“Eastern European”, Yes, but How? Autoethnographic Accounts of Differentiated Whiteness

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Abstract

This article examines how intersecting markers of difference shape differentiated whiteness. In so doing, it contributes to scholarship on whiteness and racialisation. The authors draw on autoethnographic vignettes from fieldwork in Copenhagen to analyse the emergence of similar-yet-divergent researcher and migrant positionalities. Both authors are female researchers from Baltic countries living in Denmark and often perceived as Eastern Europeans – as not-quite-white and as “Europe’s ‘internal others’”. Both of us conducted fieldwork in the same district of Copenhagen. Mantė carried out research on friendships among teenagersn a racially diverse public school and in youth activity clubs. Linda explored social inclusion and exclusion in contested urban spaces. However, our researcher positionalities played out differently. We analyse how ambiguous, contested and relational notions of (Eastern) Europeanness, together with intersecting racialised, classed and gendered tropes of Eastern European migration, made themselves manifest in our positionings and movements. Through an intersectional analysis of Eastern European racialised positionalities, our discussion of differentiated whiteness highlights how whiteness is intersectionally constituted, multiple and mouldable. These findings serve to nuance research on hegemonic whiteness in the Nordic setting.

Keywords

Intersectionality, racialisation, whiteness, Eastern Europeanness, autoethnography

Ambiguities of whiteness

This article explores shifting migrant researcher positionalities in the two researchers’

fieldwork in order to discuss whiteness as intersectional and differentiated. Both authors draw on autoethnographic vignettes, each from our own fieldwork, in the same diverse neighbourhood in Copenhagen. At the time of the fieldwork, both authors were PhD researchers. Both are also migrants in Denmark from Baltic countries, Lithuania and Latvia respectively. Both of us, positioned as "different others", unremarked or passing as Danish (Lapiņa, 2018), have experienced racialised tropes of Eastern Europeanness that have shaped our bodies, research practices and life experiences in Denmark. In this article, we analyse how intersecting markers of difference have shaped our researcher positionalities in order to tap into broader discussions on whiteness and racialisation.

A growing body of research is exploring racialisation, orientalism and coloniality as constitutive forces in notions of Europeanness (Jensen, Suárez-Krabbe, Groes, & Pecic, 2017; Loftsdóttir, Smith, & Hipfl, 2018; Ponzanesi & Blaagaard, 2011). These studies point to a conflation of Europe and Europeanness with the racial formation of whiteness. Whiteness works as a "symbol of [European] superiority and as the legitimizing authority and mobilizing ideology for national imperial and colonial enterprises" (Bonnett, 1998:1044).

However, whiteness as a racial category is neither homogeneous nor fixed (Garner, 2017; Meer, 2019). Rather, it is changeable and changing: a relational, context-specific racial formation, inseparable from historically positioned political and socio-cultural developments. Certain groups have been perceived during different historical periods variously as white and as not-quite-white. For instance, Noel Ignatiev's (1995) study *How the Irish Became White* explores how, in the nineteenth century, whiteness was symbolically appropriated by Irish immigrants in the United States; Karen Brodkin Sacks' (1998) book *How Jews Became White Folks* examines how Jews, previously considered an inferior race, became white after the Second World War; and Deepa Kumar (2012) discusses how Arab Americans passed as white prior to 9/11.

Historically configured formations of Eastern Europe and Eastern Europeanness (Wolff, 1994) demonstrate that, despite whiteness being a hegemonic force in constituting Europe, Europeanness and its implicit whiteness have been ambiguous and relational at least since the eighteenth century. After the Cold War, Eastern Europe has occupied a liminal geopolitical and cultural position, as not-quite European (Dzenovska, 2016), between "capitalism and socialism, civility and primitivism, and class distinction into elites and plebs" (Buchowski, 2006:466). Consequently, the so-called Eastern European states of the present day and their

inhabitants comprise Europe's "internal others" (Hall, 1995; Kalnačs, 2016), seen as lagging behind with regard to civic society, democracy, human rights and economic development. In these narratives, Eastern Europeanness becomes a counter-image to "European goodness" (Böröcz, 2006) and progress, implying that "real" Europe has dealt with its colonial past and overcome the problems of racism, sexism and homophobia that Eastern European states continue to struggle with (Dzenovska, 2018).

