives of the party, in which the party's leader would give suggestions, but did not help them. Moreover, she accused the party of being corrupt. Like Tymoteusz, she also addressed other minority politicians and activists, mostly from the House of Polish Culture. There, the Union of Polish Lawyers provided her with a paid lawyer and she was able to get some help. However, from the interviews, I got an impression that people would be helped by individual politicians and activists/lawyers, not the party. It was a single person who helped some of my interviewees and to whom they were thankful.

To sum up, some of my informants disliked the party's conflictual politics (as discussed in this chapter's 2nd section, dedicated to localness), and thought that the party wanted to politicize the restitution issues for their own benefit. These informants had different social backgrounds, among them minority intellectuals, businesspeople, workers, and therefore could not be identified with one particular social group. The party was perceived either as corrupt, or as only able to offer help which was either limited or not affordable.

Nevertheless, all the previously mentioned informants had barely used ethnic categories to interpret and frame the land restitution process. Similarly, in their accounts the role played by the minority party in restitution was vague. However, research participants with stronger ethnic self-identification (those who clearly

stated that they consider themselves Poles) had a more negative attitude towards the minority party. This was also the case with the interviewees who spoke about “locals” to mitigate the tensions regarding the restitution process. For example, Sara criticized the minority politicians’ input to solving the problems of land restitution. According to her, these politicians did not themselves have trouble gaining land in some prestigious locations. She mentioned that, during her meeting with Jarosław Narkiewicz – the minority party politician who later became one of the main members of the party, – he told Sara that the right time to act had passed. This made her angry and, during the interview, she complained that “for him, time was not a problem, because he managed to acquire a good piece of land by the lake in Trakai” (a resort town). Sara also told me that such politicians claimed they had no power over such issues:

I went to his [Narkiewicz’s] office to ask him for a favour, but also to ask him, how he could have allowed that... to which he answered that it was not his party that passes such laws... [...] that someone else came up with this and that it’s been done now... well, therefore what are we going to do...let’s go [ironically]... which one to write, W or V?.. (Sara, interview no. 3).

Often discussions about the minority politicians’ roles in resolving the problems of land restitution would shift towards discussions about the minority party’s activities in general. This was the case with Sara, who argued that although minority politicians were unable to solve land-related problems, they were successful in becoming embroiled in conflicts over issues such as the original spelling of Polish names in passports – a problem whose significance Sara was sceptical about.

The above-mentioned Lucja, a housewife who was trying to regain the rest of the land that once belonged to her family in what is today Vilnius city, expressed both a clear identification with the minority group (she even proposed meeting at a Polish restaurant in Vilnius for an interview) and the shame she felt because of the minority party led by W. Tomaszewski. She also expressed a belief that the party works in the manner of clientelism, providing help on the basis of how close one is to the party. Consider her answer to my question about whether she had received help from the minority party who had representatives at the city council:

I understood your question. I think it would be realistic for such a person to be a member of that party. Well, then you know, whom to talk to and so on. Now if you asked me, as a Pole, something about this party, while Tomaszewski is there, I would be ashamed to admit that I am a Pole if Tomaszewski was around. I’m ashamed. When I go to elections, I check the lists of the candidates for representatives of

national minorities, read the postulates of the party and then vote. I had no business with the Polish party, nor did the people around me. But I can assume that if you were a member of that party, they would bring you into contact with someone who could help. (Lucja, interview no. 29).

Similar views were expressed by Krzysztof, the aforementioned farmer from Vilnius city. To my question about whether the party had provided any help to him, he answered that he did not address the party. He believed that the party would help people close the party. His opinion therefore supports that expressed by Lucja that the party looks after its clientele first and foremost. His beliefs were rooted in his previous experience with the party, which he described as a group whose members tend to mind their own interests first:

[t]he Polish Party did little to help. I did not ask them. I think they were helping their own people. I don't watch TV anymore. An example – the Seimas decided on the question of funding for culture in the Vilnius district. The funding was allocated. I met some acquaintances. We're standing, talking, and there comes a person, responsible for culture in the Vilnius district. I tell him, 'Well, you are going to be rich now.' He says 'what?' I tell him that more than a million was allocated. He says to everyone, 'Well, I only signed it...' And he was a Pole. I asked him, 'How so?' He signed the document and saw no money. A Polish person should stand for his... And he said this to everyone... (Krzysztof, interview no. 32).

Further, Krzysztof shared another story that had contributed to his negative opinion of the party. Once, when the city council was preparing to vote on who should be the city's mayor, Krzysztof and his colleagues went to meet a minority deputy to ask him to vote against a certain candidate. The deputy answered that they need to look after the party's interest, because if the candidate were to win without their support, it may turn out badly for the party.

The most negative opinion about the minority party was expressed by Wiktor. He was critical of a lawyer whose name was also mentioned by some of my other interviewees. In Wiktor's opinion, the lawyer was too soft, and this, he suspected, might have been because of some corruption among Poles:

[w]ell, this guy, what's his name... X, who says that he deals with... but his goals are sometimes... I know people who addressed him... his goals are... to soften, to keep silent, to silence, perhaps others would have something to say... [unclear] You'll be paid... what are you... you got paid, that's OK, no? Dirty things are happening here... (Wiktor and his wife, interview no. 34).

It did not take much time for Wiktor to move from discussing the lawyer's activities to discussing the minority party, to which the lawyer belongs, and accusing it of being anti-state, anti-Polish, and pro-Russian.

He accused the party of the Russification of Lithuanian Poles, which resulted from the party's cooperation with Lithuania's Russian minority political organizations. Wiktor recalled that at the beginning of independence he and other politically active Poles were able to maintain a dialogue with leaders of the reform movement "Sajūdis". However, in his words, when Waldemar Tomaszewski took the leadership of the minority party, the local Polish intelligentsia "who at least knew Polish" withdrew, and a space opened for various dubious persons who soon took over the leading positions within the party: "[t]he space opened up... Mrs Rekst... I was born in 1954. I attended the 'Vilija' ensemble. Folk dance ensemble? In Vilnius, I knew... my brother, even more... all the intellectuals... sorry, but we barely could pass the corridors... pf, Rekst! And who was she? Where from? Why? How? Pft - mayor! For so many years!" Wiktor's account of the minority party was the most interesting one because he demonstrated one of the strongest self-identifications with the Polish minority, and yet his opinion about the minority's political leadership was one of the most negative ones.

To sum up, the last-quoted interviewees had very negative attitudes towards the minority's political elite because in their view the party members did little to help people in regaining their land, and instead were keen on pursuing conflictual politics by politicising trivial things such as the original spelling of names in passports; because as a Pole they felt ashamed by the party's leader; because the party provided help only in those cases when it was suitable for it and the help was provided to members of a close circle; finally, the party politicians were blamed for being corrupt and accused of being anti-Polish and pro-Russian. Thus, we can say that in some cases a strong Polish identity coexists with strong attitudes against the minority party. One can conclude from such negative evaluations that the efforts made by the minority's politicians to mobilize Poles around the issue of restitution were rather ineffective.

Regarding the interviewees' estimations of the party's role, a few things should be mentioned before drawing any final conclusions about it. Firstly, the last time land restitution had received a substantial mention in the party's electoral programmes was the 2008 party program for parliamentary elections. Restitution was mentioned in the program's section on Agriculture in the following way:

To improve the situation of farmers, we will apply for:

[...]

- the immediate return of land to the rightful owners and their heirs by the end of 2009, disclosure and condemnation of cases of unlawful seizure of land in the Vilnius and Trakai regions⁹²

Thereby, the party reduced the scope of the restitution issue, as the program mentioned nothing about the restoration of rights to property in Vilnius, where restitution might have been the most complicated. From the perspective of the party, the issue had lost its relevance some time ago. The fact that at the time of the research the issue had not been a part of the minority party's political agenda for some time might have impacted the informants' accounts. Second, as mentioned in the methodological part of this research, what is remembered is determined by the relevance of those things in the present. One can assume that these critical accounts regarding the party's role in the restitution process were determined not by what the party did (or did not do) to resolve the issues in the past, but by the party's activities (not necessarily related to land restitution) at the time of interviews, as well as by the informants' need to dissociate themselves from the party due to its polarizing image.

Less critical of the party were those informants who had some direct or indirect ties to it. Those who were closer to the party did receive help from the party or the party-affiliated Polish NGOs. Rafal, a middle-aged pedagogue from the Trakai district whom I interviewed together with Jakub, received legal assistance from a lawyer from the House of Polish Culture, who was hired with the help of the Union of Poles and "our party", as he called it. Rafal was not able to remember the lawyer's name, but said that "he was a Pole", thereby demonstrating that the ethnicity of the lawyer was of some importance to him. However, he added that he had also received help from a famous lawyer from Lithuania.

