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# To Be or Not to Be – The Question of Capital

Young Adults Negotiating a Sense of Belonging in a Norwegian National Space

Master's thesis in Social Anthropology

Supervisor: Lorenzo Cañas Bottos

Co-supervisor: Jan Ketil Simonsen

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## Sammendrag

I denne oppgaven utforsker jeg hvordan unge voksne med flere nasjonale tilknytninger forhandler ideer om tilhørighet i en norsk nasjonal setting. Jeg har sett på hvordan individer plasserer seg selv i en nasjonal orden gjennom narrativer. Ved å analysere intervju, fokus grupper, digitale korrespondanser, og sosiale media profiler, viser jeg at følelser av tilhørighet blir hevdet gjennom implisitt og eksplisitt bruk av kategoriske identiteter. Sådan finner jeg termene ‘norsk’ og ‘utlending’ sentrale. Gjennom en forståelse av sosiale felt, argumenterer jeg for at følelser av tilhørighet ikke er hevdet i et vakuum, men at de må i stedet bli sett i relasjon til dominante diskurser, som i denne sammenheng forstås som nasjonalisme. Videre forstår jeg tilhørighet som en kamp som befinner seg i samspillet mellom følelser og diskurser av tilhørighet. Jeg bruker analogien til et spill for å understreke det performative, intersubjektive, og relasjonelle ved tilhørighetsprosesser. Det norske tilhørighetsspillet består av to separate, men sammenhengende, spill. Disse kaller jeg for det offisielle og det aristokratiske spillet. Det førstnevnte handler om statsborgerskap, og det sistnevnte om intersubjektive relasjoner. I hvert spill betegner nasjonal tilhørighet det å ‘passe inn’, hvor individer må bevise sin norskhet opp imot et nasjonalt ideal. Slike ‘selvforbedringshandlinger’ blir i det ene spillet omgjort til en forestilt likhet, mens de blir tatt som bevis på ens iboende forskjell i det andre. Nasjonal tilhørighet blir ikke bare et enten/eller spørsmål, men også et spørsmål om mer, eller mindre. Følgelig finner jeg tilhørighetshierarkier på begge nivåene, samt i mine informanternes fortellinger. Etablerte narrativer begrenser hvordan tilhørighet er hevdet, men slike narrativer blir også utfordret. Gjennom å hevde, redefinere, og reproducere kategoriske identiteter, krysser informantene tilhørighetsgrenser, og på denne måten finner de også nye måter å høre til på i den nasjonale ordenen.

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## Abstract

In this thesis, I explore how young adults with multiple national attachments negotiate a *sense of belonging* in a Norwegian national space. By way of a mostly digital fieldwork, I have investigated *narratives of emplacement* through interviews, focus groups, digital correspondences, and social media profiles. I understand a sense of belonging to be claimed through the implicit and explicit use of categorical identities. In this respect, I find the terms ‘*norsk*’ and ‘*utlending*’ to be of significance. Through a social fields’ perspective, I argue that personal attachments are not claimed in a vacuum. Rather, senses of belonging must be seen in relation to *the politics of belonging*. This discursive resource takes the form of nationalism. Furthermore, understanding belonging as a struggle located in the interplay of the former and the latter, I use the analogy of a game to account for its performative, intersubjective, and relational nature. I take the Norwegian game of national belonging to be constituted of two separate, yet highly interlinked games. Namely, the official and the aristocratic game. The first mentioned has to do with issues of citizenship, and the latter with intersubjective relations. Each game makes national belonging a quest of ‘fitting in’; of proving one’s Norwegianness against a national ideal. Yet, in one game such acts of ‘self-improvement’ are translated into a perceived sameness, while they are taken as proof of one’s inherent difference in the other. I find national belonging to be a matter of either/or, as well as a matter of more, or less. Accordingly, I find hierarchies of belonging to be present on both levels, as well as in my informants’ statements. While established narratives limit how a sense of belonging is claimed, such narratives are also challenged. Through claiming, redefining, and reproducing categorical identities, my informants creatively cross boundaries of national belonging as well as creating new ways to belong in the national order of things.

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I want to thank the incredible participants of this study for their insightful statements, their humour and kindness, and, not least, their patience. I have laughed, cried, and been absolutely puzzled by your stories. You have all truly been an escape from the pandemic. To you I am forever indebted. I also want to thank all the incredible anthropologists working at NTNU, but in particular my supervisors Lorenzo Cañas Bottos and Jan Ketil Simonsen for their excellent support and guidance. I would not be where I am without you. To all my peers: The sweat, the tears, the laughter, the ‘ah!’ moments, the insightful comments, and the existential crisis – you made life not only bearable, but joyous. Thank you. I want to give an extra mention to Tonje Victoria Lidahl Mørtzell for being there in a time when everything seemed impossible, for your comments, your support, and your humour, both before, during, and after my fieldwork. Our countless emails back and forth have been a true saviour. I also want to thank Maren Ryan for always being there in times of crises, for our many hours in the gym, and for providing me with the cultural capital I didn’t know I was lacking. Without you I would be sad, lazy, and none the wiser! Thank you to Amalie Brekkan-Davidsen for your contagious laughter and your excellent food. Everyone who embarks on this journey should have friends like you. You have truly given me a place to belong. To my mother Helen’s excellent proof-reading skills and her continuous love and support, to my father Frank’s encouragement, to my brother Aron for making me rest, and to my partner Jørgen’s patience – thank you. All the shortcomings are my own.

Nina Helen, Trondheim 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2021

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

Adem was born and raised in Germany. At the age of 16, following the passing of his mother, he moved to Norway with his father. More than ten years had passed since his arrival when I first met him in a flat that he shared with two others in the outskirts of a Norwegian city. Whilst chatting, I came to ask Adem what the word ‘identity’ meant to him. He replied,

Hah! *Very mixed feelings!*<sup>1</sup> There are people in Germany that say I’m no longer German. Eh, people in Norway say, ‘you’re German’. But I’m a German citizen. I only have, em, a residence permit in Norway. So, it’s *mixed feelings* really. I feel more *norsk* than German really. But at the same time, I am German. But then I am also half Turkish. And, but, I don’t have any feelings in relation to that. I don’t know how to speak Turkish; I don’t look Turkish – I only have a Turkish name. I have a Turkish mother though. So, identity-wise I would say that I feel more *norsk* than German, but on paper I am German. Right. So, it’s a *little mixed*. But that will change when I apply for Norwegian citizenship. Then I am both no matter what.

In his reflection, Adem’s sense of self is drawn upon ideas of the nation-state. He speaks of belonging in terms of personal feelings and emotional attachments, people’s perception of him, and of institutionalised statuses. While a sense of national belonging is legitimated through citizenship, we also see how juridical statuses are not necessary for ‘feeling’ national. Adem is German because of his citizenship, yet he feels more Norwegian. On the other hand, we see how he comes to navigate other people’s perceptions of him. To people in Germany, he is no longer German. To people in Norway, he is German. Furthermore, we see how national belonging is connected to ideas of personal attributes and cultural competence – of looking and speaking Turkish – and how lacking such personal traits relegates his Turkish belonging into the background. We also see how the lack of cultural capital is balanced out by social capital in the form of kinship ties. While he does not feel very Turkish on the basis of not ‘being’ very Turkish, he cannot neglect the fact that his mother was Turkish.