The European Union's 2004 eastward expansion was accompanied by fears of migrants flooding Western European labour markets and burdening social welfare services (van Riemsdijk, 2010). Research conducted on Eastern European migrants in Western European settings in the period since 2004 supports our exploration of how our migrant researcher positionalities have manifested themselves in different locations of whiteness. Studies have examined a wide range of contexts, for instance, the ambiguous whiteness of the figure of the "Polish plumber" in Polish travel advertising for French audiences, hate crimes against Poles in Britain (Böröcz & Sarkar, 2017), the racialisation of Hungarians and Rumanians in the UK (Fox, Moroşanu, & Szilassy, 2012), and racialised experiences among Polish nurses in Norway (van Riemsdijk, 2010). To expand on one of these studies, Kristín Loftsdóttir (2017) analyses processes of racialisation experienced by Lithuanians in Iceland during the migration boom period in the early 2000s. She unpacks shifting meanings of whiteness in Nordic contexts, where "whiteness constitutes (...) a category that populations can move in and out of during the process of racialisation" (Loftsdóttir, 2017:71). Based on interviews with native Icelandic people, Loftsdóttir (2017) shows how Lithuanians are associated with darkness, referring both to appearance and to a sense of strangeness and danger. She discusses how the racialisation of Eastern Europeanness in Iceland attests to "varied categories of bodies that can be treated differently, as well as [...] a meaningful distinction between inferior and superior populations" (Loftsdóttir, 2017:73).

These studies show the ambiguity of Eastern Europeanness, which can be analysed both as located in Eastern Europe as an aspirational space of longing to become a proper European subject (Dzenovska, 2018), and as a racialised migrant positionality in Western Europe. On the one hand, Eastern Europeanness is seen as lagging behind and never quite-as-white; on the other hand, it contains the potentiality for conditional passing-as-European and of becoming (quite as) white (Lapiņa, 2018).

Research on the adjacent subject of Nordic whiteness also emphasises fluidity and

multiplicity. For instance, Hvenegård-Lassen & Staunæs (2015) show how Nordic whiteness can be shaken but then reaffirmed, holding its place precisely through its seeming openness to transformation. A recent special issue of *Scandinavian Studies* adds to this perspective by exploring how Nordic whiteness is simultaneously malleable, contested, yet also anchored in history (Lundström & Teitelbaum, 2018). Our take on differentiated whiteness draws on this emerging scholarship on Nordic whiteness understood as multiple, fluid and changeable.

Yet studies exploring different formations of whiteness in the Nordic context are still few and far between. While some research points to Nordic whiteness as malleable yet implicated in hierarchical orders of migrant groups (Hvenegård-Lassen & Staunæs, 2015; Loftsdóttir, 2017), other research has foregrounded the hegemony and unmarked position of whiteness (Andreassen & Myong, 2017; Andreassen & Vitus, 2015; Garner, 2014; Hübinette & Lundström, 2014; Myong, 2009). According to these studies, whiteness implies unrestricted mobility in majoritised spaces, conflated with authority, objectivity, belonging to the (Nordic) nation and speaking on its behalf or in its defence (A. J. Berg, 2008; Svendsen, 2015). While these studies acknowledge the importance of intersecting markers such as gender, class, and sexuality as modulators of whiteness, the attempt to expose *the* hegemony of whiteness can mean that whiteness becomes a solidified and monolithic quality. For example, in their analysis of racialised researcher positionalities, Andreassen & Myong (2017, p. 102) assert that "positioned as a white researcher, one is enabled to speak in general terms about race and racism and to access a position associated with 'scientific neutrality' and rational thinking."

Even as analyses of hegemonic whiteness expose how racism and racialisation are at the heart of the construction of Nordic whiteness, however, they risk depicting racialisation in binary terms: either one is white (with the privileges that entails) or one is not (thus perpetuating the very hegemony and unmarkedness of whiteness the research is aiming to expose). Although whiteness, as a historical postcolonial formation of racial stratification, denotes a relational position of power and privilege, we argue that this single-axis approach cannot explain how, for example, an individual's position can change from being quite-white to not-quite-white. In other words, it does not capture the different locations of whiteness that occur in different spatiotemporal moments. We find that not-quite-whiteness (and not-Nordic-whiteness) is silenced in these frameworks. Thus even as Nordic studies on whiteness aim "to combat and erode power relations based on hegemonic understandings of race and whiteness" (Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017, p. 65), an emphasis on hegemonic whiteness can reify and solidify

whiteness as a static and fixed category.

This article nuances research on whiteness and racialisation in the Nordic context through an intersectional analysis of Eastern European racialised positionalities. We analyse how ambiguous, contested and relational notions of (Eastern) Europeanness, along with intersecting racialised, classed and gendered tropes of Eastern European migration, manifest in our own positionings and movements as migrant researchers in a diverse neighbourhood in Copenhagen. In our analysis, Eastern Europeanness appears as an emic marker of phenotypical, gendered, audio-hearable difference. Analytically, we approach Eastern Europeanness as a discursive political, socio-cultural construction and a constitutive liminal space of whiteness and Europeanness. Grappling with the ambivalences of the similar-yet-divergent notions of Eastern Europeanness that materialise in our experiences, we explore how our migrant researcher positionalities signify different locations of whiteness.