During the research, I discussed land restitution issues with Ludwika, who had experience of working in local as well as in central government. In the latter, she oversaw the agricultural sector. Ludwika was not a member of the minority party but was delegated to the job by the party. Asked for her opinion regarding the fact that the responsibility for the implementation of the restitution policy had been taken away from the institutions of local government – first it had belonged to the municipalities, then to counties and finally to the NLS – she answered:

⁹² Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania. 2008. "Electoral declaration – 2008" of Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania" (Pl. "Deklaracja WYborcza – 2008" Akcji Wyborczej Polaków na Litwie).

[w]e always had self-government of two levels. But a local government of one level was introduced. I used to joke that it was because of the Vilnius district, that the decision was made to strip the local government of a say over the issues regarding the restitution. Where there was some attractive land, the central government wanted to manage things by itself. It seems so to me. It is bad that one-level local government still exists. People are indifferent to everything now. They can't decide anything about their eldership. There are 40 thousand people who live in the Vilnius city elderships. And they have no representation at the city council. (Ludwika, interview no. 16)

Further, I asked Ludwika about the relationship between the municipality and other institutions which had been responsible for restitution at the time she had worked at the municipality. To which the answer was: none. The municipality found that communication with institutions like the NLS was complicated because the institution was rather ignorant. The situation had not changed much by the time of the interview, with the municipalities and the NLS still working separately. However, she shared the fact that, due to the cooperation between the local and central governments, which she had initiated, it was possible to speed up the restitution process.

I also asked the informant what the minority party had managed to achieve regarding restitution when it was in power at Vilnius city council. The research participant's answer was not very detailed. The party's suggestion to compensate people for land that could not be given back with forest was mentioned. The interviewee expressed regret that a small number of people still hasn't had their cases solved. Yet, "not many apply, although [it was possible] to make an application as early as 1991... they don't know, they are not interested, gone or dead, and the National Land Service still has these 'leads'. Elders could help find these people and submit their papers to the Land Service... municipalities do not oversee this well enough." Thus, the officer emphasized the responsibility of people for the protracted restitution process.

The minority politicians interviewed for this research would draw attention to other factors. In the following, I present the accounts of a few minority politicians active at the municipal level regarding the restitution process and the role the minority party played in guaranteeing that the policy's implementation would not disregard the minority's interests. I asked Teodor, a minority politician from the Vilnius district, whether the party had any instruments of control over the potentially corrupt land surveyors. According to Teodor, they tried doing this, but he stressed, immediately, that in the '90s land restitution used to be the counties' competency, and the municipalities lost a say over restitution issues. According

to the interviewee, this was a bad decision because the county governors were appointed by the central government, while the local government was always closer to the people, and such a decision might have been taken in order to facilitate corruption. Despite the attempts to hold land surveyors accountable, Teodor admitted that local politicians had no instruments to enforce this and sometimes would encounter powerful people in their way:

[y]es. So here was... here, I think, it is a completely wrong decision, and I imagine that it was that decision that increased the corruption, did not diminish it, because the people in the municipality are the closest to the people, they are directly responsible to the people and people can punish them. During the election, if there is corruption, something... well, just [unclear], so to speak [laughs], and county officials, as we know, were appointed by the central government. In general, I think municipality is the closest to the people and could have done the job better... than it was done by the county staff. It's this... It was very difficult because of the responsibility of the municipality and the ability to influence or control something, because, of course, we wrote and the STT wrote and... [unclear] but we just didn't have any tools to control those people somehow, because we didn't have that stuff at all. Because we collected material from the people who were there [unclear], the case is when people... Avi... well, maybe not Avižieniai... There is a village, but near the streets of Trakio / Užtrakio, there... there, the land was Polish, and there people waited and... when the land would be returned. That... the name of the man... Malinowski probably... I'll be able to check... In the sense that he had a lot of land there, it was his family land, and part of his land was occupied by the highway, meaning that he had to be the first in line to get all the vacant land and all the land that was occupied by the highway, that made sense. But someone came at night, measured the land, erected poles on it, the people started to [unclear], the surveyor gave them a phone number and said: 'Well, call this number, perhaps they'll let you graze your cows there.' They called, and Ručytė-Landsbergienė picked up the phone. It is a fact, that they came at night and measured [the land]... The wife of the Speaker of the Seimas [laughs] (Teodor, interview no. 19).

Teodor's account suggests that cynical and unlawful behaviour was demonstrated by the land surveyors. At the same time, his story suggests that the problems of local people sprung from the fact that their interest (to get back their land) was in conflict with powerful people's interests (to get land in a better and more comfortable place).

As mentioned in the theoretical part, I incorporated into this research data that was gathered for another research project regarding the Polish minority. In

an interview conducted for T. Agarin's inquiry into the representation of national minorities in multinational societies, I asked the minority party-affiliated politician Elżbieta about the topics that she considers to be the most important for her. Among the priorities mentioned was land restitution:

[a]nother thing that worries me very much now is the return of the property, in other words, the return of land to former applicants where there are actually a lot... a lot of difficulties and challenges. All the more so, because the land is generally such a rich issue, and a very interesting one. It hurts me that it is very often said: 'Let us not pay attention to this subject, because they are Polish.' But the fact that the land, which had been taken away from the Poles by the Soviet Union, was somehow taken away for the second time, now by independent Lithuania, but taken away or not accounted for, it is a new aspect (Elżbieta).

She explained that it takes great effort to convince her colleagues that land must be returned in a particular location, and the argument that someone is entitled to this because they previously had land in this location does not always help:

I have to go a long way to prove that land must be returned in a certain place, because it is were the land was owned, the applicants are entitled to that land. And, in fact, no one is interested in it, and if you see that the land legally belongs to someone and you have to return it, then a significant amount of persuasion, proof is needed. It takes a long time and it is not always successful. And if, say, there is a disputed area, a plot, needed by the city, and you have to return that land, then, of course, it is very difficult, because the decision must still be made by the coalition. After all, there is a coalition. Regarding the land restitution, the coalition rarely hears [another opinion], and hears [it] only when other interests are not harmed. That is, say, if there is an area where the city is planning nothing, then yes, you can return [the land]. If, however, there is an area where, say, a park or a kindergarten should appear, then yes – there will be no return. Whether this is right, I cannot judge. However, that's their legitimate land... the land that formerly belonged to applicants... and it is sort of, you know, the second... (Elżbieta).

I told the informant that I had heard comparisons of land restitution with the nationalisation of land during socialism, and asked whether she thought such interpretations bore at least a grain of truth, to which she replied:

[y]es. The first time it was taken away... This independent Lithuania had almost agreed to return it, but no, it did not, because then [the land] was needed for some

other functions. I agree that it is needed for certain functions. But, say, you can build a school at a place "n", and you can move it a little bit to the left. Meanwhile, the previously owned land that needs to be returned cannot be moved, because it used to be owned there. So... and this is a rather difficult question. And yes, it depends on ethnicity [Lith. "tautybės"], because, I think, if they weren't Polish, [the process] would be easier to go through. Although, as I say, it is worth acknowledging that, with the current coalition, [...] these three years have been quite successful, because we have managed to agree on principles and we are working according to those principles, a lot has been done, but I still hope we will certainly do... (Elżbieta).

In other words, the interviewee was convinced that the difficulties in restoring the rights to land are due to the fact that this is a "Polish issue". If this was not a "Polish issue", things would move faster. The interviewee explained that it takes a lot of effort to convince her colleagues that land must be restored in a particular place, and the argument that someone previously had their land in this particular place does not always help.

Finally, during the period of pilot interviews, I interviewed Gabriel, another minority party politician and an active Polish community lawyer, who was recommended to me by several of my Polish friends as well as some other informants. He emphasised that the troubled restitution process was caused by a lack of political will to solve these kinds of problems. According to the informant, "this was always our [faction's] priority, no one else prioritized the issues".

as policyjant [Pl. "police officer"]... When we come, then... once as opposition, next time as position... well, if we were in a position, let's say [...], the process is gaining momentum... now we came half a year ago... we see the results. In some places, the process has accelerated, in others, it's over... then again, it is like a big mechanism, like a plane, so you need [a lot] for it to gain speed... (Gabriel, interview no. 1).

The second reason which the interviewee mentioned as slowing down the whole process was the indifference of officials of the civil service to the problem, and this was also because they didn't feel that there was a will among politicians to solve the problem.

the officials understand that this is an important topic, that it cannot be... under the carpet, so to say... and that we do not see the problem... and that's all... and now we are meeting with the Ministry, with the National Land Service, with... the government representatives, we discuss, we make plans, how the whole coordination

should go [...] everything becomes very smooth then... when there is communication, then we see everything – where exactly the problems are and what can be solved together, and how (Gabriel, interview no. 1).

