Exploring Everyday Nationalism and Methodological Nationalism through Migration Research in Early Childhood and Early Childhood Education

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Abstract: This paper considers the intersections of migration research in early childhood/education with issues of nationalism. Based on four articles which address migration and inclusion in four Nordic states, first, we demonstrate how migration research can serve as a fertile source for studying everyday nationalism and exploring its operation in teaching and learning settings. Second, applying a critical lens to this type of migration research opens up a reflective space for evaluating the inherent methodological nationalism of some migration research approaches. Our explorations in the article establish the need to rethink the categorizations of migration research in early childhood / education. The set of questioning we develop aid in identifying on the one hand, everyday nationalism and its operation in early childhood / education and on the other hand, methodological nationalism. Without reflexivity on methodological nationalism, migration researchers will keep falling into the trap of reifying everyday nationalism through the analytical and practical categories they draw on for their research.

Keywords: Nationalism, methodological nationalism, migration, early childhood, early childhood education

Titel: Alltäglicher und methodologischer Nationalismus in der Migrationsforschung zu früher Kindheit und frühkindlicher Bildung

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit der Verbindung von Migrationsforschung zur frühen Kindheit / frühkindlichen Bildung und Fragen des Nationalismus. Basierend auf vier Artikeln, die sich mit Migration und Inklusion in vier nordischen Ländern befassen, wird erstens demonstriert, inwiefern Migrationsforschung eine ergiebige Quelle für die Untersuchung von alltäglichem Nationalismus und seiner Funktionsweise in Lehr- und Lernsettings darstellt. Zweitens wird gezeigt, dass die Verwendung einer kritischen Perspektive auf diese Art von Migrationsforschung einen Reflexionsraum für die Untersuchung des Migrationsforschungsansätzen inhärenten methodologischen Nationalismus eröffnet. Unsere Ausführungen verweisen auf die Notwendigkeit, etablierte Kategorisierungen der Migrationsforschung zur frühen Kindheit / frühkindlichen Bildung zu überdenken. Die von uns entwickelten Fragen helfen dabei, einerseits alltäglichen Nationalismus und seine Funktionsweise in der frühen Kindheit / der frühkindlichen Bildung und andererseits methodologischen Nationalismus zu identifizieren. Ohne Reflexivität über den methodologischen Nationalismus werden Migrationsforschende weiterhin in die Falle tappen, alltäglichen Nationalismus durch die analytische und praktische Verwendung von Kategorien in ihrer Forschung, zu reifizieren.

Schlüsselwörter: Nationalismus, methodologischer Nationalismus, Migration, frühe Kindheit, frühkindliche Bildung

1 Introduction

Exclusive nationalist ideologies have a growing prominence in national and international politics all around the world. In Europe, nationalist claims of right-wing populists call for more support for a 'national' way of life and greater opposition to multiculturalism, internationalism, and the European Union. Contemporary eco-fascist movements promote nativism and preservation of a 'blood-and-soil' agenda, leading them to regularly blame migrants for ecological degradation, due to their perceived high fertility rate and their 'poor environmentalist culture' (Kulin/ Johansson Sevä/Dunlap 2021). East-Central European nations have regenerated their traditional mythic pasts in the post-Cold War period to form alliances and resist challenges of EU membership and globalization. While some are in support of EU environmental policies, local eco-movements also position themselves as cherishing 'authentic village life' by reinvigorating pre-modern ethnic traditions. With returning to a 'glorious past' tradition attached to rural lifestyle, they reject wasteful over-consumption and neoliberal global capitalism. This is one way to reject 'external influence' and make any kind of ecological activity into actions that are framed by national borders.

Right-wing nationalist political parties are also becoming more likely coalition partners in many countries throughout Europe and impact other parties' programs. This means that right-wing nationalists, including the far-right, have an increasing influence on how national educational agendas unfold (Guidici 2021; Miller-Idriss 2017). Right-wing nationalist parties have a strong agenda on education, as education in their view has a central role in shaping society. For this kind of agenda, "they frame education as a salient grievance, pinpointing misguided education policies as main causes for the dire state of the present" (Guidici 2021: 129 f.). Right-wing nationalists of this kind typically narrow complex education reforms and questions to a highly contentious claim and target mainly the history curriculum and language aspects of education (see for example, Knoll (2022) about the introduction of high German in Swiss kindergartens). In conjunction with this mainstream media can place a question mark on inclusive institutional cultures, initiatives, pedagogies and curricula promoting a multicultural, transnational, and global world, global citizenship and respect for diversity for children. The prevalence of these influences, from far-right and/or nationalist political parties in educational institutions necessitates a renewed interest in studies that explores policy formation and national sentiments prevalent in child institutions, in the family, preschools and other care settings (Zembylas 2021a; Millei 2019).