Intersectionality as a way to unpack differentiated whiteness

Paying attention to intersecting markers of difference enables us to theorise whiteness as differentiated. Rooted in Black feminist thought and activism (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Combahee River Collective, 1982; Crenshaw, 1991), intersectionality has travelled and multiplied, becoming a contested and evasive notion (Lutz, 2014). One of the controversies surrounding intersectionality debates is whether intersectionality can, and if so, how, be applied to the study of whiteness. One could argue that applying intersectionality to studying whiteness – understood as a homogeneous position of privilege and domination – counteracts what intersectionality was built to do: namely, uncover intersectional complexities of oppression. However, we believe that applying intersectionality to analyse different modulations of whiteness can help with understanding intersecting forms of oppression (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Collins, 2000). We apply intersectionality not to show how whiteness is intersectionality constructed as a category of privilege, but rather to unravel whiteness as a position of relatively figured privilege – both changeable and changing.

In our analysis, reading how intersectionality figures (in) our Eastern European positionalities enables us to trace the ambiguities of whiteness. For example, our analysis shows how Mantė's accent and appearance have been picked up on by informants to evoke a seemingly fixed, generalised figure of an Eastern European woman, while in other fieldwork encounters the same markers position her as Swedish or German. Analysis of Linda's vignette shows

how a seemingly dormant, unremarked history *in* Eastern Europe, and a history of feeling stuck in terms of gendered, sexualised and classed position as an Eastern European love migrant in Denmark, have constrained her movements in fieldwork and knowledge production, even as she passes as a majoritised subject. Our analysis unpacks the different locations of whiteness in which we have found ourselves, regardless of our occupying similar social locations as Eastern Europeans, females, immigrants, and PhD researchers employed at Danish universities.

We apply intersectionality to analyse how markers of difference emerge and re-configure each another in different ways through different embodied experiences in the enactment of divergent researcher positionalities. We engage with intersectionality as a dynamic, shifting, and constantly emerging research practice (Zhao, 2013), inspired by approaches to intersectionality that emphasise the non-predetermined and co-constitutive nature of the markers that emerge as meaningful in different social and spatiotemporal contexts (Anthias, 2013). As such, rather than identifying difference *per se*, we foreground the emergence of difference and its effects. This allows us to unravel how differences matter across time and space, in discursive, affective and embodied ways, and across different stages of the research process.

Methodological standpoint

We engage with researcher positionality, building on feminist approaches to knowledge production, namely situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988), politics of location (Rich, 1984) and feminist standpoint theory (Berg, 2008; Harding, 1992; Hemmings, 2012; Collins, 2000). According to these traditions, knowledge is unavoidably partial, enlaced in materiality, and attained through inhabiting particular positions. These positions are embedded in sociopolitical structures which can be brought to the fore through analysing lived experiences. In building our methodology, we draw on the argument that knowledge is situated in and produced through our embodied, sensory and affective engagements with the field, in which researcher positionalities and knowledge are actively made and re-made.

In Nordic feminist-inspired research, a growing body of scholarship is investigating processes of racialisation through autoethnography and memory work (Ahlstedt, 2015; Andreassen & Ahmed-Andresen, 2014; Andreassen & Myong, 2017; Berg, 2008; kennedy-macfoy & Nielsen, 2012; Khawaja & Mørck, 2009; Koobak & Thapar-Björkert, 2012; Lapiņa, 2018;

Mainsah & Prøitz, 2015). This article contributes to these studies by examining the intersecting markers of difference regarding the emergence of differentiated whiteness as it manifests in our migrant researcher positionalities. Autoethnography necessitates reflexivity about the politics of location (Rich, 1984) of knowledge production, highlighting how researcher subjectivity is entangled in multiple, interconnected social roles and fields. Autoethnography calls for attunement to the central role of embodiment and affectivity in racialised and racialising fieldwork encounters (Ahlstedt, 2015; Faria & Mollett, 2016).

Autoethnography enables us to explicate our situated positions in order to reach a better understanding of racialisation and whiteness. From the perspective of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988), our positionality as Eastern European migrants and therefore ambiguously white matters for our knowledge production. Our lived experiences as Eastern European migrants and researchers enable us to show how whiteness is differentiated, taking multiple forms and shifting shapes between not-quite-white and unmarkedly, sufficiently white. At the same time, our experiences of whiteness have also been limited, constrained by our specific circumstances and privileges, including our employment as PhD researchers in Danish universities.