The informant described land restitution as an issue that interests only the minority party. According to him, other politicians and state servants do not demonstrate the political will to solve the issues, and it is the minority party, who often needs to act like a “policjant”, that forces these servants to work and ignites cooperation between different institutions coordinating the restitution process.

To sum up, among those who were less critical of the party’s role in resolving restitution-related problems were informants connected to the party or members of the party. They tended to hold the Lithuanian government responsible for deficiencies in the implementation of the restitution policy with respect to owners of minority backgrounds. Their interpretation of the course of restitution in SEL is similar to the expert interpretations presented in chapter 4, and reinforces the interpretation of restitution as an instance of what Brubaker called a nationalizing state.

Summing up the results of this section, it can be said that some of the interviewed minority activists and politicians emphasized the responsibility of their co-ethnics in the process of restitution and were critical of people’s passivity in the process. However, the cooperation of minority activists and politicians, which was based on ethnic solidarity and aimed at solving restitution issues, did create an organizational network and a base to mobilize members of the minority around the issue of restitution. However, the informants interviewed for this research expressed criticism of the party’s conflictual politics (as mentioned in the 2nd section of this chapter, dedicated to localness), and thought that the party wanted to politicize the restitution issues for its own benefit. The party was perceived either as corrupt or as unable to offer either meaningful or affordable help. Interestingly, among the informants who were the most critical of the party were those who demonstrated the highest degrees of self-identification as Poles. They were of the view that minority politicians did little to help people in getting their land back, and instead were keen on pursuing conflictual politics by politicising trivial things such as the original spelling of names in passports; that as Poles they felt ashamed by the party’s leader; that the party provided help only in those cases when it was suitable and the help provided was provided to members of a close circle; and finally, that the party was corrupt, anti-Polish, and pro-Russian. Thus, we can say that in some cases, a strong Polish identity coexists with strongly negative attitudes towards the minority party. However, such interpretations might be affected by the party’s controversial public image at the time when the interviews were made,

as well as the fact that restitution has long been taken out of the party's political agenda. If the party pays little attention to it, it might be that those informants' view of the party's role in resolving restitution problems were shaped more by the informants' opinion about the position minority politicians take regarding other issues. Conversely, those less critical of the minority party (and more critical of the Lithuanian government) regarding the restitution included informants connected to the party, as well as members of the party.

The critical opinions of those seeking restitution towards the minority politicians who were ostensibly seeking to assist Poles in this process allow us to deduce that the political mobilization of Poles around the issue of restitution remained rather limited. The fact that people emphasized the importance of one's locality and kinship suggests that in the case of land restitution, ethnicity was not the primary source of solidarity.

However, the results presented in this section conflict with the fact that the Polish minority party achieved good electoral results. This might be explained in several ways. Most of my informants were from Vilnius, where the party's support is lesser compared to the support the party enjoys in the more rural Šalčininkai and Vilnius district municipalities. Therefore, the problem might be related to the research sample. However, it may also be due to the fact that support for the minority party does not correlate with the level of groupness of the Polish minority in Lithuania. Looking at the electoral results of the Polish minority party in Lithuania, one sees that the party's popularity peaked in 2012.

Table 3: EAPL-CFA's electoral results

Parliamentary elections	Votes received (multiple-seat constituencies)	Votes % (multiple-seat constituencies)	Seats received in multiple-seat constituencies	Seats received in single-seat constituencies
1996	40941	2.98%	-	1
2000	28641	1.95%	-	2
2004	45302	3.79%	-	2
2008	59237	4,79 %	-	3
2012	79840	5,83 %	5	3
2016	69810	5,48 %	5	3
2020	56386	4,80 %	-	3

Source: The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania, 2021⁹³

⁹³ The Central Electoral Commission of Lithuania. 2021. "Elections and referendums". URL: <https://www.vrk.lt/en/rinkimai>

During the parliamentary elections in 2004, another Polish party – The Polish People’s Party – also participated. After some transformation, this party ceased its activities in 2017. Nevertheless, in 2004, Polish minority voters were able to choose among two minority parties. However, 2004 also marked the beginning of the EAPL-CFA’s closer cooperation with politicians representing Lithuania’s Russian minority. In the 2004 Euro parliamentary elections, the EAPL-CFA formed a common electoral list, named the “Coalition of Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Lithuanian Russian Union ‘Together we are strong!’”, together with what was at the time one of the two Lithuanian Russian minority political parties – the Lithuanian Russian Union. The coalition received 5.71% of votes. and W. Tomaszewski almost made it into the European Parliament (after ranking he was first on the list). In the 2008 election, the party teamed up with another Russian minority party for the first time – the Russian Alliance – as well as with members of Byelorussian minority in Lithuania.⁹⁴ During the 2012 parliamentary elections, the EAPL-CFA formed an alliance with the Russian Alliance party, the Lithuanian People’s Party, and thirty other social organizations, and included their representatives in the party’s electoral list.⁹⁵ This was the first election in which one of the party’s coalitions surpassed the 5% electoral threshold, obtaining three mandates in single-seat constituencies and five mandates in multiple-seat constituencies, allowing the party to form a separate faction in the parliament. This historical success would not have been possible without the party’s close cooperation with the Russian Alliance (RA) – the country’s second Russian minority party.

⁹⁴ This time the party did not form a joint electoral list, as it would have meant a higher (7% instead of 5%) electoral threshold for electoral coalitions, but simply included Russian Alliance’s politicians in its electoral list, e.g., No. 3 Irina Rozova, No. 10 Tamara Lochankina, 12. Vladimir Vlasov.

https://www.vrk.lt/statiniai/puslapiai/rinkimai/400_lt/KandidatuSarasai/RinkimuOrganizacija3453.html

Regarding Byelorussian representatives, no. 5 in the party’s electoral list was taken by Marija Matusėvič, who, according to the data presented by the state’s Central Electoral Commission, self-identified as Byelorussian and was a member of Byelorussian language community “F. Skorina”.

URL: https://www.vrk.lt/statiniai/puslapiai/rinkimai/400_lt/Kandidatai/Kandidatas21615/Kandidato21615Anketa.html.

⁹⁵ The Department for National Minorities Under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. “National Communities in Lithuania: Lithuanian Poles”.

URL: https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Lietuvos_lenku_bendruomene_A5_EN.pdf

Data regarding the party's electoral strategies and successes indicate that land restitution was an insignificant factor in the minority's mobilization. The party ceased mentioning land restitution after the 2008 elections, but the next election was a historical success for the party. The results were brought about through the cooperation between the Polish minority party and other minorities, first and foremost Lithuanian Russians. This cooperation was a reason given by some of my informants for their dissatisfaction with EAPL-CFA policies.

Since the 2016 parliamentary elections, land restitution returned to the party's political agenda, albeit briefly (the party's programme simply states "[i]t's necessary to make decisions regarding lustration, national minorities, land restitution, as well as issues raised by farmer."⁹⁶ In the party's 2020 electoral program, the issue received further articulation:

[t]he state must unconditionally take care of the protection of private property. Entire generations of the Lithuanian population have worked to ensure that their descendants have the foundation needed to ensure social development and the peaceful life of their families for future generations. When LLRA-KŠS joined the coalition in Vilnius City Municipality, the number of plots assigned for return in the capital increased significantly. This year, 1,100 plots have been assigned, and since 2018, a total of 1,846. In cases where the return of land in kind is not possible, we offer to pay compensation for the unreturned land (property) at market prices. We unequivocally call for the acceleration of the process of restoring property rights in Vilnius, as well as for an active policy of returning property seized during the last war and the Soviet era.⁹⁷

Yet, since 2012, support for the party has been declining gradually.

⁹⁶ The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania. 2016. "2016 Parliamentary Elections". URL: <https://www.vrk.lt/documents/10180/606155/SEIMO+RINKIMAI+2016.pdf/ba01f8f0-2826-4091-85d9-730b557e7f81>.