Despite this growing influence, there is little attention paid in education and early childhood education on exclusionary nationalism expressed in xenophobic rhetoric and anti-immigration policies and the monistic view of the nation (homogeneous nation with one ethnic group) (Tröhler 2020; Giudici 2021; Zembylas 2021a,b; Miller-Idriss 2017; Miller-Idriss/Pilkington 2017). It is at least partially because we are talking about legitimately elected political representatives in the European Union rather than the more amorphous social movements that might be separately developing in the EU. As such it can already make it difficult to develop a critical stance as these nationalist political parties already carry the weight of political legitimacy into parliaments and a large variety of policy-making bodies. Nationalism, if explored in early childhood / education, is viewed from the perspectives of policies and curriculum, as a top-down socializing force, and interpreted as legitimate patriotism or a part of nation-building processes that seek to form a national citizenry (Thöler

2020; Millei/Imre 2015; Scourfield/Dick/Drakeford/Davis 2006). These explorations are less focused on how children are taught and themselves learn the nation and develop an attachment to it (Zembylas 2021a; Millei 2019). Moreover, they cannot answer questions about how children *learn to inhabit* and *practice* the nation, how *feelings* for the nation become a part of children's habitus, or how children *express their opposition* to national sentiments (Zembylas 2021a,b; Millei 2019). Besides being shaped by right-wing party agendas mediated in policies and the curriculum, children's institutional environments are also influenced by public sentiments as reflected within the views of teachers, carers and families creating spaces filled with cynicism, negative stereotyping and exclusions in everyday life (Knoll Forthcoming; Millei/Kallio 2018).

Since studies about how nationalism operates in early childhood / education are scarce, in this paper we seek to demonstrate how migration research can serve as a fertile source to explore the operation, teaching and learning of national sentiments. To show this, we re-interpret four studies exploring migrant children's experiences in early childhood / education in Northern Europe. Our aim is to point to the operation of nationalism and how national sentiments and feelings are (unconsciously) passed on or taught by teachers, or learned through objects, spaces and practices created for young children. In this case Northern Europe as a sub-region serves as an excellent source of critical nationalism studies (Mouritsen/Olsen 2013) as the policies in general are regularly concerned with the welfare of children and seek to integrate all children in to the 'national project' as equals. However, due to the perceived loss of national sovereignty due to immigration, the idea of an egalitarian and redistributive welfare state is increasingly linked to a "sovereign and exclusive national community" (p. 357) which manifests "in narrowing and strengthening the boundaries of belonging, and establishing more effective control around this" (p. 372) (Nordensvard/Ketola 2015) Nordic states are among the wealthiest of countries on the planet, and have the highest social welfare indicators in the world. On the surface, everything is going well, but is that the case?

2 Everyday nationalism and the 'pedagogy of nation'

We understand nationalism as the project which seeks "to make the political unit, the state (or polity) congruent with the cultural unit of nation" (Fox/Miller-Idriss 2008: 536). There are top-down (or elite) forms of nationalism – such as national sentiments and discourses passed down through curriculum, policies or banal signifiers, such as the national flag, and more bottom-up forms that originate from the "assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people" (Knott 2016: 1). Approaches to the bottom-up or 'everyday nationhood' take as their starting point ordinary people and their social practice as they talk about, give meaning to, accomplish, undermine or subvert the nation through routine activities. Nationalism, in this way, is an ever present process which can take exclusive or violently extreme forms, such as those represented by right-wing parties and groups.

There is only a handful of research in psychology that considers how children are socialized into national cultures and understand the world in terms of 'us' and 'them'. The consensus that has developed around this issue indicates that by the age of 6, most children become aware of their national belonging but their strength of subjective identification with

that group varies at this early age (Barrett 2007). In education, research primarily focuses on the top-down transference of national culture, assuming that this is both a legitimate process, and that there is an agreed upon and demonstrable national culture to pass on (e. g. Tröhler 2020; Farini 2019; Millei/Imre 2015). These studies explore how certain elements of the curriculum, such as national and sport events and celebrations, national symbols, and traditions, are passed on in textbooks, rituals and practices in preschools and schools.