Both authors separately conducted fieldwork between 2014 and 2017 in Nordvest Copenhagen (Copenhagen's "north-west quarter", an area in the southwestern part of the Bispebjerg district covered mostly by the 2400 København NV postal code). Nordvest is known as a diverse, disadvantaged and gentrifying district with a range of forms of housing and institutional and activist presences. Mantė looked at how processes of racialisation play out in friendships among teenagers in a public school and youth activity clubs. Linda explored social inclusion and exclusion in contested urban spaces of Nordvest. In selecting episodes for analysis, we shared and discussed fieldnotes, tracing our similar-and-different trajectories as Eastern European researchers in Denmark. Rather than imposing a standardised mould for presenting and analysing these situations, we cultivated different writing styles, producing two different accounts, which we analyse to trace patterns of resonance and divergence, of different locations of whiteness.

Mantė: an unlikely PhD student in Denmark

I first became an “Eastern European woman” when I moved to Denmark. I migrated to the country from Lithuania in 2010 to take my Masters degree. This experience was unique to me, as Denmark was the first long-destination European country to which I had travelled.

However, statistically I was yet another constituent of the mass immigration wave of Eastern (Central) Europeans following the EU enlargement in 2004. As such I was a potential problem for the Danish labour market. The category Eastern European was unknown to me before I left Lithuania. Only after I moved to Denmark, through my encounters with the questions "Where are you from?", "Why are you here?" and "When are you going back?" did I learn that my subject position, as a woman from a post-Soviet country, was understood as not completely European – as someone who most likely had come to Denmark driven by economic necessity rather than educational aspiration. At times, it was assumed that I was from Russia, which imposed a rather sensitive political identification considering the occupations and coloniality (Tlostanova, 2012) of a number of nation states by the Soviet Union. Other times, I was perceived as Polish – a predominant and generalisable figure of Eastern Europeanness (Böröcz & Sarkar, 2017). The generalised figure of an Eastern European woman with imposed stereotypical sexualised and gendered features has followed me through my migrant experiences in Denmark over the years. These encounters impressed upon me that the predominant frameworks for interpreting the presence of Eastern European migrant women in Denmark are limited to being perceived as a low-paid cleaning industry worker (in Denmark often expressed as a "cleaning lady"), a "welfare thief", or a marriage migrant (explicated through questions such as "Have you found a Danish guy yet?"). I could not have been anything else.

Five years later, after numerous "cleaning lady" jobs to support my studies, I was offered a well-paid PhD position at a Danish university. This achievement was even covered by the local newspaper in my hometown in Lithuania, giving the message that not all migrants are exploited to do "dirty" jobs in Western Europe. In Denmark, this was equally unexpected. The idea that a female (Eastern) European researcher might conduct research on Denmark and in Denmark seemed unthinkable and unexpected. Often I encountered surprise and wonder. "How come you are doing a PhD in Denmark?" and "Is your PhD about the participation of Eastern Europeans in the Danish labour market?"

Instead, my PhD project (2016–2019) looked at the role played by processes of racialisation in friendship formation practices among adolescents in an ethnically, culturally, and racially diverse Danish public school and youth clubs located in Copenhagen's Nordvest neighbourhood. I spent a year conducting fieldwork and interviewing youth and professional staff. The experience of being positioned as Eastern European stayed with me during the

fieldwork. It enabled me to be attentive to how my variously intersecting positionalities were emerging through the fieldwork encounters, informing my knowledge production about racialisation and whiteness in Denmark.

Using moments from my fieldwork, I illuminate the ways in which my position as a researcher and a migrant from Lithuania was imagined, reflected, and emerged through my interactions with students and professional staff working with young people. As I illustrate through my fieldwork vignettes, the differences ascribed to my position shifted in ways that came to matter. At times I was perceived as a visible other, representative of Eastern Europe; at times as a privileged citizen bof Scandinavia and Western Europe. Through intersectional analysis of my shifting positions, I examine how my whiteness emerges and is reconfigured in different encounters. I look into the variations of difference produced through my interchanging subject positions in the field, and the ways that these differences come to matter.

Being Eastern European: an (un)relatable other

During my fieldwork interactions with students and professional staff at the school, I was often positioned interchangeably as Russian or Polish. In some situations, in response to my saying I come from Lithuania, students expressed lack of knowledge of where the country is located, and needed to situate me in a broader region. Consider the conversation that occurred between myself, Kate and Thomas – thirteen-year old students at the school. While I sit in the classroom during the break and look at my notes, Thomas suddenly approaches me with the question:

> Thomas: Where are you from?
>
> Mantė: From Lithuania.
>
> Thomas: What?
>
> Kate: Close to Russia. This kind of... [does not finish the sentence]. I have a friend from Russia. You really look alike.