Adem’s statement reveals a complexity that characterises the senses of belonging of many of my informants. The ambiguous nature of his statement seems to emanate from navigating multiple national belongings, as well as an attempt at negotiate different perspectives of what it means to be national. It shows how a sense of self navigates and negotiates external ideas that emanate from both informal and formal actors; how a sense of

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<sup>1</sup> Translation note. While the excerpts presented in this thesis have been translated from Norwegian to English, I have kept some words and phrases in their original format. Unless stipulated otherwise, these will appear in italics.

self must come to terms with other people's perceptions, as well as the ready to use templates of citizenship produced by states. While Adem speaks of being German, Turkish, and Norwegian, it is the negotiation of the latter subject position I am interested in this thesis. Through a mostly digital fieldwork, I explore the ways in which individuals understand and perform their place in a Norwegian national space through the stories they tell about themselves and others. I am interested in how individuals with multiple national attachments construct, deconstruct, perform, reproduce, and negotiate a sense of Norwegian national (non-)belonging. In this way, I explore what it means to be '*norsk*'<sup>2</sup> and what it means to be '*utlending*'<sup>3</sup>, and how such categories are claimed in implicit and explicit ways through narratives. Yet, as revealed by Adem's statement, this also warrants a need to explore how such individuals are constructed, interpellated and cohered into categories which signify national belonging and non-belonging.

Recognising the importance of context, then, I explore the production of categorical identities from both a state and an individual level. In terms of the former, I investigate prominent ideas of immigration, citizenship, naturalisation, and integration in a Scandinavian context, and how my informants relate to such institutional issues. On the other hand, I focus on my informants' feelings of being '*norsk*' and being '*utlending*' as expressed through narratives, and what these might signify in different contexts. Specifically, I focus on the way in which people navigate and perform notions of similarity and difference, of fitting together, through drawing on and reshaping categorical identities (see Lamont and Molnár 2002); how they draw on prevailing discourses, how they reshape them, and the way in which they are attributed meaning and significance (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). I investigate how national belonging, as well as national non-belonging, becomes a matter of feeling and being perceived as equal, a process of highlighting and downplaying similarity and difference. I want to show that, while boundaries between an 'us' and a 'them' continuously function to include some and exclude others, boundaries are themselves open to contestation and creative pursuits of boundary-crossing. While national belonging remains important for most of my informants, a sense of belonging is also to be found in national *non*-belonging.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Norwegian'.

<sup>3</sup> 'Foreigner'.

## The Norwegian Context

The preservation of a sovereignty, Norwegian identity and an associated folk behaviour has a long historical record in Norway (see McIntosh 2015; Sørensen and Stråth 1997). What these different, yet cohering, dimensions have come to mean has been shaped by years of Swedish and Danish rule, the Nazi occupation during the Second World War (WWII), as well as nineteenth century cultural romanticism (McIntosh 2015, 312). Historically, the Norwegian identity grew out of the idea of a poor, yet heroic peasant, who ‘built the country’ against all odds (Sørensen and Stråth 1997). Norwegian nationalism came to link ‘the idea of the national community to resistance, a struggle for democracy, and freedom from external domination.’ (Bendixsen, Bringslid and Vike 2018, 20). Ideas of equality have played a central role in the Norwegian self-perception, reflected in ideas of *likestilling*<sup>4</sup> and the welfare state. The perception of Norwegians as peaceful, law-abiding, and benign have been further strengthened by Norway’s role in the noble peace prize, involvement in humanitarian aid, as well as peace negotiations (McIntosh 2015, 312). However, this perception neglects Norway’s role in colonial endeavours and transatlantic slave trade, the production and export of weapons, and the existence of class differences. Norway is further commonly perceived as a country which historically speaking has been inhabited by a ‘exotically homogenous’ population, and immigration is understood largely as a 1950’s-1960s phenomenon (*ibid.*). Yet this perception neglects, or even renders invisible, the continued presence of ethnic and indigenous minorities, as well as the fact that immigration to Norway has been present since the start of the state’s formation.

## A Brief Account of Immigration in Norway

Until WWII, immigration was nevertheless mostly intra-Nordic (Wickström 2017), and the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was mostly characterised by emigration to the United States. Immigration numbers remained relatively low until the 1970s when the country saw an increasing demand for labour workers. Migrants were perceived as a benign, yet temporary, resource. With the 1973 oil crisis and rising unemployment numbers, the positive understanding of immigration turned sour. In 1975, the Norwegian Government implemented a moratorium on labour migration<sup>5</sup>, yet continued to allow for family reunification and asylum seekers (see Midtbøen 2018, 348). The 1980s and 1990s were characterised mostly by the latter

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<sup>4</sup> Equality between the sexes.

<sup>5</sup> Something which was also introduced in the rest of Northern and Western Europe.

two. With the expansion of the European Union (EU)<sup>6</sup> in 2004, immigration to Norway was characterised by low-skilled migrants coming from the Eastern European countries, particularly Poland and Lithuania. The number of immigrants continued to rise until it reached a top in 2011. Since then, numbers have been decreasing, with the exception of an increase in 2015 and 2016 due to refugees and asylum seekers fleeing the Civil War in Syria.

As of 2021, the immigrant population<sup>7</sup> in Norway counts 800 094, thus accounting for eighteen and a half percent of the total population (SSB, 2021a). Of these, 197 848 are what Statistics Norway (SSB) defines as ‘Norwegian-born to immigrant parents.’<sup>8</sup> The immigrant population come from or have ancestral ties to over 200 places. Nearly eight percent are affiliated with ‘the EU27/EEA, United Kingdom, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand’ and nearly eleven percent with ‘Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania except Australia and New Zealand, and Europe except the EU27/EEA/United Kingdom.’ (*ibid.*). The largest section of the former subgroup is that of the European countries at seven percent, while the largest section of the latter is that of Asia<sup>9</sup> with just above six percent. As of 2020, the most common reason for immigration was labour, followed by family reunification, refugee/asylum seekers, and education (SSB, 2021b). As of 2021, the biggest immigrant group – accounting for 177 331 individuals – is without a doubt associated with Poland. Next is Lithuania with 48 564, closely followed by Somalia, Pakistan, Sweden, and Syria. In 2017, the largest section of Norwegian-born descendants had parents who had migrated from Pakistan, closely followed by Somalia, Poland, Iraq, Vietnam, Turkey, and Sri Lanka (SSB 2017).