National cultures also operate in less prominent ways in everyday institutional life and play a large role in the re/production of a national culture in preschools (Millei/Lappalainen 2019; Lappalainen 2006). In this more bottom-up form of nationalism, the "assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people" appear in everyday practice (Hobsbawm 1992: 10). This more implicit form of nationalism, that pervades national institutions, can appear as punctuality, having meals at a particular time in the day, or trust in things to happen, operate as a part of everyday life, appears as more innocent and is more difficult to notice. What is in operation is not heated patriotic expression nor intensive emotional attachments to land, "it is indifference and apathy; the people in whose name it speaks silently ignore it, submitting to its invisible power" (Carter et al. 2011: 343 f., cited by Fox 2017: 30). However, as a more explicit expression of nationalism, everyday nationalism can also be mobilized by extremists employing seemingly innocuous beginnings to reinforce dangerous stereotypes: such as wearing far right symbols as a fashion (Miller-Idriss 2017) or in a study comparing primary students' attitudes towards Poles and German in Silesia, stereotypes were used for Poles as altruistic and cordial, and more curious, fit and inventive than Germans, and Germans were described as responsible and elegant, but less brave and self-confident than Poles (Mazur 2020). These forms of everyday nationalism can be the basis of belonging and 'othering' and quite easily translate into a 'dog whistle' politics that can mobilize opposition to a large variety of perceived 'others' (see e. g. Zembylas 2021b). This type of politics is often organized in the form of everyday nationalism and coded to ensure that the messages are received through the reinforcement of these practices and stereotypes. Everyday nationalism appears in the mundane life of early childhood/education in (non) innocent forms as well. For example, children by favoring dolls based on their skin color can perform the mythical 'white nation' and recreate the institutional culture of white Australia within their preschool (MacNaughton 2001). This can become an obvious legitimator of both belonging as well as 'othering'.

Millei (2019) developed the notion of 'pedagogy of nation' to orientate research to this educative and learning process in identifying its elements and forces in everyday life. The specific relations between teaching and learning (pedagogy) were mapped to show how they operate as a 'cultural relay' to re/produce culture in general without necessitating the constant presence of human teachers (Watkins/Noble/Driscoll 2015). To demonstrate how the nation is learned and taught, Millei explored the socio-materialities (Millei 2020), feelings and atmospheres (Millei 2021) that also teach the nation to children as embedded in the everyday life of preschools.

Using this context, we understand nationalism as a practice that involves people's thinking, acting and feeling. Thus, nations are made real and meaningful to people in social interactions in everyday encounters that are specific in different places (Skey 2011; Brubaker 2009). Nationalism continuously reinvents itself adjusting to changing circumstances of the social, political, and economic world, also reshaping national values presented in curricula and teaching approaches and national sentiments in everyday life, including notions of who

belongs and who does not ('us' and 'them'). National forms of knowledge and sentiments, practices and emotions, are embedded in institutional settings and coordinate, sustain, and naturalize notions and experiences of the world (Skey 2011). As we later develop in this article, competency or attunement to nature can work as these forms of knowledge, practice and affect creating discourses and practices of inclusion and exclusion.

Teaching and learning in 'pedagogy of nation' includes the teaching enacted by human or nonhuman others, and incitement for the learner for teaching the self, to integrate. For example, as children learn to navigate national times (see Lappalainen 2006), the explicit instruction of the teacher can include the passing of knowledge, showing techniques to help keep time, offering reasoning, demonstrating behavior that children imitate. To highlight the different aspects of the ways 'pedagogy of nation' (Millei 2019) operates in everyday life, the concept includes: (1) *human and non-human didactic means*, such as explicit teaching and incitement of the learner for teaching the self, imitation / socialization and socio-materialities shaping practices, (2) *emotions and affects* and (3) *interiority of space* through which spaces are bounded / bordered (preschools with specific national practices prescribed in curricula) and aspects of the environments are created, such as daily rhythms or allowed noise levels. In the re-reading of the articles, we will highlight these aspects in the operation of everyday nationalism by drawing on information that are available in these texts.

3 Researching everyday nationalism

Everyday nationalism 'operates below the radar', it is in our subconscious thoughts and actions, and this makes it difficult to research (Fox 2017: 28). Jon Fox (2017) suggests studying everyday nationalism as it is breached, when its rules and norms guiding social intercourse are broken. When everyday nationalism is breached, the observer can gain a glimpse of its form and operation (Fox 2017). For example, Iveta Silova's (2021) study focuses on a special part of a Soviet girl's school uniform, the wearing of the hair bow. With her autobiographical exploration she demonstrates how nationalism operated in her preschool in 1970 s Latvia, while Soviet girls were expected to wear the bow, she arrived at the official photography day without a hair bow. Her parents wished to express non-identification with the Soviet state and instead emphasized their independent Latvian identity, and the child learned her national belonging through this practice.

To research everyday nationalism, Fox (2017: 8) proposes finding the 'edges' of the nation, when breaching occurs, when "unselfconscious suppositions about how our national world operates [turns] into explicit articulations". One kind of breaching that occurs at the 'temporal edges of the nation', is when a child or a migrant, for example, is in the process of acquiring the norms, habits, and routines of a nation and at occasions violates those. Fox (2017: 37) claims that "[r]esearch on early childhood socialization lays bare some of the more fundamental, pre-submerged elements of national belonging". In this way, researching children's everyday life in institutions, especially where children from migrant backgrounds or those who are not operating in line with national sentiments are present, offers ample opportunities to learn about the operation of everyday nationalism contributing to the broad study of nationalism.