⁹⁷ Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance. 2020. "Electoral programme." URL: <http://awpl.lt/wybory2020/rinkimu-programa/?lang=lt>.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This research sought to find out whether and how ethnicity impacted the process of land restitution in SEL, as revealed in relevant governmental documents, and as seen from the perspective of various actors involved in the restitution process. The research asked how the relationship between ethnicity and changing property regimes (from collective to private ownership) was structured in independent Lithuania by focusing on the case of the land restitution process in the state's ethnically diverse south-eastern region. The need to study the interplay between property and ethnicity grew out of several problems of both empirical and theoretical kinds. First, although the restitution process was initiated three decades ago, it is still unfinished. Moreover, a high proportion of the unresolved cases are to be found in SEL, which is ethnically heterogeneous but over the last three decades has seen increased numbers of ethnic Lithuanians. This raised the question as to whether there might be any link between property restitution and the nationalization (Brubaker 1996) of the region, as revealed in restitution-related documents (parliamentary debates and legal documents), and as seen from the perspective of those who shaped restitution policy and/or those minority residents of SEL who were participants in the process. Second, having in mind the lack of materially-oriented studies of ethnic issues in Lithuania, this research sought to fill this gap by examining the case of land restitution in post-socialist Lithuania's multi-ethnic south-eastern region.

The main findings of this thesis are the following:

- restitution was planned as a colour-blind process, in which every citizen was to receive justice in the form of having his or his family's land, previously collectivized during the Soviet period, restored to him. Despite ostensibly equal treatment, minorities lacked the equal resources necessary to participate in the restitution process. Equal treatment of unequal groups (in the case of this research and the SEL region analysed in it, ethnic and/or social groups) hampered minority members' efforts to get back their land. Moreover, analysis of the practical implementation of restitution, as opposed to merely how it was planned, demonstrated instances, albeit not systemic, of discrimination which members of the minority groups felt during the restitution process.
- The thesis identified multiple experiences that resulted from the process of restitution in the lives of SEL's minority members, who sought or are still seeking to regain their land after socialism. Land restitution resulted in experiencing land as elastic (when one was able to get back rights to land, but at the same time was not able to use the land), moving (land to which one

was entitled could be transferred to a different location), acquiring new and old forms at the same time (the re-emergence of street-plot settlements and collective property). In peoples' accounts of the progress of the restitution process in SEL, these changes correspond to the multifarious shapes of ethnicity (ethnicity overlapping with such categories as localness and as kinship). However, the process of restitution was not seen by those who were seeking to have their land returned as primarily ethnically driven, though there were exceptions. Although the research found that ethnicity had an effect on the restitution process on a macro level (the research described sporadic instances in which the category of ethnicity served as a basis for discriminatory practices in the actual implementation of restitution policy, which otherwise was designed to be colour blind) yet it also demonstrated that on a micro/personal level this effect may not be recognized. Furthermore, the effect may even be disputed or downplayed by the participants, and ethnicity may not appear as a meaningful category in their interpretations of restitution experiences. In other words, to use Brubaker's terminology, nationalization may occur due to restitution, but it may not be perceived this way by those who took part in it.

- The thesis demonstrated that, as a result of the limited usage of ethnicity as a cognitive category to interpret and frame the restitution process, land restitution had a limited impact on reifying ethnic group boundaries in the region, as far as the participants of this research were concerned.

In the following, I recapitulate the main arguments in a more detailed way.

Chapter 1 started the inquiry by setting up a theoretical perspective that allowed me to analyse the meaning ethnicity might have in the land restitution process. To do this, I first explored the theories that help to analyse nationalism in post-socialist Central Eastern Europe from a top-down perspective. One of the most influential and well-known scientific contributions to the study of nationalism in former socialist states was made by Roger Brubaker, who formulated a concept of the "nationalizing state" (1996, 2011). However, the concept has some analytical weak spots. Most importantly, it does not help to say how nationalization unfolds, nor what role the state plays in the process of nationalization (e.g., how it nationalizes and is nationalized at the same time). These weak spots, I argued, can be eliminated by supplementing Brubaker's concept with Michel Foucault's (Foucault, 1991) concept of governmentality, which facilitates the analysis of how modern governance is practised and problematizes the state's role in such practice.

The cross-fertilization of Brubaker's and Foucault's concepts helped achieve the first aim of this research – to set up a theoretical research perspective in which

ethnicity and property questions were approached as conceptually compatible and where a question regarding the intertwining of the two domains became intelligible. The perspective facilitated the analysis of an interplay between ethnicity and property, which in this research was examined through the case of land restitution in the multi-ethnic south-eastern part of Lithuania. The perspective first and foremost served the macro part of the analysis of possible nationalization through or because of restitution.

The concept of governmentality allowed capturing rationalities and governmental technologies that constitute governing. It also distinguishes between the state and other forms of governing (e.g., self-governing), and implies a particular and historical notion of government as governmental critique and problematization of certain social, political and economic aspects of the life of national populations. Therefore, governmentality, in comparison to the concept of the nationalizing state, helps to break down what Brubaker called “nationalization” and thereby provides the means to say *how* some processes of nationalization happen. Governmentality is characterised by a reserved approach to the state, which it sees as neither omnipotent nor unique in terms of ensuring various social functions. Moreover, it assumes that the state, in fact, can become a problem of government. Thereby, the concept helps to correct another drawback of the “nationalizing state” – namely, the paradox of the simultaneously nationalizing and nationalized state. However, governmentality is neither self-driven nor does it operate in a vacuum. Therefore, to better understand how it operates one needs to focus on governmentality’s context in the nation. Used together, the two concepts correct each other’s drawbacks and, in this research, help to set up a top-down research perspective on how the process of restitution was governed. A more detailed model on how to study governmentality with respect to the land restitution process, and how to conduct research along the perspective developed in the theoretical chapter, can be found in chapter 4, in which a top-down analysis of the restitution process is presented.

In the bottom-up part of the analysis of the property-ethnicity nexus, I relied on Brubaker’s anti-groupist perspective (2004). Therefore, in this dissertation, I used Brubaker’s notion of ethnicity as a cognitive category (2004). Such a step was important not only in terms of methodology, e.g., to avoid methodological nationalism (Billig 1995), but also analytically, as it allowed me to examine what categories people use when framing and constructing their restitution experiences. In the bottom-up analysis of the nexus, I also relied upon the Weberian notion of an ethnic group as status (Weber 1978; Malesevic 2004). Because status is defined not so much by the wealth available as by the respect received from other members of society, the choice to treat ethnic groups as status groups complements the decision to treat ethnicity as a cognitive category in the study. Treating ethnic groups as

status groups allowed me to ask questions regarding the continuity and changes in minority status and how these continuities and changes were affected by the restitution process.

The decision to distinguish between categories and groups allowed the problematization of the connection between the two and, in Brubaker's words, to study the politics of categories both from above and from below (Brubaker 2004: 13). From above, as already mentioned, I was able to analyse the categories embedded in and proposed by governmentality (the top-down part of the analysis), from below – to study how people use ethnic categories to make sense of the world around them, and specifically in the restitution process. Taking both top-down and bottom-up perspectives helped in avoiding deterministic accounts of macro-level decisions imposed on people. Indeed, the bottom-up perspective made it possible to examine findings related to governmentality against the backdrop of personal accounts of the restitution process. Such a decision ruled out making automatic assumptions that what is planned at the top level will occur at the bottom level, e.g., the restitution of property rights will bring justice to those whose land was collectivized during the Soviet period and that this justice will then be felt among those who regained their land.

The bottom-up part of the analysis was also facilitated by taking a relational approach to ethnicity (Barth 1969; Eriksen 2010). This approach made it possible to avoid such (groupist) questions as, e.g., “who are Lithuanian Poles?”, or “what are the main features of their ethnic group?” Instead, it was left for research participants to define the degree of their ethnic groupness and the ethnic content of the group. Further, the relational approach assumes that ethnicity is a product of social interaction (Barth 1969; Eriksen 2010). In the case of this research, the interactions were mediated and structured by the land which was to be restituted. However, leaving the task of describing “ethnic content” to research participants themselves meant remaining attentive to those cases where the research participants interpreted social interactions in ways other than through an ethnic prism (e.g., as interactions between locals and non-locals, rural vs. city dwellers, “ordinary people” vs. bureaucrats).

The theoretical chapter was followed by chapter 2, focused on methodology. Chapter 3 presented the historical and legal context important for the analysis outlined in the following chapter. Moreover, it presented the most significant moments as well as main problems of the restitution process in (south-eastern) Lithuania. In this chapter, I demonstrated how street-plot settlements – the legacy of the 16th-century Voklo reform – together with the absence in the country's south-east of the 1922 Lithuanian land reform which elsewhere eliminated this legacy, as well as the Soviet demographic and nationality politics, had an impact

on the land restitution process in independent Lithuania. The overview also demonstrated that ethnicity was an important factor in land reforms conducted by different authorities, e.g., the land reform in 1922 sought socio-economic reforms and at the same time had a social/national aspect – more land was to be given to small (Lithuanian) farmers at the expense of the (Polish) aristocracy (Norkus 2014). Redistribution of property meant redistribution of status: the reform sought to end the privileged status of the (Polish) aristocracy and served the process of Lithuanian nation-state building (Norkus 2014). Yet, this reform did not introduce these changes to SEL, as at the time it was under Polish rule. At the same time, in the 20th-century's eastern Poland/today's SEL, the rivalry of different nationalisms encouraged national indifference among inhabitants of the contested territory, and as a result, a type of "local" or *tutejszy* (as opposed to national) category of self-identification emerged (Snyder 2004; Zahra 2010).