Not only did students often place Lithuania within the broader Slavic region to make sense of where I am from [a country close to Russia] and to make sense of what this country is “like” [this “kind” of “country”]; they also alluded to my apparently different accent and assumed

shared phenotypical features with people from Slavic regions. According to Kate, I look like her friend, who comes from Russia. During my fieldwork I experienced the juxtaposition of my accent and my looks multiple times. For example, at the beginning of my fieldwork, when most of the students were still confused about who I was and what I was doing at the school, I heard a rumour that I was a mother or relative of one of the students (whose mother is in fact from Poland). As I spent a lot of time talking to this student, his classmates entertained assumptions that I was his mother, or a close relative who comes to school often to take care of this student. These assumptions arose due to our ostensible phenotypical similarity as Eastern Europeans.

Most of the time, people I met during fieldwork alluded to my difference in relation to my accent, stating that it sounds Polish or Russian, but phenotypical features were explicitly mentioned as well. Consider my encounter with one of the professional staff, a 25-year-old woman, at a youth sports festival in the school, who after one minute of conversation in Danish, approached me with the question, "So, where are you from?"

Mantė: I am from Lithuania.

Social Worker: I thought right away that you might be from Poland and such.

Mantė: Really?

Social Worker: Yeah, your accent and just your face.

Mantė: My face?

Social Worker: It is something about your eyes and bone structure of your face.

The idea that I exhibit features that position me as a generalisable Eastern European subject "from Poland and such" was based not only on my audio-hearability (i.e. an accent), but also on ostensibly shared phenotypical features. Being professionally interested in the processes of racialisation and in how perceived markers of difference are figured into explanations, action and affect, I found these situations particularly evocative, because they illustrate how the figure of Eastern European emerges as a distinctive generalisable phenotypical and audio-hearable marker of difference. I also found these encounters shaping my movements in the fieldwork. Always having to explain my background and my (unlikely) position as a researcher, I had a hard time with relating and feeling that I was relatable. I was the distant

other.

As I moved through different spaces around the neighbourhood, such as at different extracurricular school clubs, I found that my position was interpreted in various ways. In the settings where I mainly talked with white, ethnic Danish-born teenagers and staff, I was positioned as Eastern European. Yet in settings where I met people who were not originally born in Denmark, I would be positioned as Swedish, German or Dutch, such as in this situation:

> Ali: Are you from Sweden?
>
> Mantė: No, I am from Lithuania.
>
> Ali: Really??? [Looks surprised and somewhat relieved] Yeah, your accent is like from Sweden. You speak good Danish.

Racially minoritised teenagers often asked me if I was from Sweden because of my "good Danish", and responded with relief once I told them that I was from Lithuania. Once Ali, a 15-year-old racially minoritised boy who I met at one of the youth clubs in Copenhagen, discovered that I was from Lithuania and not from Sweden, as he assumed I might have been based on my accent, he responded with a smile and palpable relief. He even told me a few days later: "You are one of us." For Ali, perhaps my Eastern European background spoke to a relatable subject position that he had experienced as a marginalised young man in Denmark. From his point of view, perhaps we shared an undeserving and undesirable migrant subject position. After some months of frequently meeting Ali at the youth club, he told me that he does not trust Danish social workers, because, as he sees it, they are trying to control him. Even though Ali also perceived my position to be that of a social worker, he felt that I was not there to control and spy on him. Similarly, during my interviews with racially minoritised students, I observed that my Eastern European positionality provided opportunities to talk about and relate to youth marginalised experience. Sometimes when students expressed frustration over being racialised or feeling othered, I shared some of my own experiences about being a migrant in Denmark, which allowed us to relate over shared experiences of marginalisation. In these particular situations I felt that my position could be valuable, because I could reciprocate and relate.

These different situations illustrate how my subject positions have been layered, shifting from

moment to moment. On the one hand, they provided me with different kinds of positionalities – not quite-white Eastern European, or white Western/Nordic European. At the same time, the position of Eastern European varied with different degrees of proximity, resulting in different levels of reciprocation and shaping my movements while doing fieldwork. Explicit identifications of me as Eastern European during my fieldwork at the school made me constantly doubt my value as a researcher – can I reciprocate, can people trust me, can I actually understand what is going on? – while the very same experience of racialisation allowed me to relate to some of my interlocutors' racially marginalised experiences.

These situations show how processes of racialisation and constructions of differentiated whiteness unfold intersectionally. They highlight the processes through which *difference* is induced. This allows us to understand difference not as essential or given, but as coming to matter in connection and juxtaposition with different markers and subject positions among people we encounter. In other words, they show intersecting markers of difference as relational doings. They manifest and transform as we carry them into the field, showing how differences matter in various ways across time and space, in particular situations, and in relation to the people we engage with. Even as differences might come across as fixed, they are shifting and fluid. Across encounters, the "same" markers can be stigmatising, can denote a position of privilege, or can enable trust and reciprocity.