In this paper, we sought exemplars of recent studies about migrant children's experiences in early childhood and education settings in four Nordic countries: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland. Through this re-reading of the articles with paying attention to national cultures, we aim to demonstrate how teaching democratic participation and 'proper relationships with nature' to migrant children reveals forms of everyday nationalism. Re-reading migration research from the perspective of everyday nationalism also offers a reflexive critical lens. Reading studies with everyday nationalism in mind can also help identify methodological nationalism (Chernilo 2006). Studies of migration that are 'guilty' of methodological nationalism take the nation as a container thus equaling the nation "with the 'total' or 'inclusive' society" for social analysis even though nations are not cohesive and many segments of the population – other than migrants – are also excluded (Martins 1974: 276, cited by Chernilo 2006: 7). Constant and regular references to 'integration' (if not 'assimilation') that needs to be performed and enacted by migrants in these contexts are precisely those specific requests to conform to the signaling of everyday nationalisms. As such it is not about democracy per se, nor about the relationship between children and nature, but instead modes of behavior that can demonstrate an integrative national practice. In other words, studies conceptualized in this way contribute to reifying national values and ideals as chosen by the creators of the various curricula and pedagogy, and the production of migrants as alien to those.

4 Analytical frame

We examined several recently published articles in migration research in early childhood / education considering the Nordic states and selected four articles that offer rich description of ethnographic data through which everyday nationalism can be delineated, even though these articles do not intend to focus on nationalism. Two articles focus on democratic participation in Norway by Sadownik (2018) and in Iceland by Karlsdottir/Einarsdottir (2020), and two on nature in Sweden by Harju/Balldin/Ladru/Gustafson (2021) and in Denmark by Jørgensen/Madsen/Husted (2020). We discuss these articles as pairs, which will help to avoid falling in the trap of methodological nationalism. We also examine other studies to decenter claims through which criteria for the frame of reading (as well as the construction of national space and migrant subject) in the explored texts are produced.

Some research in migration and immigrant integration set up a frame that links to policy-oriented goals (including research and funding infrastructures, such as inclusion in working and civic life) and project this framing onto their case studies. Others, especially in education and early childhood education, employ institutional frames, those that relate to international rights discourses enshrined in national systems, such as children's rights to participation. Uses also include framing curriculum guidelines, pedagogical approaches, or 'good' practices, such as play-based approaches to learning or values of equality and democracy. Both types of frames feed into nation-building efforts, either by creating a productive national workforce or by creating a desired national society and culture. These frames also set up (policy or intervention) models according to which integration is explored, evaluated, and supported.

Through exploring (and critiquing) these or other models of migration research and processes of integration, first, it becomes also possible to examine how everyday nationalism operates within the practices of integration described (to state again, everyday nationalism is not explicitly identified as everyday nationalism by the authors themselves). Importantly, through this exploration it becomes also possible to highlight how everyday nationalism can attach to broad political claims and processes taking place, and what kinds of inclusions and exclusions they make possible (Zembylas 2021b; Fox 2017). Second, we can glimpse how top-down nationalisms operate in lending aspects of methodological nationalism to research projects.

We respond to 2 questions in the re-reading of articles:

1. What model of integration is used to explore its processes (hinting at the practices and operation of everyday nationalism)?
2. How is the national community characterized (including values, habits, etc.)? How is this 'including national group' constructed? And who is left out of the picture / left behind in this construction of the inclusive homogeneous center? By overlooking different strata of the society, what kinds of identifiers are used and universalized?

5 Who needs integration and the construction of the universal including group

a) Individual competence in democracy

Alicja Sadownik's (2018) article titled '*Belonging and participation at stake. Polish migrant children about (mis)recognition of their needs in Norwegian ECEC*'[1] focuses on exploring interviews with ten children from Polish backgrounds about their preschool experiences. The author draws on the Nordic notion of 'good childhood' as a frame of understanding migrant children's experiences. With 'good childhood' the author refers partially to democracy, of which two aspects are children's voice and competency. Competency is understood as children's ability to negotiate their own belonging and is explored through play since play is taken as 'children's way of being' in Nordic preschools. "Child centeredness and welfare" and "democracy and participation" (p. 958) are introduced as national values in Nordic states stated in respective curricula (see Karila 2012), including Norway, and practiced as giving children ample room for decision making. For example, when a child withdrew from the children's group and play, and spent a long time in the bathroom, the teacher left the child there as she understood staying there as a decision of a competent child that teachers should respect.