The Soviet collectivisation in SEL correlated with the Soviet nationality and demographic policies: Poles from urban territories were allowed to repatriate to Poland, unlike their kinsmen from the rural territories surrounding Vilnius (Stravinskienė 2012). As most Lithuanian Poles from urban centres (especially Vilnius) left for Poland, and ethnic Lithuanian migrants from elsewhere in the country took their place, Lithuanian Poles, in the words of T. Snyder (2004), became a peasant nation, a group with lower status. However, positive discrimination in favour of Lithuanian Poles in Soviet times (Stravinskienė 2012), as well as a post-socialist suburbanization (Bruneika and Ubareviečienė 2016) and land which due to Polish repatriation to post-war Poland at the time of land restitution appeared vacant – all this impacted the restitution process as well as the status of its participants – as local ethnic groups – in post-socialist (south-eastern) Lithuania, as described in subsequent chapters.

These legacies resulted in additional challenges to the implementation of restitution reform in independent Lithuania's south-east. The challenges were not common to the rest of Lithuania: the previously eliminated street-plot settlements re-emerged with the decision to return the land to its previous owners in kind. Moreover, restitution was to be conducted in a region inhabited by ethnic minorities which, at a time of major political, economic and social transformations, felt insecure (Sirutavičius 2013).

Further, the chapter zoomed in and focused on the significant moments of the decollectivisation process, as well as those problems that occurred and impeded the restitution policy in (south-eastern) Lithuania after socialism. Here, I presented major instances of legislation that initiated changes in the private property regime with respect to land ownership. The major restitution-related problems characteristic to (the south-eastern part of) Lithuania were the following:

a) Problems related to mutually contradictory political decisions

- Laws relating to land reform and land restitution passed at different times (by different governments) would contradict each other, hampering and stalling restitution. Rapid and conflicting changes to the legislation were due to different competing visions regarding what should be the aim of the restitution reform (one part of the political elite advocated the interest of those who owned the land prior to collectivisation, while the other part defended the idea that land should be given to those who work it and who managed it during the Soviet period) (Norkus 2014).
- Restitution of land in territories which after 1995 were assigned to Vilnius city was carried out according to the rules of restitution of land in rural areas. According to the law, if one's land in the city was occupied and it was not possible to have it returned directly, the owner could be offered land in rural territory. This caused tensions among local inhabitants of SEL because the value of land in the city and in rural areas differed.

b) Problems related to the centralization of the decision-making process

- Direct rule by the central government, introduced in the region after a failed attempt to declare Polish territorial autonomy in 1990, had a negative impact on the course of the restitution process. The government trustee allocated land to city dwellers for private construction before the restitution process was accomplished. The original owners' land was thereby given to other inhabitants.
- Over the course of time, the responsibility for the implementation of restitution policy shifted from the Ministry of Agriculture/municipalities, then to the county-level administration, and finally to the National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture. The process therefore became more centralized over the course of time.

c) Historically determined problems

- One of the major problems was street-plot settlements – a legacy of the 16th-century Voklo reform which re-emerged in the days of post-socialist Lithuania. These settlements of archaic structure, which in SEL had disappeared only as a result of the Soviet collectivization policy (as opposed to the rest of the country, where such settlements almost disappeared as a result of the 1922 land reform), reappeared as problematic cases for restitution. Due to the lack

of documents, land restitution in these types of settlements, whose residents were mostly members of minorities, was behind schedule.

- For a certain period of time, the documents proving one's right to land ownership issued by the interwar Polish government were not accepted. This was because such documents were seen as issued by an occupying state (Poland). Consequently, the restitution process for members of the Polish minority was stalled for some time, while other citizens were able to proceed with their claims to land in SEL.

d) Citizenship-related problems:

- Finally, changes in Lithuanian citizenship regimes mattered in the context of the restitution policy. In independent Lithuania, citizenship was granted to all the persons and permanent residents who had lived on the territory of Lithuania between 1919 and 1940, as well as their descendants. This was important to members of the Lithuanian Polish minority because ownership rights to land could only be restored to citizens of Lithuania (Sirutavičius 2017). Yet, as argued by some historians, such a decision was to some extent a compromise on the part of the Lithuanian state, borne from the need to establish good relations with Poland (Sirutavičius 2017).

Such was the main historical and legal context that served as a background to the later analysis and explain of the restitution process in SEL.

Chapter 4 approached the question of restitution from a top-down perspective, and analysed how the relationship between ethnicity and changing property regimes (land decollectivization) was structured by the decisions made by both Lithuanian and minority political elites as revealed in various official documents related to restitution, as well as interviews conducted for this inquiry. I examined how, in the context of land restitution policy, using Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke's terminology (see Chapter 2) "lines of force that make certain forms of behaviour more probable than others" were created, which enable one to see "how people are invoked to move within these lines" (Bröckling et al. 2011: 13; cited in Teghtsoonian 2015: 6). I analysed this with the help of Dean's (2010) model of the analytics of government, which was developed to facilitate the Foucauldian governmentality analysis. The top-down part of the analysis presented in this chapter proved the fruitfulness of the cross-fertilization of Brubaker and Foucault's concepts: it allowed the analysis of governmentality, in a national context rather than a vacuum (Antonsich 2016), and at the same time, the concept

of governmentality and the methodology of Dean (2010) that was inspired by it, allowed a better understanding of how nationalization happens.

In the first part of the analysis, conducted along the lines of the first three dimensions of the analytics of government, I analysed the way in which the field of land and property was seen from the perspective of the government; the problems related to land ownership that restitution was to solve; and the technologies and ideas in which the process of restitution was embedded. I argued that restitution in Lithuania, as revealed in parliamentary discussions, was born as a critique of the collectivisation policy carried out by the former totalitarian state. Restitution sought to remedy the injustice caused by the Soviets by 'freeing' people from collective ownership and restoring their individual rights to property. The policy, however, was a compromise between different and competing camps within the post-Soviet elite: the reformist right prioritized the interests of previous owners, while the former communists prioritized those who worked the land (Poviliūnas 2008).

However, with respect to ethnic minorities, the implementation of both of these goals remained limited, as restitution of the right to land for minority members faced specific difficulties. Thus, the new regime of governing property rights invoked Lithuanian citizens of different ethnic and/or social backgrounds to move within these new lines of force unequally. On paper, members of every ethnic group had equal rights to participate in the restitution process, as this was provided by citizenship (Chapter 3). My analysis showed that the process of restitution was officially colour blind, as ethnicity was not mentioned in public discussions or laws related to restitution. However, closer examination of how restitution was implemented revealed that there were cases of minorities finding themselves in disadvantaged positions (due to the problems listed in Chapter 3).

Further, to apply Dean's analytics of government to the land restitution process, it was supplemented by approaching the governance of restitution through the lens of a nation (Antonsich 2016). Approached in this way, the restitution process appeared as having resulted in injustices towards Poles, as members of an ethnic minority group. This was revealed in the analysis of international organizations' reports, accounts provided by Lithuanian experts and activists, and the testimony of members of the Polish minority's political and societal elite. Therefore, in some cases, restitution might have contributed to the nationalization of SEL after socialism. This is because restitution resulted in local inhabitants, many of whom are members of the minority group, selling their land to, or seeing how their or their relatives' land was given to, people from other parts of the country. However, there's no proof that this effect was intended or that restitution, as described above, was a result of well-thought-out discriminatory policies.

However, a sufficient amount of data exist to claim that the reform failed to achieve one of its main goals – providing justice to those who had suffered from the Soviet regime. For example, in SEL, members of ethnic minorities would face government-created problems to get back their land, such as ‘Polish’ documents proving their right to ownership being rejected for a certain period. Factors contributing to these effects included restitution being driven by a national nostalgia and that it was perceived as a political rather than an economic or social problem (Treinys 2008). It was informed by national nostalgia because, as was shown in chapter 4, land constituted an important part of the national imagination after independence, upon which the further development of the state and society was to be built. In the perception of at least by one part of the new state’s elite, the Soviets had interrupted this process of development – that is from the times before WWII and of a pre-industrial nation-state – with an alien system. Therefore, some segments of Lithuania’s political elite sought to prevent foreigners from acquiring land and joining the Lithuanian agriculture market. At the same time, opening the market was seen as a precondition to becoming more like a western (and therefore less of a Soviet/Russian) society (Abdelal 2005). As noted in the analysis of actual restitution (as opposed to restitution intended in the laws and policy documents) conducted in chapter 4, the restitution in Lithuania was linked to market reforms, and the speed of these reforms was at the expense of justice that the reforms were intended to bring to people. Land restitution, as implemented in independent Lithuania, could be seen in this way as part of the nation-building process after socialism.