### Scholarly Attention: Immigration, Belonging, National Identity

Back in 1989, Marianne Gullestad (1989, 72) noted how anthropology in Scandinavia was mostly ‘an anthropology of insiders and of outsiders who have settled in.’ Accordingly, scholars have been, yet not exclusively so, interested in ‘national cultures’ – what it means to be ‘Norwegian’, ‘Danish’ or ‘Swedish’ (*ibid.*, 83). Gullestad has herself written extensively on the Norwegian context, introducing the salient idea of ‘imagined sameness’ and ‘equality as

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<sup>6</sup> While Norway has never been a member of the EU, they have been part of the European Economic Area (EEA) since 1994. This is an internal market that seeks to ensure the freedom of movement of people, goods, services, and capital.

<sup>7</sup> Includes ‘Norwegian-born to immigrant parents.’

<sup>8</sup> There are three further categories that do not figure part of ‘immigrants and their Norwegian-born children’, but rather part of the ‘general population’. These are 1) foreign-born to one Norwegian-born parent (38 861), 2) Norwegian-born to one foreign-born parent (284 174), and 3) foreign-born to two Norwegian-born parents (39 198) (see SSB 2021c).

<sup>9</sup> Including Turkey.

sameness' that posits that one must feel the same in order to be of equal value (see 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). In her article *Invisible fences: Egalitarianism, nationalism and racism* (2002b) and in her book *Det norske sett med nye øyne* (2002a), she explores Norwegian official debates on immigration and finds a heightened focus on ancestry, common culture and origin. Being 'norsk' is as such understood as an inherent essence, rather than something that can be attained. This 'growing ethnification of national identity' (Gullestad 2002b, 45) is seen in light of the growing tendency to perceive 'immigrants' through a lens of irreconcilable differences where ideas of race often take centre stage (see also Gullestad 2002c).

While it is nearly two decades since Gullestad's publications on the matter, her findings remain important to contemporary studies. McIntosh (2015, 313) shows how the egalitarian logic has turned into an egalitarian ideal, where integration in Norway is continuously 'framed in moral terms that gesture towards the inherent goodness, equality and democracy of "basic Norwegian values".' In a similar manner, Erdal, Doeland and Tellander (2018) find the contemporary Norwegian naturalisation program to reflect an idea of 'becoming one of us', where non-citizens must prove themselves through language proficiency and cultural knowledge (see also Brochmann and Seland 2010; Midtbøen 2015; Wickström 2017). Bendixsen, Bringslid and Vike (2018, 21) illustrate how ideas of appropriate competence are central to the popular perception of Norwegian national identity too, functioning to designate foreigners as people who tend to lack it. In her study of youth with minority backgrounds in Norway, Mathisen (2020) finds that 'Norwegianness' becomes a normative 'measuring stick' for minority youth. Analysing two contemporary autobiographical texts written by individuals of minority and immigrant backgrounds in Norway, Tisdal (2020) explores belonging as it is produced in literature. She finds belonging to be grounded in ideas of 'fitting in', a notion that is itself grounded on ideas of 'cultural competence', in a skillset that is deemed necessary for 'integration' and 'belonging'.

Newer literature approaches immigration and belonging through various perspectives: *family, parenthood, and household* (Aarset 2015; Bendixsen and Danielsen 2020), *media and political representations* (Alghasi 2009; Eide 2018), *the welfare system and the differentiation of rights* (Bendixsen 2018), *issues of citizenship* (see for example Birkvad, 2019; Erdal, Doeland, and Tellander 2018; Erdal and Midtbøen 2021), *integration* (Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud 2009), *everyday social inclusion* (see Danielsen and Bendixsen 2020), *boundary-making* (Erdal and Strømsø 2021) and *matters of self-identification and identity* (see for example Bielicki 2017; Dyrli 2017; Mathisen, 2020; McIntosh 2015; Kaya 2014; Tisdal 2020; Vestel 2009). Erdal, Doeland and Tellander (2018) who explore the citizenship-belonging

nexus among residents in Oslo and find citizenship to be crucial in determining individual's everyday sense of security and insecurity. Birkvad (2019) find Norwegian citizenship to be important for spatial mobility, legal stability, as well as formal recognition. Erdal and Midtbøen (2021) find the passport to be an important symbol of national belonging, and that citizenship is perceived as more-than-instrumental among immigrant populations. Erdal, Doeland and Tellander (2018, 720) find that citizenship becomes an important tool in legitimatising national belonging for individuals who have their sense of belonging challenged by others. While citizenship matters, they do not find it to determine people's sense of belonging. And while becoming '*norsk*' is the goal of Norwegian naturalisation processes, this does not always translate into the majority population perceiving new citizens as truly belonging (*ibid.*, 719). Birkvad (2019), McIntosh (2015), Erdal and Strømsø (2021), and Erdal, Doeland and Tellander (2018) all find ideas of 'race' and ethnicity to function as invisible fences that hinder some individuals' from claiming a legitimate sense of national belonging. Nevertheless, many of the authors (see Bielicki 2017; Eide 2018; Engebriksen and Fuglerud 2009; McIntosh 2015; Midtbøen 2018; Tisdell 2020; Vestel 2009) find that individuals who are pushed to the edges of the nation also engage in create acts of boundary-crossing, finding new ways to belong in a Norwegian national space.

### Conceptualising National (Non-)Belonging through Social Classifications

As analytical concepts, 'belonging' and 'identity' suffer from being poorly defined and overstretched. In addition, they are often conflated with each other. If they are to be of any heuristic value, however, they must be properly defined and separated. I take belonging as an *analytical* concept to explore the 'modes of action through which people place themselves and are placed into social categories' (Ferguson 1999, 95). Social categories – what I call categorical identities – are on the other hand categories of *practice*<sup>10</sup>, or emic terms, that my informants use to signify or claim a *sense of belonging* (see Fenster 2005). The latter is an emotional attachment that in some cases designates a feeling of being 'at home' or of being 'safe' (see Yuval-Davis 2006), yet which in my case comes to designate 'fitting in with' or 'fitting together with' others – of feeling and being perceived as equals (see Gullestad 2002b). Such attachments are thus heavily interlinked with ideas of 'groupness' (see Chin 2019, 717), where similarities between people within a group are highlighted and differences are

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<sup>10</sup> For a further discussion on the use of 'identity' as an analytical concept see for example Anthias (2002), Brubaker and Cooper (2000), and Hall (1996).

downplayed. Categorical identities function to signify inclusion and exclusion to social groups. In terms of national belonging and national non-belonging, the terms I found to be of highest significance were that of *'norsk'* and *'utlending'*<sup>11</sup> respectively<sup>12</sup>.