Linda: From love migrant to majoritised researcher

I moved from Rīga to Copenhagen in 2004 at the age of eighteen with my Danish partner. We had gotten married in Latvia – a romantic, rebellious act that in Denmark became interpreted as a calculated move to gain access to social welfare. It was just after the eastward expansion of the European Union, and "Eastern workers" invading the labour market was a common trope in Danish media. However, rather than being seen as cheap labour, I became a too young, unemployable, uneducated, feminised and sexualised Eastern European love migrant of limited social value (Lapiņa, 2018).

As the years passed, I learned Danish, studied in Danish, had Danish friends and Danish jobs. I divorced my Danish partner. Gradually the questions "Where are you from?" and "Why are you in Denmark?" stopped being an everyday occurrence. Becoming less remarked as an Eastern European migrant – not being made to justify my presence – was a relief. Only doing my fieldwork in 2014 did I realise that this unremarked passing could be noteworthy and

worth attending to.

My PhD research (2014–2017) focused on experiences of urban change and encounters with diversity in Nordvest, Copenhagen. Nordvest, known as a diverse immigrant district with a working-class history, has in the last decade increasingly become an up-and-coming, gentrifying neighbourhood, "discovered" and consumed by white middle-class Danes (Stensgård, 2017).

Doing fieldwork, I discovered that in Nordvest I was not perceived as embodying diverse qualities. Instead, I had become a mobile, majoritised subject, passing as Danish and not incurring comments on my accent or looks (Lapiņa, 2018). When my presence was questioned, it happened through calling out my privileges as a white middle-class researcher. I was uncomfortable, coming to see myself as a representative of an industry of urban diversity researchers targeting, and thereby problematising, "diverse" places and people. Along with questions of access, this discomfort pushed me to conduct many of my first interviews with white middle-class Danish residents. Rather than constituting one part in a spectrum of diversity, they saw themselves as privileged observers infatuated with diverse and authentic Nordvest who were seeking alignment with me as a white, middle-class, left-oriented, tolerant, gender-progressive researcher who would understand and reciprocate these affects.

The vignette below shows how, during a single day of fieldwork, I found myself in different locations of whiteness. I discuss how intersecting markers of difference accumulated and mattered over time, analysing how seemingly dormant and unremarked histories and experiences *in Eastern Europe* and as a gendered, sexualised and classed *Eastern European migrant in Denmark* angled my fieldwork movements, researcher positionality, and knowledge production.

Different locations of whiteness

I interview Henning on an early June afternoon in 2014, in his apartment in a public housing block. He has lived in the block for about thirty years. The apartment is chock-full of old scrap electronics, books, and furniture. Each surface is covered by piles of stuff, and I have to move the coffee table a few centimetres away from the sofa to have space for my legs. The air is full of dust. The stuffiness makes me hold my breath.

Henning, a white, frail Danish man in his sixties, serves tea and two different kinds of cookies with chocolate, our plates and cups balancing on top of newspapers, advertisements, and spare computer parts and tools on the coffee table. “Life is too short for weak tea and bad cheese”, he proclaims. He tells me he always keeps an eye on special promotions, Lidl often having the cookies for half price. Having grown up in a time of socioeconomic instability in Latvia with a grandmother who was extremely skilful at getting a good price, and having shopped for carrots and eggs at different supermarkets just to save a couple of kroner in my first years in Denmark, I could reciprocate. I remain silent, however. The air in the apartment is weighing down on me.

I feel the interview is going off track. Henning is telling me about development plans from the 1990s, renovations, rented apartments being converted into co-owned (cooperative) apartments. He is providing facts. I want to hear how he *feels* about the ongoing changes, his neighbours, conflicts and alliances. I am used to my informants sharing their feelings about Nordvest. Often this is infatuation, modulated by self-reflexivity, irony, and other forms of distancing. Henning’s responses do not fit this mould. Forgetting to breathe, squashed between the coffee table and the sofa, developing a headache, I am increasingly frustrated by my inability to listen. The sentence “This is not relevant, when will this stop” is circling in my head. I can look up the facts, I tell myself. I want to hear *what Henning thinks*, *how he feels*. Henning’s promotion hunting, going all the way across Nordvest to Lidl, does not resonate with me and is not “relevant empirical material”. It is one more point of misalignment.

I exit the apartment more than two hours later – tense, nursing a headache, frustrated with Henning and myself. On the way home, I make a spontaneous stop at one of the biggest greengrocers in Nordvest. The greengrocer’s is a chaotic space of changing bargains and non-standard produce. My white, middle-class informants identify it as one of the prime arenas for the racialised, classed “diversity” of Nordvest. As tends to happen, I end up with two huge plastic bags, overflowing with not perfectly fresh, not organic and not exactly seasonal produce (three slightly limp cauliflowers for 10 kroner), very different from the fare I would have chosen in a Danish supermarket.