In the context of intended rapid reforms to break away from the Soviet past, restitution was chaotic and deregulated and had an ethnic and/or social blind spot because it treated applicants of different ethnic and/or social backgrounds with unequal conditions to take back land as equals. Minority members, who at the beginning of the process belonged to a less-educated rural segment of society, had poorer knowledge of Lithuanian and had less symbolic capital accumulated during the Soviet era (e.g., through education), were therefore in a worse starting position regarding the restitution process. Often the land restitution process started by parents would be continued by their children, who were better educated and had better knowledge of Lithuanian. Therefore, although the restitution process could be unfair and strenuous for any Lithuanian, other citizens did not face the extra problems, described above, faced by minority members of the region.

Chapter 5 presented the bottom-up part of the analysis and had several further aims. First, it aimed to find the ways in which the restitution process is socially constructed by those who took part in it. Second, it sought to find out: a) whether and how ethnicity had any meaning and impact on the inhabitants of SEL in their

interpretation, negotiation, and strategies of restitution; b) the impact restitution might have had on ethnic (non)mobilization.

I approached the question of the ethnicity-property nexus from a bottom-up perspective. The ethnicity part of the nexus was examined by taking a relational (Barth 1969) and cognitive (Brubaker 2004) approach to it. In other words, the task to define what ethnicity was left to my informants themselves. This was done because of the assumption that ethnicity should be viewed as a product of social interactions. In the case of this research, interactions happened in relation to and were structured by property (land), which was to be restored by the new post-socialist Lithuanian government.

First, I argued that, land, in my informants' accounts, emerged as elastic (Verdery 1994, 2003) and fluid. As demonstrated in chapter 4, after socialism, land became transferable, and hence movable. Moreover, interviews with participants of the restitution process from minority backgrounds revealed that in SEL, land restitution brought back some of the archaic forms of land management – the street-plot settlements. The reappearance of these settlements was not the only result of land restitution in SEL. However, due to its significance in the informants' accounts of their restitution experience, more attention was paid to the case of street-plot settlements. Regarding the settlements, it can be said that in SEL, the restitution policy aimed at restoring the institute of private property, but in this circumstance resulted instead in the creation of potential and collective property. The re-emergence of street-plot settlements and “collective” property was particular to SEL. The results also confirm the insights of scholars researching post-socialist societies, that post-socialist transformation is best described as open-ended processes which do not necessarily end the way they were planned by the respective societies' elites.

Second, I argued that in my informants' social construction of restitution experiences, ethnicity emerges as one of the frames. This corresponds to the findings of the top-down analysis, which revealed that in some cases restitution was embedded in national ideas. However, what people mean by ethnicity (in relation to the restitution of property rights to land), judging from people's accounts, varied: what people meant by ethnicity appeared to be determined by different relations (locals vs. alien, bureaucrat vs. “ordinary people”, “Lithuanians vs. Poles” etc.) in which people found themselves during the restitution. I argue that besides ethnicity, localness and kinship were the two main categories people used when interpreting, making meaning of and negotiating the restitution process. These categories would often overlap with the category of ethnicity. This supports some of the previous observations regarding Lithuanian Polish identity,

e.g., that locality is an important component of Polish identity (Korzeniewska 2013, Vyšniauskas 2020).

Finally, in chapter 5 I examined how the restitution process and land reforms invoked people to move along the new “lines of force” (Teghtsoonian 2016), and using the terminology presented in chapter 2, I now looked at how people actually navigated through the restitution process. I argued that family and locality provided important resources to those who sought to regain land. Additionally, the restitution process strengthened people’s embeddedness in family and locality, as during the process of trying to get back the land people developed a stronger feeling of belonging to their families (albeit not unconditionally) and localities. At the same time, in the case of my informants, the use of ethnic categories resulted in groupness of a rather limited kind, and land restitution neither became a topic to reify group boundaries nor significantly fostered political mobilization on ethnic terms. Nevertheless, some of the interviewed members of the minority elite demonstrated the belief that ethnicity played a negative role in the restitution of land to minority owners, and would frame the whole process in ethnic terms.

Such results are interesting because although examination of actual land restitution in the top-down part of the analysis showed that there were cases when restitution of land to minority owners was hampered, results of the bottom-up analysis show that those who sought to get back their land might not necessarily perceive this as actions conducted against them as members of a particular ethnic minority (although, as mentioned, minority leaders would express a different opinion). Claims to land were made on the basis of ethnicity, but more often this was not the case. Instead, the politicization of ethnicity would be avoided and old strategies of legitimate claim-making (e.g., being a local) and negotiating one’s marginal status (e.g., *tutejszym*) were employed during the restitution process. The depoliticization of ethnicity was sought when emphasising that in terms of unjust restitution, the minority’s problems did not differ from problems experienced by members of the ethnic majority. Thereby, informants tried to position themselves as equals to members of Lithuania’s majority population in terms of the problems faced during the restitution. This might be interpreted as an attempt to avoid the status of a needy and complaining person. Also, it was done while displaying a negative attitude towards the Polish minority party, when discussing its role in helping minority members to get back their land. Instead of drawing a distinction along explicitly ethnic lines, people would emphasize their status of being locals and therefore having greater legitimacy than newcomers who would get land in the region.

6. 1. Discussion

In closing, I want to briefly discuss how this research may advance further studies on ethnicity and property. Overall, this dissertation showed the potential for such research. Property is a powerful thing that structures social relationships. It establishes social hierarchies, defined by who owns what. One part of a variety of possible social relationships is that which is defined by ethnicity. This thesis demonstrated how changes in property regimes after socialism (from collective property to private property) were grounded in different ideas, e.g., justice, modernization of the state and society according to Western values, democratization, nation-state building. In addition, it demonstrated that planned restitution reforms sometimes needed to adjust to region-specific factors, e.g., street-plot settlements or the region's distinct heterogeneous ethnic makeup. Sometimes these adjustments were made better, e.g., the problem of street-plot settlements was tackled rather successfully, sometimes, e.g., as with accommodating the ethnically diverse population of SEL, worse.

In addition, focusing on property in relation to ethnicity, rather than treating them separately, suggests a more complex and therefore perhaps more adequate perspective on examining both phenomena. This is because, in the case of land restitution in SEL, neither of the two could be analysed in a vacuum. Moreover, ethnicity is a product of a relationship between groups that perceive each other as different. Property is often a thing, which defines the difference among individuals and groups. Therefore, property reforms in ethnically mixed populations may result in what Brubaker called "nationalization". Yet, as this thesis showed, the process at the end of which one finds "nationalizing" effects emerging might not be as straightforward, and it is not necessarily the state which conducts nationalization. On the other hand, the thesis shows that it is equally important to focus on what the state did not do. For example, the state did little to positively discriminate in favour of ethnic groups who faced specific hardships during the process, even though on an individual level it had guaranteed help (e.g., via courts) to those who faced issues while trying to get back their land.

Over the decades of independence, SEL did become more Lithuanian. Certainly, such nationalization was facilitated by the land restitution process. For example, one thing that fostered this was land transfer – a right which served the interests of those who wanted to relocate their claim to land closer to the financially more attractive SEL territories. This right hardly offered anything to those who sought to retain their land in the region. Equally doubtful is the idea that members of the minority would wish to relocate their land to other parts of the country, thereby breaking with their communities. Perhaps a more differentiated approach towards

the different ethnic/social groups of the region could have resulted in faster and, in terms of justice, better restitution. However, such nationalization happened without the active involvement of the state. One serious drawback of this thesis is that the real-estate developer, businessmen and speculators dealing with land were left out of sight in this research. In the end, it was them who would purchase people's land or their rights to land and whose (semi)legal activities would foster, albeit unintentionally, the nationalization of SEL. It would be worth reaching out to this group of restitution participants to examine whether ethnicity played any meaningful role in their actions.