While I recognise that people may 'place themselves' and be 'placed' into categorical identities in non-verbal ways, I am, in this thesis, interested in *narratives of emplacement* (Farrer 2010). Accordingly, I explore the ways in which my informants perform their place in the Norwegian national space through the stories they tell about themselves and others (see Anthias 2002; Yuval-Davis 2006). In this way, my informants' narratives draw upon categorical identities – both explicitly and implicitly – to signify a sense of national (non-)belonging. However, a sense of belonging is never solely a matter of personal choice (Probyn 1996, 13); instead, it must be seen in relation to the power of others to categorise (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 15; Calhoun and Brubaker 2003, 549). While one may claim to be *'norsk'*, one's claims are always open to contestation by formal as well as informal actors. I thus follow Antonsich's (2010) suggestion to explore the interplay between senses of belonging and what Favell and Geddes (1999), as well as others (see Crowley 1999; Yuval-Davis 2006), call *the politics of belonging*. As a discursive resource, the latter claims, produces, legitimises, and challenges senses of belonging (Antonsich 2010, 645). The narratives produced and performed by my informants are thus never solely of their own making, but rather intrinsically interconnected with political projects themselves aimed at constructing such attachments (Yuval-Davis 2006, 204). The discursive resource explored in this thesis is that of nationalism; a discourse that divides the world into national and non-national entities shaping who can legitimately claim to belong to a particular place (*ibid.*).

### Nations, Nationalism and Everyday Struggles for Belonging

In his famous book *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (1991) analyses the origins of nationalism. This late eighteenth/early nineteenth century ideological current gave rise to the social entity of the 'nation' – an imagined community that is perceived as both limited and sovereign. Asserting that 'the political and national unit should be congruent' (Hobsbawm 1983, 9), nationalism came to legitimate the political constellation of nation-states. Nationalism

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<sup>11</sup> *'Immigrant'* and *'Innvandrer'* were also used, yet to a lesser extent.

<sup>12</sup> Seeking to explore national belonging and non-belonging in a Norwegian national space, I take other national categorical identities – such as 'Polish' or 'French' – to have the same function as that of *'utlending'*. Namely, that they signify a Norwegian non-belonging. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that such categorical identities may also be drawn upon to claim national belonging elsewhere. I thus also acknowledge that a sense of national belonging may be claimed simultaneously with a sense of national non-belonging.

may as such be understood as a schematic order that demands ‘that certain things be brought together, and others kept apart’ (Bourdieu 1984, 474). National ‘identities’ are a vital part of the production of a ‘national order of things’ (see Malkki 1992, 1995). With the proliferation of supranational governance, global capitalism, and migration, the disintegration of the nation-state has by some been perceived as a matter of time (see Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008; Skey 2013). However, with the rise of the political right, as well as stricter immigration politics, we seem to be witnessing the opposite (Antonsich 2018). Issues of globalisation, transnationalism, and immigration ‘are increasingly perceived as dangerous streams that risk flooding the protective and protected lands of domestic sovereignty.’ (van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer 2005, 2). The question of belonging thus figures part of much of today’s political debates. Questions then circle around *who* can claim a legitimate sense of belonging, and who cannot, in a national space, as well as *what* national belonging is, and the minimum sameness that it requires for people to legitimately claim it (Yuval-Davis 2006, 207).

Mann and Fenton (2009, 518) note how much of the literature on nationalism treats ‘national identities’ as ‘free-standing social facts.’ Yet if we are to take the constructed nature of the nation at face value, we must also problematise such ‘identities’ and see them as continuous outcomes of struggles instead (Goode and Stroup 2015, 719). After all, the social world is ‘not a pre-given or determined by external conditions,’ and people do not ‘possess a set of fixed and authentic characteristics or essences.’ (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 5; see also Prieur 2002). I thus take national belonging to be a struggle over boundaries, and the right to ascribe, claim, legitimate and delegitimate senses of belonging. Such struggles are both about the right to claim and use categorical identities, but also about what they mean. As well as studying such matters from above, studies of nationalism must explore how the ‘nation’ and the ‘national’ are manifested, produced, reproduced, and challenged in ordinary people’s attempts to navigating life (see Antonsich and Matejskova 2015, 504; see also Fox 2017). The ‘nation’ cannot be understood as solely the making of states (see Edensor 2002), nor do people’s narratives appear in a vacuum. While I am interested in recovering the perspective of people, I recognise that individual narratives of national belonging ‘involves tapping into existing meaning, the existing normative and symbolic resources’ (Chin 2019, 724). Dominant narratives have both conserving and expansive potentials on everyday struggles of belonging (see van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer 2005, 4; Rossetto 2015, 166).

With this understanding, I seek to explore national belonging ‘as a cultural construct of collective belonging realized and legitimised through institutional and discursive practices’, seeing the national space ‘as a site for material and symbolic struggles over the definition of



national inclusion and exclusion.’ (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 539). Put differently, I take national belonging as a struggle that is located in the interplay between my informant’s sense of belonging and the politics of belonging in which they are situated, in their interactions with others, and with institutions where the ‘national’ is discursively produced. So, while the idea of belonging seems to promise safety (Cueppens and Geschiere 2005, 387), processes of inclusion and inclusion are in fact struggles between individuals, groups, and institutions over the meaning and terms of categorical identities.

### A Game of Relative Relations: Thinking through a Social Fields Perspective

Understanding national belonging as the continuous struggle between senses of belonging and the politics of belonging, I find it fruitful to think through Bourdieu’s notion of social fields (Bourdieu 1984; see also Bennett *et al.* 2009; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Hilgers and Mangez 2015). Thinking through a social fields’ perspective is ‘to *think relationally*’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 96, original emphasis). I draw heavily on Hage (1998) who explores ethno-nationalist relations of power in the ‘multicultural’ Australia, as I find many of his discoveries applicable to the Norwegian case too. I take the ‘nation’ to be a discursive field that distinguishes between insiders and outsiders, positioning people within a web of relative relations. Nationalism functions as a *doxa* (Karner 2005); a force that ‘structure[s] inseparably the real and the thought world’ and which is ‘accepted as self-evident.’ (Bourdieu 1984, 471). I presume a social world where ‘nationals’ and ‘non-nationals’ have differential access to discursive power (Goode and Stroup 2015, 719), where the former is constituted in its relation to the latter (Barth 1969).

Furthermore, a social fields perspective is productive as it allows us to focus on boundaries as well as their content. While Barth (*ibid.*, 15) argued for an approach that focuses the boundary, rather than ‘the cultural stuff that it encloses’, I argue, in tandem with Gullestad (2002b, 45-46), that if we are to properly understand what it means to be ‘*norsk*’, we must account for the content as well as the boundary which is drawn around it. National belonging is as much a struggle over boundaries, as it is a struggle of what those boundaries mean. In this way, I found the ability to claim categorical identities to be dependent on an individual’s social position vis-à-vis a national ideal. I thus seek to go further than approaches that understand belonging as a matter of either/or, as well as approaches that see belonging as overtly fluid. Such an approach will allow us to ask how multiple, singular, fluid, and more stable attachments may coexist simultaneously (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 1; Calhoun and Brubaker

2003, 537), and how they come to interact with each other (see for example Cañas Bottos and Plasil 2017).