Through the analysis of interviews with the children, it is revealed that children experienced stress around playing with Norwegian children, except when pop-culture has been referenced, then they could join the play easier. As opposed to choosing to be alone, as in the above example, from the children's explanations it became clear that they experienced exclusion to a different extent, and some reacted to the stress caused by exclusion with self-isolation or becoming sick. Some children received help in learning the language and in

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fulfilling their need for playing with others, and some were left on their own devices to engage in play. Overall, the author argues that children need a particular capital to participate in preschool, and that capital is linked to the notion of the 'competent child,' which is characteristic of the Nordic approach, facilitated the teachers' blindness to the vulnerability of the migrant children and even the traumas they experienced. It entrusted the transition and integration process to the children, who, according to the results of my study, did not always experience themselves as skilled, competent, or independent enough to co-create their own satisfying life in the ECEC (p. 967).

The author highlights the notion of 'competent child' in teachers' views, in which children are understood as competent in fulfilling their needs within the democratic practices of preschools. It seems migrant children lack this capital to different extents, as this research shows. Not having this competency, migrant children breach ideals of what it means to practice 'good childhood' in Norwegian preschools. From the perspective of everyday nationalism, migrant children need to learn to inhabit the nation and acquire this form of 'competency' in preschool in their integration path of becoming participants in the Norwegian democracy. In other words, migrant children need to acquire the values, habits, and routines of 'competency' – here understood as negotiating their own well-being -, to become like the Norwegian children.

In Karlsdottir/Einarsdottir's (2020) article titled '*Supporting democracy and agency for all children: The learning stories of two immigrant boys*', the authors recount two migrant boys' experiences from Eastern European countries in two Icelandic preschools. The frame of understanding of their integration is very similar to the previous article as the authors draw on the Nordic welfare tradition and child-centeredness of ECEC, including its democratic values. Children's competence here is understood within a social justice frame. Children's learning stories describe play situations and draw out those attitudes and actions that teachers evaluate as competency in engaging and contributing to play. In one of the scenarios explored, a boy sought to join a play scenario, however, his ideas about how to gain a role in the play have been rejected. Not being accepted in play is read in the article as exclusion, a social justice issue. Recognizing the exclusion of the boy, the teacher has intervened in the play, but instead of helping to shape how the play progressed which could have created a role for the boy, she ended up asking the boy himself to change his ideas, as in the teachers' view it did not fit the play scenario. With this act, instead of empowering the child, the teacher confirmed the other children's view and the boy as incompetent in influencing play on his own behalf.

The second observed boy seemed to be separated from the others' play, however he observed the others and helped them in ways he could. This might have been interpreted as a form of participation, but the boy's help was not recognized by the other children and the teacher did not recognize these helping acts as participation either. The teacher, recognizing the child's exclusion, tried to rebalance the power among the children which led to reinforce the child's incompetency in engaging in play. Thus, in both situations the teachers' intervention was framed within terms of inclusion and in/competency and teachers sought to help the children to become more competent in their participation in play. The importance of competency and the lack thereof in participating in play were the frames in which the teachers interpreted these situations. The children broke related expectations, which indicates the culture where the nation has been breached by the migrant boys and points to how competence is associated with Icelandic childhood and practices, signaling also the frame and operation of everyday nationalism in these preschools.

In both articles, competence in play is linked to practicing democratic participation and were used to outline migrant children's difference and served as a measure of integration. The including group has been constructed in both articles as already having the competency to play and for migrant children, various interventions were administered. In both articles, the intervention focused on supporting children's competencies in getting included in play. Play can thus be read as a *didactic means of the nation* through which children practice their democratic participation which is deemed as a national characteristic. In the second article, competencies teachers recognized also appeared in gendered *attitudes and emotions*, the specific Hjalli pedagogy sought to teach "the girls' groups … independence, positivity and daring, and in the boys' groups, discipline, communication, and friendship" (Karlsdottir/Einarsdottir 2020: 329) (drawing on Icelandic traditional characteristics independence, frankness, bravery etc). It seems some of the migrant boys' competencies might have been recognized along these differentiations, such as being 'calm and absorbed' (perhaps disciplined) and helping (perhaps as friendship), but it seems these characteristics still were not enough to be read as competency in play. They could be read, however, as gendered national attitudes despite the Hjalli pedagogy[2] explicitly aiming to create equality between the genders.