Finally, seen from the participants' perspective, the nexus appears to be even more complex. The interviews with persons who sought to regain their land deepened the understanding of the constitutive part of the nexus. In informants' accounts, ethnicity and land are discussed through such categories as localness and kinship. These categories provide an exit strategy from conflictual language about restitution, possibly provided by, say, members of the minority elites. More importantly, the participants' perspective helps in avoiding oversimplified accounts, e.g., that land restitution resulted in the nationalization of SEL. The social construction of restitution, reflected in interviews with informants of this research, shows that restitution participants do not always frame the process through an ethnic prism.

This provides a question for further research – why do participants who are members of ethnic minorities not frame the process through an ethnic prism? Is it because they try to avoid the negative label of “complaining” losers? Or have they internalized a neoliberal ethos, according to which one's failure is first and foremost a result of one's insufficient efforts?

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APPENDIX

Qualitative questionnaire

Interviews with experts

Thematic block	Description of questions asked / example questions
Expert experience/ attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions regarding the informants' professional experience in (working with) the restitution process (issues) <i>[e.g., Can you tell me how you started working in [field X], what were your main activities?]</i> • questions to explore rationalities of restitution policy (the ideas and rationalities behind certain orders that defined the implementation of the restitution process) [e.g., could you please describe how the restitution was implemented during the time you were at this position? How would you explain the reasons for it being implemented in this way?] • questions to elucidate subjective assessments of restitution's main problems (what, according to the informant, were the main problems hindering the return of land in south-eastern Lithuania) <i>[e.g., Restitution hasn't been finished and according to official statistics, many of the unresolved cases can be found in south-eastern-Lithuania. In your opinion, why did it take so long to return land in the Vilnius region?]</i>
Process of restitution	<p>questions about documents needed during the land restitution process and issues of (non-) recognition, questions on historical difficulties related to land restitution <i>[e.g., What documents were needed during land restitution for citizens of Lithuania? Did residents of south-eastern Lithuania encounter any challenges with the documentation needed for land restitution? If yes, what kind of challenges?]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions regarding land transfer in the process of restitution (reasons for the decision to allow land transfer all over Lithuania, and the effects of these decisions) <i>[e.g., could you comment on issues of land transfer, i.e. How and why did the possibility to transfer land arise? Could you please tell me how these changes influenced the process of land restitution in south-eastern Lithuania?]</i> • questions on institutions' activities regarding the process of restitution in south-eastern Lithuania <i>[e.g., could you describe what institutions were involved in the land restitution process? What was the relationship between central and local governmental institutions responsible for restitution?]</i>

<p>Ethnic issues (only if the informant does not bring it up himself/herself)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions on the participation/role of the Polish minority party in shaping the process of land restitution <i>[e.g., When the EAPL-CFA party was in power in Vilnius municipality, in your opinion, did it have any influence on the restitution process? If yes, what influence?]</i> • questions about the involvement of ethnicity in the restitution process (does the informant think that land restitution issues might have been related to ethnicity) <i>[e.g., In your opinion, are land restitution issues in south-eastern Lithuania related to ethnicity? If yes, how?]</i>
<p>Context(s) of restitution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions on the intertwining of restitution with the state’s agricultural policy <i>[e.g., If we are talking about agricultural policy, do you think that the legislators, when handing over the land to private hands, expected those who took back the land to start farming, or did the legislators take the view that it was most important to return the land and allow the owners to do what they wanted?]</i> • questions on the possible significance of the EU accession process on restitution) <i>[e.g., Ensuring the rights of minorities was an important precondition for entering the EU. Did the negotiations on Lithuania’s accession to the EU have any impact on the return of land in south-eastern Lithuania? If so, what impact?]</i> • questions regarding the relationship between the central government institutions and local government in the context of the implementation of restitution <i>[e.g., Did you need to contact local/national politicians/officials? If yes, how would you describe working with them? What was your relationship with them like?]</i>
<p>Concluding part/question</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions aimed at elucidating aspects of restitution important to my informants at the end of each interview, a final question about what the interviewee thought we had missed through the interview and what should be emphasized regarding the analysed topic. <i>[e.g., The last question I would ask everyone is, if we were to switch the roles, what would you ask me? Perhaps when it comes to land restitution in south-eastern Lithuania, there is something important that you think we missed during the interview? What would you stress regarding the topic?]</i>

Interview guidelines with individuals who sought to regain land

Demographic information about informant: age, gender, education, profession

Thematic block	Description of questions asked/main questions
Personal experience of land restitution	<p>questions for people who had sought restitution started with the request to share and narrate their restitution story from the beginning: Can you briefly tell me how, where and when you started the land restitution process and how it went? Other questions, depending on the previous answers</p>
Experiences with governmental institutions	<p>questions related to people's experiences communicating with institutions responsible for implementing restitution policies: Please tell me how the land restitution process went? What authorities were contacted, what answers were received, etc. What did the officers say to you, how did they explain the fact that land return took so long to implement?</p>
Mapping main problems/obstacles	<p>questions regarding obstacles in the restitution process that were mentioned in interviews: You mentioned that there were X difficulties/difficulties with X in trying to regain land – please tell me more about it. How did you solve these problems? I happened to hear that the authorities sometimes would not accept documents proving one's ownership rights to land if they were issued in interwar Poland. Did you have any similar experiences? Why might this have been the case? You've mentioned that your village X once was a street-plot settlement. Was this relevant in the process of trying to get back your land? Can you tell me how land restitution took place in such cases?) Other questions, going deeper into the previous answers)</p>
Support network	<p>questions regarding the help people might have received in their struggles over land: Could you please tell me, was there anyone who helped you with this process? For example, relatives, NGO representatives, lawyers, elders, local politicians? There is a political party in the city and municipality that represents Lithuanian Poles. Did you feel represented by these politicians in your efforts to regain land? What motivated you to go forward and not to give up on having the land restored?</p>

<p>Ethnic issues (only if the informant does not bring it up himself/herself)</p>	<p>questions about whether the informant thinks in his/her case his ethnic background played any role in the restitution process How do you identify yourself in ethnic terms? In your opinion, was the process of land restitution in this region more difficult for members of ethnic groups other than Lithuanian? Could you please tell me if you have heard or encountered the fact that the return of land was stalled because of someone's ethnic background. Have you experienced anything similar?</p>
<p>Concluding part</p>	<p>questions to elucidate aspects of restitution important to my informants at the end of each interview, a final question about what the interviewee thought we had missed through the interview and what should be emphasized regarding the analysed topic: The last question I would ask everyone is, if we were to switch roles, what would you ask me? Perhaps when it comes to land restitution in south-eastern Lithuania, there is something important that you think we missed during the interview? What would you stress regarding the topic?</p>

Table 1: Pilot interviews

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education, profession	How informant was contacted	Generation (grand-parents, son/daughter, grand-children)	Place where land was/is to be resituated (city/district, street-plot settlement or not)	Informant's social status	Restitution process finished/not finished	Interview date	Interview place	Interview duration	Interview language
1	Gabriel	1	~40 years; man; higher education; lawyer, politician	e-mail	-	-	politician	-	2018-05-29	informant's workplace, Vilnius	1:01:25	Lithuanian
2	Adela	1	~30 years; woman; higher education	responded to a call on Facebook	grand-children	?	emigrant	finished (by parents)	2018-06-04	via Skype	1:08:01	Lithuanian
3	Sara	1	elder woman; former pedagogue	responded to a call on Facebook	daughter	Vilnius city, former street-plot settlement	pensioner	not finished	2019-01-10	cafe, Vilnius	1:13:13	Lithuanian

Source: author

Table 2: Expert interviews

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education	How the informant was contacted	Informant's profession	Interview date	Interview place	Interview type	Interview duration	Interview language
4	Zenon	1	73 years; man; higher education	by email	a former civil servant who was directly involved in the land restitution process between 2001 and 2004	2019-02-15	cafe, Vilnius	semi-structured	1:44:46	Lithuanian
5	Adrian	1	middle-aged; man; higher education	by email / former contact inside the community	scholar	2019-05-26	cafe, Vilnius	semi-structured	42:24	Lithuanian
6	Joanna	1	middle-aged; woman; higher education	by phone	lawyer	-	House of Polish Culture, Vilnius	semi-structured	-	Lithuanian
7	August	1	middle-aged; man; higher education	by phone, former contact inside the community	lawyer, officer, representative of the intelligentsia	2019-05-28	bar, Vilnius	semi-structured	52:38	Lithuanian
8	Vytautas	1	middle-aged; man; -	recommended by an acquaintance	officer, land manager	2019-05-27	informant's workplace, Kaunas	semi-structured	1:13:26	Lithuanian