I approach social fields through the analogy of a game to better highlight the inherently performative, intersubjective, and situational nature of national belonging. Through the analogy of a game, the aim of this thesis is thus to show how one's sense of belonging in a national field is a product of relative relations of power. The analogy of a game has previously been used to explore matters of political power by Bourdieu (see for example Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) himself, Fredrik Barth (1959, 1965), and F. G. Bailey (1969). While I find Bourdieu's approach too heavily focused on the rules of the game at the consequence of the creative strategies of players, I find Barth gives players too much room to change the rules. I thus position myself somewhere in the middle; while the possible strategies are outlined by the game, players may creatively follow their own tactics to better their positions or to destabilise the game itself. Theoretically speaking, then, I am more aligned with that of Ortner (2006) who coined the concept *serious games*. While players do not always have them in mind (see Giddens 1979, 56), games are 'actively played, oriented toward culturally constituted goals and projects' (Ortner 2006, 129). However, players 'are always involved in, and can never act outside of, the multiplicity of social relations in which they are enmeshed.' (*ibid.*, 129, 130). I also engage with Bailey's (1969) understanding, and particularly his take on the limitations of the analogy.

Belonging is far from decided, but in a continuous process of negotiation, where different social positions are produced, reproduced, contested, and challenged by social actors. It is a struggle between competing positions that seek – both consciously and unconsciously – to assert themselves. Belonging is thus always a matter of *longing* to belong (see Probyn 1996), or a struggle to *become*, rather than a notion of being, and thus a matter which is inherently *performative* in its nature (Antonsich 2010, 652; Bell 1999; Yuval-Davis 2006). Belonging is something we *do*, rather than something we possess (Skrbiš, Baldassar and Poynting 2007, 262). Taking a performative approach, I understand the doer to 'be constituted in the deed', meaning that 'the performance of difference is one of the ways distinctive subjects and social types are themselves constituted and made to seem natural' (Ferguson 1999, 96; see also Butler 1990; Goffman 1977). Ways of being are thus not expressions of a given 'identity', but rather constitutive of categorical identities themselves. The categorical identities '*norsk*' and '*utlending*' do not 'define a point of view or a set of values' but define 'a mode of signification.' (*ibid.*, 97). To be '*norsk*' is thus not something my informants, or anyone else for that matter, *are*, but something that they perform. A focus on performativity does not, however, mean that I adhere to the idea of ever-changing and fluid forms of belonging that are easily created by

individual actors (see Bell 1999, 2; Valentine 2007, 19). Rather than relegating social relations, historical structures, and politico-economic determinants to the background, I consider them as the necessary context that enables us to see how practices of self-fashioning by individuals ‘does not imply free creation’ (Ferguson 1999, 94). On the contrary, belonging must be understood as ‘a performance crafted under a “situation of duress” (*ibid.*). There is ‘never determinism and never absolute choice’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 527). While I assume that humans are creative beings, we cannot neglect the power of ascription in the production of boundaries that distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Calhoun and Brubaker 2003, 536; see also Lems 2016).

### The Norwegian Game of National Belonging

The players of the Norwegian game of national belonging are those who find themselves implicated in the state’s legal system, as well as those who find themselves implicated ‘in the imaginary lines, running through borders, that states draw to demarcate their territories’ (Kearney 2004, 132). Like most games, the game of national belonging has its ‘trump cards’; cards that are efficacious ‘both as a weapon and as a stake of struggle’, enabling its possessors to ‘wield power, and influence, and thus to *exist*’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98) as national subjects. Trump cards are convertible into a *legitimate* sense of national belonging (see Anthias 2007, 790; see also Bourdieu 1986, 248-249). Like a deck of cards, the game is characterised by a scarcity of valuable cards that are distributed unevenly between players. This unequal distribution structures the game of national belonging, distinguishing its players while creating ‘the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chance of success for practices’ (Bourdieu 1986, 242). They function to separate the world into national and non-national players (see Yuval-Davis 2006, 204), making ‘possible the production of a common, meaningful world, a common-sense world’ of nations (Bourdieu 1984, 468). I follow Hage (1998) in calling such cards for *national capital*.

What makes the Norwegian game of national belonging complicated, however, is the fact that it is played on two levels simultaneously. The first game is a formal game between individuals and the state – what I call the official game. This is a vertical game where national belonging is a consequence of the ‘formal rules and laws that enable membership or exclude minorities from the national community’ (Favell and Geddes 1999, 11; see also Chin 2019, 717). The rules are thus explicitly established by the Norwegian state authorities. This is a

game that forces players to play, and thus to ‘accept some basic rules of conduct’ (Bailey 1969, 1). National capital here takes an institutionalised form and is limited to that of citizenship. Players are separated into a home and an away team, where only citizens can claim a legitimate sense of national belonging. The distribution of trump cards follows blood-ties, meaning that one is either born ‘*norsk*’ or one is not. However, the game enables players to change the relative force of their position; to move from ‘*utlending*’ to ‘*norsk*’. The distribution of trump cards is grounded on an egalitarian logic that requires some players to prove their ‘*norskhet*’ before they can be considered ‘*norsk*’. Yet the egalitarian logic also creates a hierarchy of belonging (see Gullestad 2002b, 47), where some are considered more equal than others from the onset. This is the game Adem must play if he wants to be considered juridically ‘*norsk*’ and is the game which comes to delegitimize Sophie’s sense of national belonging.

The second game is an informal game between individuals – a game I call the aristocratic game. It is constituted by the ‘informal symbolic, linguistic and cultural processes by which [in]groups react to [outgroups]’ as well as the ways in which these outgroups ‘organise and defend their interests’ (Favell and Geddes 1999, 11; see also Kearney 2004, 134). Rather than being decided by the state, this is a game that is produced through the competition between its players, who through playing agree to its terms (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98; see also Bailey 1969, 1). The terms of this game are a little different to that of the official game. The national capital is of a larger quantity and is more ambiguous than the previous. It comes in an embodied, cultural, economic, social, and material form (see Bourdieu 1986). This game is based on two different, yet simultaneous, logics of distribution. Here the egalitarian logic functions alongside an aristocratic logic. As my material shows, while non-national players may, and indeed are demanded, to become ‘*norsk*’, the latter logic nevertheless ensures that they will never become ‘*norsk-norsk*’ and thus cannot claim a legitimate national belonging. The aristocratic logic ensures that any attempt at becoming national, instead signifies one’s inherent difference. The aristocratic game thus distinguishes between those who truly belong and those who do not based on how a player has come to hold national capital.

I take these two levels to constitute the politics of belonging; they are games that restrict any individuals’ attempts to claim a legitimate sense of national belonging. Each game has its own form for national capital which circumscribes how the game may be played by different players. Both games function on an egalitarian logic, where national belonging has to do with seeking to grow and expand resources – i.e., national capital – that can legitimatise one’s sense of belonging (see Chin 2019, 725). As such, it is about playing to accumulate the right type of cards which come to function as signifiers of one’s right to claim particular categorical

identities. National belonging is as such a *cumulative process*. What constitutes national capital in each game emanates from a notion of the ideal player – the national player – meaning that the games are also *comparative* in nature. While the aim of each game is to accumulate national capital to convert it into national belonging, how such capital is ‘recognised as legitimately national’ – and thus how one claims national belonging – differs (Hage 1998). Following the logics of each game, some players do not need to actively play to accumulate resources as they start the game already endowed. The games of national belonging are therefore *unequal*. The game of national belonging is performative, relational, and situational, as it is played by players who are embedded in a web of hierarchical relations (Barth 1965, 3). While the games limit player strategies, they do not determine them. The games are played, in both meanings of the word, by players who seek – consciously and unconsciously – to bolster their own positions. They may do this either by following the rules of the game, or by challenging them.