Exiting the greengrocer’s, I feel fatigued. I decide to sit down for a moment with a cup of strong black tea and syrupy baklava at the Turkish bakery nearby. The bakery lies at a busy intersection, adjoined by a sunny and crowded square with wooden benches and tables set up

during the summer months. Taking a seat, I am the only person who is white, female, younger than 45, and sitting alone. A steady stream of mostly white people on bikes is passing us by on their way home from work in the city centre. The afternoon rush-hour is beginning.

On other occasions, I would have felt set apart, an outsider intruding in a space I am not entitled to occupy. My fatigue, headache and low blood sugar justify my lingering. But there is more. Despite the hard wooden bench having no backrest, I am leaning into something. Despite sitting by myself, I do not feel alone.

Suddenly, I remember the trips to the market with my grandmother as a child growing up in Rīga. We would visit different stalls in the market: vegetables, meat, eggs, fish, grains. My grandmother had known many of the retailers for years. She knew where the apples were grown and where the ham was smoked. After making our rounds, checking the grocery list, we would stop at a market café. I would have layered honey cake, she would have coffee. The tables were high, with no seating. I had to reach up over the edge of the table to reach my cake. I would eat it and look around, tired, with a sense of accomplishment. After taking the trolleybus home, my grandmother would unpack the grocery bags, writing down expenses. She always remembered the exact numbers. Sometimes she pretended to check with me.

Sitting there, accompanied by my plastic bags overflowing with limp vegetables, I realise that I could not have taken them to the gentrified cafés I normally frequent in Copenhagen. I would have been out of place. By the Turkish bakery, the bags are my companions, my gatekeepers, my friends.

Applying intersectionality allows us to examine how whiteness is relational, and continually contested and negotiated. Intersecting markers of difference, and their past traces, mattered for how my whiteness materialised in the different encounters. Meeting Henning, the dusty air, the abundant stuff and cookies in the apartment, his food hamstering and promotion hunting did not trigger me to reciprocate. Certain differences/similarities did not resonate, failed to shake up the stale air. Instead, I found myself stuck in desiring to pass unremarked. Perhaps it made Henning's apartment safer for me. Even being no longer young, no longer in Denmark because of a love relationship with a white Danish man, I felt much safer not disclosing what could pass as Eastern Europeanness in Henning's apartment. It had often been white Danes carrying similar embodied markers who had made me a sexualised,

feminised Eastern European love migrant in my first years in Denmark. In Latvia, it had mostly been white men of middle age and older who had taught me that public spaces were unsafe. Entering as a researcher, and through the accumulation of embodied markers of privilege, I could pass as quite-white.

The tension I experienced in the interview with Henning accentuated how I had grown accustomed to engaging in reciprocal performances of tolerant, self-reflexive white, middle-class Danishness, aware of its own privileges, with my informants (Lapiņa, 2018). "Coming out" as Eastern European, as someone who knew a bit about hamstering food, would have unsettled this relationality. Perhaps it would have enabled me to hear feelings and thoughts in what Henning was telling me.

In contrast, by the Turkish bakery – too white, too young, too female, too alone and Western-looking, fatigued and feeling like an impostor and outsider as I did – my history came to matter, allowing me to linger and lean into space. Embodied memories of market visits with my grandmother intervened with what often passes as a white majority position in Copenhagen. My histories angled how I took place in these spaces and how they enveloped me. The plastic bags of withered vegetables and sugary baklava became anchors of the past that ruptured the seeming present, grounding me among the brown and black men on the hard wooden benches.

The vignette shows how intersecting markers of difference are elaborated over time, as memory and imprints of objects, affects and relationships make themselves present across time and space. In the course of a couple of hours, I found myself inhabiting different locations of whiteness. In Henning's apartment, his stories of promotion hunting did not disrupt the positionality I had established as a white, middle-class researcher, expecting him to share "reflections" and "feelings" in ways white, younger, middle-class, university-educated Danish informants had done. By the Turkish bakery, tiredness and the company of the plastic bags of vegetables anchored me in place, surfacing embodied memories of childhood in Latvia and special-offer hunting I had engaged in as a migrant in Denmark. In these encounters, I inhabited and carried whiteness differently, affecting my possibilities for movement and for lingering in the field. Different locations of whiteness had emerged relationally, through changing constellations of embodied, affective markers of difference. Applying intersectionality shows how the potentiality to pass as (quite) white is contingent on embodied histories and dynamics pertaining to a specific situation.

Revisiting differentiated whiteness and intersectionality

In this section, we discuss how differentiated whiteness contributes as an analytical approach in studies of racialisation, especially with regard to scholarship on whiteness. We also elaborate how intersectionality as a research practice has shaped our studies.