The frame of democracy, participation, and competency as an overarching Nordic value, appear in specific forms in the national curricula and pedagogical approaches. In the first article, teachers aimed to reach competency in children to be able to negotiate their own wellbeing (inclusion in play). In the second article, empowering children to become competent play participants is a form of practicing democracy. Differentiation of children based on having or lacking these competencies create groups of 'us' and 'them', separating migrant children from those of non-migrant nationals or those who are socialized successfully into the national culture, and operate as a form of everyday nationalism. The '*pedagogy of nation*' then targets the learning of these competencies to aid integration. The teacher by letting children decide on their own in their negotiations of wellbeing also incites a *self-didactic* aspect of learning in children – "the individual child's way of persisting with a difficulty" (Karlsdottir/Einarsdottir 2020: 327) to acquire individualized social competencies in play, to become like other Norwegian children. These views position migrant children as lacking certain competencies deemed as necessary to belong and construct all other (national) children as competent and included, and as skillfully participating in these national democratic societies. While this view constructs the national society's child members as universally having these competencies, it also ignores those from different strata of the nation who might also struggle with acquiring similar competencies.

b) Openness to nature

Jørgensen and her colleagues (2020: 27) in the article titled '*Sustainability education and social inclusion in Nordic early childhood education*' explore 'nature experiences and nature education' 'entangled with sustainability education activities' in various settings (public gardens, preschools, schools) provided by NGOs for young children in Denmark. Nature and outdoor life have a significant place in the curriculum in Denmark since 2004. The authors mostly focus their discussion on one education session in the school garden, first, to understand how children from ethnic backgrounds are included in ecological sustainability education depending on their relations to nature; and second, to show that only one positive

2 https://www.hjallimodel.com [Date of access 11th of October 2021]

emotional response to nature is recognized (allowed) in the including group. This positive response is assumed by the teachers as the universal feature of the including group and manifests in openness to nature and joy and fascination with nature. This view homogenizes Danish children and differentiates those with migrant backgrounds (Gullestad 2002). A positive relation to nature is "characterized by a 'natural' and playful openness and innocence, rather than fear of, or being disgusted by, disgust with" nature and its elements (Jørgensen/Madsen/Husted 2020: 28). The authors link approaches of environmental education to the democratic ideals of society and the concept of 'action competence' developed for Danish ECEC. The authors analyze how minority children and parents are expected to conform to these cultural expectations and feelings towards nature, and specific educational practices to inculcate relations with nature are also instituted to help migrant children to integrate.

The re-reading of this article aims to show how the 'us' and 'them' is created by this positive relation to nature Danish children supposed to have (disregarding those who have an ambivalent feelings towards nature), and which feelings and associated practices operate as everyday nationalism informing innocuously teachers' practices of inclusion and exclusion, and the facilitation of integration.

In the article of Harju and colleagues (2021) titled '*Children's education in 'good' nature: Perceptions of activities in nature spaces in mobile preschools'*, mobile preschools are explored as children interact with/in nature. Mobile preschools operate as buses taking children to experiences in different places daily, such as nature, which is deemed as a "'good' place for children" by teachers, especially if their learning, well-being, and health are considered (p. 243). The notion of "'good' outdoor life in nature" also appears in the Swedish curriculum connected to a romanticized view of nature "correlating with Nordic national identities" (p. 243). This view of relating to nature is used as a differentiation for children from ethnic backgrounds, who live in a particular area mostly occupied by migrant and lower socio-economic status families, relatively isolated from natural environments. These families are viewed by the teachers as lacking (the right) experiences in nature. On an outing with the buses, teachers engaged those children who had the right experiences with nature in activities where nature supplied the educational material for their sensory learning, such as props to play or as understanding for math. For 'ethnic children' who were deemed as lacking nature experiences, teaching focused on showing appreciation for the beauty of landscape and nature as a healthy environment. These children were also carefully guarded in their movement, could only walk by holding hands, as nature was considered as a risky environment for them. Walking in nature served as a physical exercise rather than nature providing materials for their learning.

This study in a similar manner reveals nature as a key to good life, as a dividing view and practice between most Swedes and minority migrant children. This view homogenizes the including group and initiates integrative actions, which manifest in different pedagogical approaches based on nationality status of children. Therefore again, relation to nature operates as a form of everyday nationalism.

In these studies, nature appears as an *educator*, its didactic means are nature materials and its beauty and health promoting effects, and as an object to which children *relate* in specific ways and *with positive emotions.* Nature also appears as a space for learning experiences through which *nature as a space* is created "where children can be themselves and live out their feelings" (Harju et al. 2021: 244), and where they can experience freedom with responsibility, hence linking the notion to how to be competently in nature as they in-

dependently explore. Nature as a Nordic ideal in the case of the Danish study, works through emotional relations to/with nature, and in the Swedish case, nature as the place for children. Thus, nature as everyday experience can be read as everyday nationalism. This experience can thus create the 'including center' of 'us' as Nordic children and migrants as 'them'as differentiated and practiced in everyday life. The pedagogy of nation with / through / relating to nature, as we have shown above, operates in didactic, emotional, and spatial ways and produces evaluations of and practices for integration.