### The Structure of the Thesis

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I present the methodology upon which this thesis is built. Here I question the use of normative standards in anthropology, suggesting a move away from a preoccupation with the whereabouts of anthropologists – both in terms of geography and in terms of the physical/digital divide. Furthermore, I explain how my methodology was emergent as my pre-decided choice of methods, as well as my preconceived ideas, were challenged by the field. Exploring national belonging through narratives, I position myself within the wider debate on discourse and explore its usage in the digital sphere. I outline my methods, and end with some associated ethical considerations.

Chapter 3 is the first empirical chapter and is where I explore the official game of national belonging. I start with a brief history of citizenship and naturalisation in the Scandinavian context before I move on to introducing the contemporary game. While being ‘*norsk*’ is a matter of either or on this board, I argue that the official game is built on a hierarchy of belonging that distinguishes between different types of players – between the ‘*norsk*’, the ‘Nordic’, and the ‘Other’. With an empirical example, I further show how the official game is a game that players are forced to play. Through visualising the precariousness of a naturalised Norwegian citizenship status, I further problematise the discursive production of the ‘*norsk*’ player as a *citizen*. As such, I question the assumed equality between citizens through understandings of dual citizenship. Through two examples, I show how my informants come to play the game according to both new and old rules.

In Chapter 4, I move on to the aristocratic game. Here I explore the differentiation that exists between players competing in a vertical web of relations. I show that, unlike what is stipulated by the official game, being '*norsk*' is a matter of more, or less, for many of my informants. They thus swing between notions of national belonging and national non-belonging – between being '*norsk*' and being '*utlending*' – a pendulum movement that is dependent upon the context at hand. While able to be '*norsk*', I argue that the game blocks such individuals' claims to be '*norsk-norsk*', barring them from claim a legitimate sense of national belonging. Their attempts are futile when put up against the 'natural' aristocracy. I thus show that some players must prove their Norwegianness, and by proving so they actually prove their '*utlendingness*.' The dice has thus already been cast – yet the aristocracy must continuously ensure that it stays that way.

By Chapter 5, we will have seen that, while it differs in quality, national belonging is a matter of fitting in and fitting together with a national ideal. In the last empirical chapter, I will search deeper into how the game of belonging is navigated and negotiated by my informants. Here we will see that belonging is not always a struggle to be '*norsk*'; it may also be a struggle to be '*utenlandsk*'. While both the official and the aristocratic game requires non-national players to prove their similarity, a sense of belonging may also be found in a struggle of proving one's difference – both as a strategy to be '*norsk*' and to be '*utlending*'. We will see that the normative value of the national ideal is challenged to reclaim a strength in national non-belonging. And how, as a consequence, the national ideal is reproduced as 'pure', primordial, and singular, while the '*utlending*' categorical identity is reproduced as a valuable community of difference. While I present the limits of the analogy of a game in passing in each chapter, I revisit them in order to summarise in this latter chapter.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 6, I will summarise my findings and make suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 2 – Approaching the Field

### What about the Field? Questioning the use of Normative Standards in Anthropology

Before presenting the methodology on which this thesis is grounded, I find it necessary to reflect upon a paradox present within some anthropological thinking; a paradox made visible to me through my own fieldwork. The literature frequently underlines how anthropological research is a cyclical process, rather than a linear one, where the researcher moves continuously between the abstract and the concrete to validate their findings in the quest for ever better approximate truths (Reyna 2016; Spradley 1980; Wadel 1991). Responding to the ever-changing nature of the field, the anthropologist moves between theory, methods, and empirics to produce representations that are hopefully more than mere fiction. It is this willingness to engage with the ‘landscape in which the ethnographer has limited control’ (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007, 20) and the readiness to ‘radically change one’s perspective’ (Miller 2013, 228, 229) that enables the anthropologist to produce new and insightful knowledge. Yet, and herein lies the paradox, there simultaneously exists a tendency to critique certain types of studies as ‘less than’ anthropology based on their methodological characteristics. Such critique is directed towards – albeit to a lesser extent now than before – the geographical place in question (see Howell 2001, 2011), but also to the choice of method (see Frøystad 2003, 41; Jenkins 2002, 53). Based on my own situated experience, I question, and argue against, the need for such normative standards in anthropology.

### Anthropology at ‘Home’?

Full of expectations, I ‘entered’ the field on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2020. With a repertoire of theories, methods, and ideas neatly packed into my metaphorical backpack, I set off into what some critiques of ‘anthropology at home’ call the ‘known’. At first, the whole affair felt rather anticlimactic; I did not ‘enter’ the field by plane, train, or boat, nonetheless a kayak, as I already lived there. Neither did I take part in some new and exciting social practice, like a cockfight or a kula-ring. Instead, my work took place shoulder to shoulder with my own ‘normal’ day-to-day activities. Unable to relate to an extreme transformation of my everyday life, I did not feel the presence of the ‘rite of passage’ so often talked about in anthropology. Little did I know at the time, however, that I would also come to experience this intellectual revolution – and I would do so amid a pandemic.

Eleven days after my ‘arrival’, when the Norwegian Government declared that they would instil the strongest and most intrusive measures known to the Norwegian society in times

of peace, I came to heavily regret my anticlimactic feelings. Everything that had seemed so familiar to me suddenly became unfamiliar. Infection control guidelines were strict, putting limits to all in-person interactions, making people – myself included – anxious about meeting others. Red headlines, R-numbers, economic decline, a fixation on bodily boundaries, *hjemmekontor*<sup>13</sup>, videoconferences, plastic gloves, facemasks, and a preference for certain types of anti-bacterial gels became part of the everyday life in Norway. This was not the field context Signe Howell (2001, 2011; see also Frøystad 2003) so ferociously had promised me would be too familiar for my own good.

Having read Rivoal and Salazar (2013), Miller (2013), Spradley (1980), and Cerwonka and Malkki (2007), I was – as paradoxical as it may seem – trying to expect the unexpected. What has struck me in hindsight, however, is that I expected the unexpected solely to emanate from my interactions with people. Conducting fieldwork ‘at home’ in Norway I had never even considered the possibility that the field context itself could become unstable. Having designed the form of my research for a pre-COVID-19 Norway, I was forced to reconsider and re-evaluate the situation and my anticipated methods. Taking the field and the possible methods as being static, I had designated ample room in my metaphorical rucksack for a variety of theoretical perspectives that would enable me to understand the diverse and unforeseen experiences I would encounter. Yet, I had overlooked the need for multiple methodological ways of rendering such experiences. Unpacking my methodology during a pandemic, I was painfully made aware of this matter.