Engaging with intersectionality as a research practice entails attending to shifting alignments and uneven temporalities of embodied markers of difference in how we take place and form as (white) researchers. Eastern Europeanness appears as forced and solidified (a racialised, gendered figure); through embodied memories; and/or as dormant and camouflaged. Our analyses show how Eastern Europeanness materialises into different figurations, illuminating the ambiguity of whiteness. Linda's passing and stuckness as a majoritised researcher in the encounter with Henning attests to the simultaneous solidity and malleability of her racialised positionality. Verbalising her migrant background might have shifted the choreographies of power, meaning, and affect that made her feel that the interview was irrelevant and meant that she failed to hear "thoughts and feelings" in what Henning was sharing with her. Paradoxically, this had become less possible because of how Eastern Europeanness had stuck to her younger self as a love migrant in Denmark. Mantė's experiences, contrarily, show how Eastern Europeanness is consistently emphasised and explicitly, phenotypically racialised. Mantė's researcher positionality fluctuated from being figured into the racialised category of a not-quite-white Eastern European researcher with marked "Slavic" appearance whose legitimacy was questioned doing research in Denmark, to an articulate and well-spoken white researcher from Sweden or Germany.

Practising intersectionality foregrounds the role of intersecting markers of difference in shaping multiple ways of inhabiting (Eastern European) whiteness. We find that whiteness does not operate solely as "the unspoken norm against which 'others' are measured and defined" (Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017, p. 66). Rather, our analysis shows how whiteness constitutes not only "a default demographic starting point for racialising others but (also) the contingent and tenuous end point of being racialised by others" (Garner, 2009: 794–5, cited in Fox et al, 2012, p. 692). Whiteness is not a generic marker that, for instance, unconditionally gives a white researcher access to a "position of 'scientific neutrality' and 'rational thinking' in discussing issues of race and racism" (Andreassen & Myong, 2017, p. 102). On the contrary, an insider position might be unattainable for a white researcher speaking with what is heard as an Eastern European accent, or a white woman born in

Denmark wearing a headscarf. Our analysis show that, while whiteness often brings one closer to going unnoticed and being "in place" in a Nordic context – which in turn entails specific habits and orientations in space (Ahmed, 2007, p. 155) – it does not always stop one being scrutinised as not-quite-white enough. Approaching whiteness as differentiated enables the observation and analysis of how whiteness can contribute to a multiplicity of intersectionally emerging subject positions – and how it matters in knowledge production.

Our emphasis on differentiated whiteness nuances analyses of hegemonic whiteness (Andreassen & Myong, 2017; Hübinette & Lundström, 2014; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Svendsen, 2015) so as to underline how whiteness, intersecting with other markers, can be implied in the emergence of racialised positionalities in different contexts that are both minoritised and majoritised, relatable and unrelatable. Tracing unstable, shifting formations of whiteness, our analysis underlines the importance of conceiving whiteness as always-already-differentiated, emerging through the interplay of intersecting markers of difference. Foregrounding the fluidity and dynamic interplay of intersecting markers of difference, our aim is to direct scholarly work on racialisation and whiteness towards potentialities, degrees of relatability, proximity and distance, conditional passing and mobility. From this perspective, hegemonic whiteness becomes one modality among others when accounting for how whiteness can take form and operate.

We see a tension between different analytical emphases in foregrounding different aspects of whiteness: between an emphasis on its hegemonic power, and an emphasis on how whiteness is (also) unstable and shifting, enabling a range of subject positions. This could be framed as a political choice between acknowledging and exposing whiteness as denoting a position of privilege, and foregrounding whiteness as (also) implicated in formation of less majoritised subject positions. However, while there have been alerts to how scholarship on whiteness can risk perpetuating centring a white perspective (Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017), we believe that foregrounding differences through intersectional analysis contributes to decentring whiteness. Whiteness does matter; but it matters in different ways.

Conclusion

Both authors, engaging with autoethnographic episodes each from our own fieldwork in the same diverse Copenhagen neighbourhood, analysed our historically situated positions as female migrants and researchers from Baltic countries in Denmark. We explored how Eastern

Europeanness, as a figuration of (not-quite) whiteness, manifested in our fieldwork, shaped by intersecting markers of difference. While both authors encountered gendered tropes of Eastern Europeanness, such as the cleaning lady and love migrant, these notions shaped our movements in different ways. Mantė's experience varied from being racialised as Eastern European to gaining trust among youth due to shared experiences of minoritisation. Linda, on the other hand, discovered herself to have become a mobile, majoritised subject, called out as too privileged to study a stigmatised neighbourhood.

Our article contributes to intersectional studies of racialisation and whiteness by nuancing analyses that foreground hegemonic whiteness. Drawing on scholarship on Nordic and Eastern European whiteness, our research shows how Eastern Europeanness constitutes a liminal position, fluctuating between racially marked and remarked, salient and implicit. Approaching our different positions as signifiers of differentiated whiteness, we contribute to emerging scholarship on race and racialisation that analyses whiteness as changing and changeable.

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