Inclusions and exclusions, and a measure of integration in these spaces are created through relations with and openness to nature and having the right emotions and appreciation for nature. The national society thus is constructed as nature loving and good national childhood is evaluated as close to nature. However, and as it is also argued in Jørgensen and her colleagues' article (2020), this excludes various negative and ambivalent relations to nature, and as discussed in Harju and colleagues' article, homogenizes the national society by disregarding those people from different socio-economic backgrounds who have less opportunities or have no desires to practice their nature relations. And read from our perspective, there are far too many loaded presuppositions here that assume that migrants and migrant children will somehow appear in classrooms and early childhood settings with oppositional attitudes towards a Nordic view of the 'correct national way' to interact or 'be' with nature.

6 The notion of integration and methodological nationalism in migration research

In this context we shall raise an important and interrelated point surrounding the question of migration research and early childhood education in general, and link to our specific set of studies under examination. To be able to make this point, however, a broader question of integration needs to be examined. The idea of 'integration' has crept into policy making discussions at almost every level in the context of Europe, the EU, and Nordic countries in the past two decades. The post-Cold War era became dominated by this terminology shortly after the millennium, and can possibly be linked to several major political events that we are not about to discuss here in detail as there is no space, but just to mention: the rise of a particular form of global terrorism, migration events caused by war and climate change, the establishment of a new global neo-liberal world order, and the re-emergence of particular forms of right-wing nationalism[3]. Clearly, we can only begin to discuss this problem here, and we are looking to turn the academic conversation to an interrogation of the problematic turn to 'integration' as a general policy solution dealing with migration and education in the Nordic countries in question.

Established multicultural societies, such as Australia and Canada, who see multiculturalism as part of their national culture, seek to retain versions of cultural difference, rather than 'integrate' people in order to create a homogeneous national society, have long discarded the notions of assimilation and integration as policy positions as they are overtly nationalist. As such, it can still be seen as a version of everyday nationalism to demand acceptance of difference, since denying difference in established multicultural societies such as Australia

3 https://www.mipex.eu/history [Date of access 15th of October 2021]

and Canada is seen as right-wing and regressive positions. In this framing both the questions of assimilation and integration have been posited as a gateway to right-wing nationalist social and political forces and have developed as a long running argument between conservatives and progressives in the Australian and Canadian contexts. It is a well-established idea that in the case of multicultural societies, pluralism and forms of liberalism must take precedence over questions of assimilation and integration. Assimilation as a policy position is a direct cause of conflict in a set of demands to disestablish difference and ensure homogeneity as it cannot operate in a normative vacuum: What are the parameters for 'assimilation', who sets the boundaries for a culture, a knowledge, a set of beliefs, in to which diverse people are to be assimilated, made whole, and as one polity? Multicultural societies assume a plurality of religions, cultures, ethnicities, and that these are not static positions. Group intermarriage, syncretic religious practices, multi-juridical justice systems, and non-reliance on static categories of identity politics is what characterizes what Will Kymlicka (2001) has termed as established multicultural liberal pluralist societies such as Canada and Australia. The Nordics have opted for migration and education policies that are then meant to be 'kinder' than this much criticized assimilationist concept, and have instead framed much of the policy surrounding migration and education as something that needs to deal with the 'integration' of migrants as both individuals and as groups. Knowingly or not, these integrationist policies are overtly nationalist (Kymlicka/Banting 2006). This is problematic for a whole host of reasons, and we discuss only a few here as an introduction to a much larger research agenda.

Who do we identify as a migrant and as needing integration considering migration research? This is a very complex question, as we need to be certain what we are dealing with in the categorizations of the people who step into these educational institutions: simply put how are migrants defined? Given that the EU has among the Five Pillars the famous 'freedom of movement' right[4] given to all citizens of EU member countries (remembering that Norway and Switzerland, while not technically members, adhere to a vast majority of the laws surrounding the movement of people from other EU countries), then what are we discussing when we talk about, for example, 'Polish migrants' to European countries outside of Poland? What would be the difference between a 'migrant' from Denmark or Poland, moving to Norway or Sweden? Is 'migrant' as a category applied to both? If not, why not (here we can see already the emergence of stereotypes also guiding research)? Are both categories somehow in need of established integrative policies? Why or why not? And what about people from outside the EU/European associated countries? Are we making distinctions based on some form of legal grounds or is it a question of ethnicity? And how is this proposed integration measured or evaluated? Does it make sense to differentiate from among children with a 'Nordic' background (based on culture, ethnicity, or birth status) and those from other parts of Europe, and/or those from outside of Europe? This is a fundamental question about progressive and 'integrationist' policies in the Nordic context, as it would suggest that this is really about some form of Nordic nationalist response to social and political change over the past two decades.