While recognising that we can never expect the unexpected, nor truly plan for it, I believe my inability to reflect over the possibility of a rupture in the field context was, in part, a consequence of doing fieldwork ‘at home’. Dwelling within a temporal and spatial ‘safe zone’, where *my* existential context of being hardly makes itself visible, made me and my field work vulnerable to the effects of the unexpected. Nevertheless, I also believe it was a consequence of reading the literature on anthropology ‘at home’. Far from giving the opponents of anthropology ‘at home’ fuel, however, I believe my experience reminds us of the inherent need for reflexivity and flexibility in all our endeavours – whether they are in our backyard, or on an island far away. While acknowledging the important input such literature offers (see for example Frøystad 2003), I do not here seek to add yet another defence for ‘anthropology at home’ against the backdrop of more traditional studies. Suffice to say that a preoccupation with *where* anthropological studies can be carried out is bound to be unproductive if our goal is to

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<sup>13</sup> The act of working from home.



be a *comparative* discipline that investigates what it means to be human (see Gullestad 1989). If the outcome of the ‘writing culture debate’ (see Clifford and Marcus 1986; James, Hockey, and Dawson 1997) is to not be in vain, we must explore the limits and possibilities of *all* anthropological endeavours, rather than continuing an outdated effort of critiquing the whereabouts of some anthropologists.

### My Journey as an Aspiring Online Anthropologist?

My field experience also made me reflect over another harmful perception I found floating around in the literature; one that came to affect me more than the aforementioned. Namely, that there is a ‘correct way’ of doing anthropology. Since the early days, participant observation has laid at the heart of the anthropological endeavour, distinguishing it from other disciplines. It is often referred to in a narrow sense, describing a *method* where the anthropologist lives among – in the more traditional sense of being co-present – and takes part in the everyday lives of the people studied. A method which is constituted of two, allegedly contradictory, activities of *participation* and *observation*, where the former is understood to be ‘subjective’ and the latter ‘objective’ (see Czarniawska 2013, 55; Ingold 2014, 387; Jackson 1989, 51; Tonkin 1984, 216-217, 219). Engulfed by the roaring pandemic, where physical ‘living amongst’ and ‘hanging around’ simply was not possible, I thus faced an overwhelming predicament as my field practice slowly, but surely, turned towards cyberspace – a practice I thought was at odds with participant observation. Could digital anthropology *really* be considered anthropology?

With no way of conducting the hallmark of anthropology, or so I thought, I came to question my role as a novice anthropologist. Although mediated communication was the only viable option available to me, the use of interviews and focus groups still did not sit particularly well with me. As elicitation methods, interviews and focus groups are often praised for the valuable insight they can produce, while in the same sentence being critiqued for producing misleading pictures of social life (see Boellstorff 2012, 54; Jenkins 2002, 53). With this at the back of my mind, I continuously felt as though I was doing a half-good job, and due to the circumstances, without any means to improve it. While recognising that the critique of ‘elicitation methods’ is mostly directed at studies that *solely* rely on such means, and that some form of triangulation is always to be preferred, I argue that interviews and focus groups are often falsely juxtaposed to participant observation. Something that, in my case, made me feel like I was stuck in a liminal space where the anthropological ‘rite of passage’ remained out of reach.

In hindsight, however, I realise that I was just stuck between two opposing and contradictory tasks – and it was not between participation and observation to which I had been promised. I believe my disciplinary crisis emanated from being stuck between the need to do the ‘right type’ of participant observation and the need to respond to the field at hand. As such, I had been instilled with what I thought was an all-encompassing and rigid method that somehow was supposed to solve all the dynamic and changing problems I could possibly meet. Yet, which was not practicable in my infection control context. Although not directly speaking about digital fieldwork, I find it fruitful to build on Ingold’s (2014) move away from understanding participant observation as a ‘method amongst methods’ towards a ‘way of working’ to account for how anthropology also emanates from studies that do *not* take place in physical realities. What anthropologists do, regardless of how they do it, is, after all, to observe the people they study. They observe, however, not through a one-way glass, but ‘from within the current of activity in which [they] carry on a life alongside and together with the persons and things that capture [their] attention.’ (Ingold 2014, 387). Who is then to say that a life is not lived through, and in, cyberspace?

In a world where ‘digital media and technologies are part of the everyday and more spectacular worlds that people inhabit’ (Pink *et al.* 2016, 7; see also Boellstorff 2012, 39; Hine 2015; Murthy 2008, 849) – and even more so for my informants due to the pandemic – does not ‘carrying on a life alongside’ mean engaging with social practices that unfold on and through digital platforms? (see Nørreby and Møller 2015; Stæhr and Madsen 2015, 68). Whether the anthropologist approaches the people she studies physically or virtually, what she does fundamentally stays the same; she is in the business of telling social stories of what it means to be human, and she does so through her own situated experience among participants in the field (see Bernard 2006, 286; Gilliat-Ray 2011, 482; Hastrup 1995; Murthy 2008, 383; Pink *et al.* 2016, 6; Tonkin 1984, 218). Although they may take different forms, the practices of the physical field are akin to those of the virtual. While the former presumes direct presence, the latter presumes mediated contact, and where the physical field invites listening, the virtual often, but not only, invites reading (Pink *et al.* 2016, 3). Moreover, in virtual fields, ‘we might be in conversation with people throughout their everyday lives’, as well as ‘watching what people do by digitally tracking them or asking them to invite us into their social media practices.’ (*ibid.*). Normative standards left me unable to see the existence of such similarities.

Although it is no longer as controversial to conduct studies ‘at home’ in anthropology, perceptions of ‘correct practice’ (see Frøystad 2003) still ring loudly. This, I argue, has negative effects on our endeavours. Or at least it did for me. Not only does it delegitimise perfectly good

anthropology based on a pre-determined ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, but it also loses sight of what I believe is the true greatness of anthropology; namely, the flexibility that comes from subscribing to a methodology that responds to whatever you meet in the field. In terms of method, should not the crux of anthropology rest on the ability to ‘adapt them to the context of particular field sites at particular periods of time’, rather than on showcasing a particular choice of method (Boellstorff 2012, 54-55; see also Cerwonka and Malkki 2007, 20; Geertz 1973, 5-6)? I lost sight of this due to the idea of ‘proper fieldwork’, which in turn, came to debilitate my ability to move forward.

I did not plan to embark on digital ethnography, neither was I prepared to do so. Unarguably, however, to the best of my abilities, I too was able to explore what it means to be human. My fieldwork experience illustrates well how the shape and form of research might be out of the hands of the anthropologists, and the fact that she ‘will need to continue to follow and adapt’, shaping methods to the situations she finds and ‘the pressing theoretical and practical issues of concern’ (Hine 2015, 192). Exploring how belonging is negotiated on and through digital practices was not a deliberate choice, yet it shows how the unforeseen and unplanned is also conducive to knowledge, forcing us to ‘seek out ways of knowing (about) other people’s worlds that might otherwise be invisible and that might be unanticipated by more formally constituted, and thus less exploratory and collaborative, research approaches.’ (Pink *et al.* 2016, 12-13). I thus want to argue against the production of normative standards, as they do nothing but delimit our ability to respond adequately to the field in front of us – something to which the neophyte anthropologist is particularly vulnerable.