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education	How the informant was contacted	Informant's profession	Interview date	Interview place	Interview type	Interview duration	Interview language
9	Povilas	1	78 years; man; higher education	recommended by another informant who took part in the research	pensioner, scholar	2019-06_28	informant's car, Birštonas	semi-structured	1:13:27	Lithuanian
10	Patricija	1	middle-aged; woman; -	recommended by another informant who took part in the research	officer, land manager	2019-07-03	informant's workplace, Vilnius	semi-structured	-	Lithuanian
11	Stanislaw	1	middle-aged; man; -	by email	officer, land manager	2019-07-05	informant's workplace, Šalčininkai district	semi-structured	1:08:04	Lithuanian
13	Almantas	1	middle-aged; man; -	by email	officer, land managed	2019-07-04	informant's workplace, Vilnius	semi-structured	47:49	Lithuanian
14	Inga	1	middle-aged; woman; -	recommended by an acquaintance	politician, former land surveyor	2019-07-03	cafe, Vilnius	semi-structured	1:49:29	Lithuanian
16	Ludwika	1	64 years; woman; higher education	by email	politician, officer	2019-07-16	informant's workplace, Vilnius	semi-structured	1:02:07	Lithuanian

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education	How the informant was contacted	Informant's profession	Interview date	Interview place	Interview type	Interview duration	Interview language
17	Kristupas	1	60 years; man; higher education	by email	NGO member, lawyer	2019-07-16	informant's workplace, Vilnius	semi-structured	1:20:26	Lithuanian
19	Teodor	1	53 years; man; higher education	by email	politician	2019-07-26	informant's workplace, Vilnius	semi-structured	1:02:52	Lithuanian
21	Barbora and Vile	2	middle-aged; women; -	recommended by another informant who took part in the research	officers, land managers	2019-08-14	informants' workplace, Vilnius	semi-structured	1:28:59	Lithuanian
24	Marius	1	young; man; -	recommended by another informant who took part in the research	officer	2019-09-15	informant's workplace, Vilnius	semi-structured	31:53	Lithuanian
25	Danutė	1	middle-aged; woman; -	recommended by colleague	former officer, lawyer	2019-09-18	cafe, Vilnius	semi-structured	55:54	Lithuanian

Source: author

Table 3: Interviews with people who sought to get back the land

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education	How the informant was contacted	Generation (grandparents, son/daughter, grand-children)	Place where land was/is to be restituted (city/district, street-plot settlement)	Informant's social status	Restitution process finished/not finished	Interview date	Interview place	Interview duration	Interview type	Interview language	Whether during the interview respondent mentioned his ethnicity
12	Cyprian	1	mid-dle-aged; man; -	recommended by acquaintance	son	Šalčininkai district -	businessman	finished	2019-07-05	informant's place, Šalčininkai district	1:00:59	recorded	Lithuanian	-
15	Jadwiga	1	elder; woman; -	recommended by acquaintance	daughter	Vilnius, former street-plot settlement	pensioner	finished	2019-07-08	train station, Vilnius	41:03	recorded	Lithuanian	-
18	Waldemar	1	72 years; man; higher education	by phone, recommended by an acquaintance	son	Šalčininkai district	pensioner, former farmer	-	2019-07-17	informant's working place, Šalčininkai district	1:17:00	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education	How the informant was contacted	Generation (grandparents, son/daughter, grandchild)	Place where land was/is to be restituted (city/district, street-plot settlement)	Informant's social status	Restitution process finished/not finished	Interview date	Interview place	Interview duration	Interview type	Interview language	Whether during the interview respondent mentioned his ethnicity
20	Mikolaj	1	80 years; man; -	by phone, recommended by acquaintance	son	Vilnius	businessman	finished	2019-07-30	informant's working place, Vilnius	46:28	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole
22	Sandra	1	young; woman; -	by e-mail, recommended by acquaintance	granddaughter	Vilnius district	student	not finished	2019-08-21 -- 2019-09-18	cafe, Vilnius - follow up an interview – informant's place Vilnius district	51:17	recorded- Notes were made during the follow-up interview	Lithuanian	self-identified as Lithuanian („because this is the way it's mentioned in the passport)

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education	How the informant was contacted	Generation (grandparents, grand-son/daughter, grandchildren)	Place where land was/is to be restituted (city/district, street-plot settlement)	Informant's social status	Restitution process finished/not finished	Interview date	Interview place	Interview duration	Interview type	Interview language	Whether during the interview responded mentioned his ethnicity
23	Waldemar & the collective	4	mid-dle-aged; 2 men and 2 women; -	by phone, recommended by the previous informant	-	Šalčininkai district	pensioner/former head of agricultural enterprise and farmers	-	2019-08-23	informant's working place, Šalčininkai district	2:04:16	recorded	Russian/Lithuanian (with the help of a translator)	self-identified as Poles
26	Tymoteusz	1	mid-dle-aged; bachelor; basic education	via Facebook	son	Vilnius	unemployed	finished	2019-09-21	informant's home, Vilnius	1:26:40	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole
27	Malgorzata	1	79 years; woman; basic education	recommended by acquaintance	daughter	Vilnius district, former street-plot settlement	pensioner	not finished	2019-09-24	informant's home, Vilnius	1:35:58	recorded	Russian, Lithuanian, Polish	self-identified as Pole

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education	How the informant was contacted	Generation (grandparents/daughter, grand-son/daughter, grandchildren)	Place where land was/is to be restituted (city/district, street-plot settlement)	Informant's social status	Restitution process finished/not finished	Interview date	Interview place	Interview duration	Interview type	Interview language	Whether during the interview respondent mentioned his ethnicity
28	Sylwia	1	middle-aged; woman;	recommended by acquaintance	daughter	Šalčininkai district	worker	finished	2019-09-30	informant's working place, Vilnius	27:25	recorded	Lithuanian	-
29	Lucja	1	young; woman; higher education	via Facebook	granddaughter	Vilnius, former street-plot settlement	housewife	not finished	2019-10-01	(Polish) cafe, Vilnius	1:27:36	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole
30	Jakub & Rafal	2	elderly and middle-aged; men; higher education (Rafal)	Rafal – during another research, Jan was recommended by Rafal	son	Vilnius, former street-plot settlement, Trakai district	pedagogue, pensioner	finished (both)	2019-10-24	informant's working place, Trakai district	52:11	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole
31	Joanna	1	young; woman;	via Facebook	granddaughter	Vilnius	-	not finished	2019-10-25	cafe, Vilnius	29:26	recorded	Lithuanian	-

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education	How the informant was contacted	Generation (grandparents, grand-son/daughter, grandchildren)	Place where land was/is to be restituted (city/district, street-plot settlement)	Informant's social status	Restitution process finished/not finished	Interview date	Interview place	Interview duration	Interview type	Interview language	Whether during the interview respondent mentioned his ethnicity
32	Krzysztof	1	60 years; man; vocational training	through a chairman of local community	grandson	Vilnius district, former street-plot settlement	small farmer	not finished	2019-10-29	cafe, Vilnius	2:11:02	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole
33	Albert	1	young man;	via Facebook	grandson	Trakai district	emigrant, worker	not finished	2020-01-21	cafe, Warsaw	50:46	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole
34	Wiktor and his wife	2	middle-aged; man and woman; higher education (Wiktor)	through a relative (38_ Rysard) who took education part in the research	grandson	Vilnius, former street-plot settlement	member of the minority's intelligentsia	not finished	2020-01-27	informant's place, Vilnius	1:27:36	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole
35	Michalina	1	56 years; woman; higher education	during another research	granddaughter	Trakai district	politician	not finished	2020-01-29	informant's working place, Trakai district	38:32	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole

Interview number	Pseudonym	Number of interview participants	Age, sex, education	How the informant was contacted	Generation (grandparents, grand-son/daughter, grandchild)	Place where land was/is to be restituted (city/district, street-plot settlement)	Informant's social status	Restitution process finished/not finished	Interview date	Interview place	Interview duration	Interview type	Interview language	Whether during the interview responded mentioned his ethnicity
36	Halina	1	~90 years; woman; higher education	by phone, recommender by the previous informant	granddaughter	Vilnius	pensioner	not finished	2010-02-02	informant's home, Vilnius	1:16:24	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole
37	Katarzyna	1	elderly; woman; -	by phone, recommender by the previous informant	granddaughter	Vilnius	pensioner, member of local minority intelligentsia	not finished	2020-02-02	House of Polish Culture, Vilnius	32:20	recorded	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole
38	Ryszard	1	elderly; man; -	recommended by acquaintance	grandson	Vilnius	member of the minority's intelligentsia	not finished	2010-01-21	cafe, Warsaw	-	written	Lithuanian	self-identified as Pole

Source: author