For example, Sadownik (2020) describes Poles as coming to Norway seeking to "improve their economic status" and as "the largest working immigrant minority in the country" (p. 956). An immediate question that arises in this context is which migrant or expat (or new resident for that matter) moves for other reasons than improving their economic status via

4 https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=457 [Date of access 15th of October 2021]

occupying a new job or career? Would it not be already assumed that a person would move from one city to another to improve their circumstances (economic, social, political, career, family interests, and so on)? Since there are no borders in the EU/European Association Area, then moving from one city to another in Poland should be viewed legally and normatively as moving from a city in Poland to a city in Sweden or Norway. It seems the definition of migrant in this study aligns with the officially used differentiation for identifying migrants. So, to reiterate, are we also discussing Danish and Swedish citizens in the same way as Polish citizens when they move from one place to another?

Official statistics are used for showing this minority and work status, beside the use of the category of paid work alluding to one of the frames that possibly measures migrant integration. Paid employment is a criterion that is often applied to measure usefulness for, or making contributions to, the national economy of migrants. In Sadownik's (2020) study, it seems the parents' employment is not taken as a sign of integration. Instead, the differentiation of cultures in early childhood education, that is taken to provide grounds to explore inclusions and exclusions, hence integration, are those cultures that are often referred to as 'working parents of migrant group X'. An odd assumption, since specific groups are then referred to as 'working' or 'non-working', and that is indicative of their level of integration. But again, the group to be integrated is defined on national policy frames such as 'working Poles' (working is a sign of contributing to the national economy, hence nation-building), and since the very fact of working points to integration, integration is instead measured in cultural aspects of children's need to learn Norwegian ECEC culture of competency. The question remains to be answered is what about those children who are Norwegian citizens, born and raised there, and having difficulties with competency? Are they already presupposed to be integrated, whether part of 'working families' or not? In this case the criteria of 'integration' seems to be ethnicity, or at the very least place of birth. We suggest, for migration research to avoid falling into the trap of methodological nationalism (treating belonging within the frame of a national container in line with some assumed national characteristics), the entire category of integration needs to be questioned in the same way as the aforementioned policies surrounding democratic participation and attitudes surrounding nature as it seems that even in these inclusive and progressive Nordic societies, nationalism, both overt and covert, appear to drive policy.

7 Final thoughts

Our main goal here was to establish the need to rethink the categorizations of migration research in early childhood education and education. We sought to develop a set of questioning around the idea that everyday nationalism was ubiquitous in these settings, and that migration research reifies this everyday nationalism with the analytical and practical categories we discuss in the paper.

National pedagogies, relationships/openness to nature, democratic participation in classroom settings, and certainly anything to do with 'integration' policies demonstrate an ongoing practice of everyday nationalism that exists in both the educational setting as well as the migration research about that setting. The Nordic context provides us with an interesting set of problems as it can tell us something about progressive societies and the attempts to

accommodate and/or tolerate others. It would appear on the surface that models of both democratic participation as well as inclusion in an educational setting in the Nordics is still subject to practices of everyday nationalism. This is a very concerning problem at several different levels.

First, the movement of peoples is not something that will reduce in levels in the near future. All sorts of factors are involved in this including climate change refugees, protracted conflict zones pushing people out of various areas, internal national social and political conflicts (for example discriminatory practices such as LGBTQ+ 'free' zones, poorly managed national/local economies, arguments about ethnic discrimination), and any form of detrimental life circumstances will obviously make some people try to better their circumstances by moving to another city.

Second, the categorizations of children in educational settings are problematic, and it is something that needs constant and regular attention. We sought to raise examples that might appear 'fair and unbiased' on the surface, and yet once put in to practice could be seen as demonstrably unfair. The idea that a category of child might be less able to participate in some form of 'democratic classroom' learning, or have a more problematic relationship to nature, based on an assessment of their possible ethnicity or place of origin, is a practice that would be fair to assume progressive Nordic welfare state countries do not want in their education policies and practices. Clearly, there is a nationalist bias that reifies ethnic and place-of-origin stereotypes.

Third, the ubiquitous presence of 'integrationist' policies, and the rhetoric of integration for migrants, is an obvious result of everyday nationalism. The consequences of this integrationist nationalism have been seen to be detrimental for decades, and yet it appears that it is still in existence in the Nordic states, and it has gone unnoticed and unexamined by policymakers and migration researchers. The practice of integration needs to be analyzed in more detail in terms of what kinds of practices and criteria are required to become an 'integrated member' of any society. Is it enough to be born there, speak a common language, practice a common religion, engage in social practices towards the environment and others around us? Or are there more specific kinds of activities and assumed narratives and realities that we need to know to be fully accepted as integrated in Nordic societies? This is highly problematic in a European context in which nationalist policies are overtly discriminatory and basing this discrimination on varieties of assumed human behavior that might be in the hands of groups within these national boundaries.

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