### An Emergent Methodology

The arrival of COVID-19 created a large divide between the fieldwork I was planning to do, and the fieldwork I ended up doing. I originally set out to explore how notions of belonging were produced through the construction and negotiation of the social category *andregenerasjonsinnvandrere*<sup>14</sup> in Trondheim. As most of the Norwegian studies on immigration, nationality and belonging emanate, albeit understandably, from Oslo (see for example Aarset 2015; Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud 2009; Erdal, Doeland and Tellander 2018; McIntosh 2015; Vestel 2009), I thought such a location would contribute to a much-needed diversification. Accordingly, I delimited the participant criteria to legal-aged<sup>15</sup> individuals who

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<sup>14</sup> Second-generation immigrant.

<sup>15</sup> Legal age in Norway is reached at eighteen years of age.

resided in the city, who were either born in Norway or who came here before the national school age<sup>16</sup>, and who had two immigrant parents<sup>17</sup>. I found it debilitating to subscribe to an ethnic lens (Runfors 2016; see also Adur and Purkayastha 2013; Anthias 2006, 2007; Dyrli 2017, 34; Glick Schiller and Çaglar 2009; Midtbøen 2018) as I wanted to explore how the social category played out as a whole, rather than on specific enclaves. I had planned to use mostly participant observation – in the narrow sense – and to supplement with interviews and group-shadowing<sup>18</sup>. Before national lock down, I had secured contact with a selection of local schools and universities that I wanted to use as platforms for recruitment. I was also in contact with a few youth centres, meeting points, and after-school activity providers. As already disclosed, this did not go as planned. The contacts I had attained, the meetings that were planned, and the fieldwork design, were all flushed into a COVID-19 catalysed abyss. If I am to be honest, most of my motivation had flushed alongside the rest at this point. Alas, postponing was not an option. The question then became: *How can I explore what I originally intended to look at, through means that respect both people's and the authority's anxiety over infection and desire for social distancing?* My methodology became emergent; it was created alongside the ever-present need to adapt my methods to the Government's ever-changing and somewhat confusing infection control guidelines. It would also have to adapt to the empirics I encountered. More on this later.

Now that the platforms I had intended to use were no longer available, I had trouble reaching out to potential informants. With a rather limiting criteria, attempts to 'advertise' the study through social media platforms and emails were unproductive. Having a few people reaching out to me that did not fit the original criteria, I thus decided to alter the informant pool. Firstly, the geographical reach was expanded from that of Trondheim to the whole of Norway. Digital means meant I could engage with people across the country without difficulties. Secondly, in relation to those who were not born in Norway, the age limit was moved from six to eighteen at the time of immigration. Thirdly, and keeping within a wider gaze than what an ethnic lens would allow, individuals with only one immigrant parent were now also included.

Altogether, fourteen individuals took part in this study. There were unintentionally equal numbers of men and women, and their ages ranged between twenty and thirty-nine years

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<sup>16</sup> Norwegian school age is six years of age.

<sup>17</sup> Individuals who have themselves actively migrated to Norway.

<sup>18</sup> In this context I felt it would be easier to get access to friend groups than to individuals, and I thus planned to modify Gilliat-Ray's (2011) shadowing of individuals to shadowing of groups.

of age at the time of the fieldwork. Six of the participants were born in Norway, while eight migrated here as children on their own, or alongside their families. The migration age varied from three months to sixteen years of age, and they migrated from Venezuela, Malaysia, Colombia, Poland, Germany, France, Iran, and Somalia. Parental backgrounds varied between Algerian, American, Colombian, French, German, Iranian, Kosovar, Malaysian, Montenegrin, Nepali, Norwegian, Polish, Somalian, Tibetan, and Turkish. Ten of the participants had Norwegian citizenship, while four did not. At the time, a majority lived in the Mid-region of Norway, while others lived in the South, West, and East. Albeit one participant was born in the North, none of them had grown up or lived in this part of Norway at the time. All but two were in, or had finished, higher education. All had siblings, and two of the participants had children of their own.

### Posing Meaningful Questions

Cohen (1984, 225) explains how it is through the conversations we have with our informants that we ‘discover the appropriate questions to ask.’ (see also Spradley 1980, 32; Hockey and Forsey 2012, 70). The research process is thus ‘a subjective and introspective learning,’ where, while speaking to our informants, we are also ‘talking silently to ourselves’ (Cohen 1984, 226; see also Ingold, 2014). This was unarguably the case for this study, and something which – alongside infection control guidelines – shaped its form. After only a few interviews with different participants, I quickly understood that terms which seemed meaningful to me, were not so for my informants. My quest to approach individuals in generational terms (see Alba and Waters 2011; Nibbs and Brettell 2016) showed itself to be unproductive. In the beginning of the fieldwork, I posed questions such as ‘*Would you describe yourself as a second or third generation immigrant*’, to which I got answers such as ‘What do you mean?’ and ‘I don’t really think in those terms’, alongside a few puzzled faces. And although some of the informants used generational terms when replying to my question, their answers illustrated well that thinking in such terms was not common practice. I believe using such terms on the information sheet may have delimited the people that showed interest in participating. This was illustrated by Gabriela, a female who migrated from Poland with her family at the age of ten, and who was unsure whether she was relevant for the study because she saw herself as an ‘immigrant’. I thus adopted more of a ‘wait-and-listen’ approach. If we do not engage in the learning process Cohen (1984, 225) speaks about, we would ‘merely be displaying the contrivances of our *own* minds’. I, for one, would not have been able to see how Gabriela, and the other participants

that filled different parts of the participant criteria, claim senses of belonging through categorical identities that *do not* necessarily build on a differentiation between being born here and of migrating here.

Having set out with a (in retrospect, not so) wary eye on *methodological nationalism*<sup>19</sup>, I tried to avoid predetermining in what ways belonging was made meaningful by the participants. By approaching my informants in generational terms, however, I was myself taking part in boundary-making, assuming where their sense of belonging might lie. Through defining my preliminary research question, alongside setting criteria of participation, I had already – albeit, unknowingly – produced both *who* should be affected by the second-generation category, as well as setting the terms for *how* they would be affected by it (see Hellevik 1997, 38). This highlights the methodological problem of labelling informants (see Cañas Bottos and Plasil 2017) and how studies themselves risk being stigmatising (Gullestad 2002a, 44). It illuminates the care one must take when setting the terms of research, the effects academia might have on social realities (see Bourdieu 1999, 2003), and particularly the workings of methodological nationalism (see Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). I will however note that the study would have been further strengthened by having additional informants who were of ‘Norwegian descent’. Through such an approach, I would have been better aided to compare the different ways senses of national belonging are claimed, and how such matters are negotiated in intersubjective relations.

### Reaping the Fruits of the Unexpected

The shape of the study was a consequence of responding to two main events: 1) COVID-19 and the move away from a physical reality to a mediated one, and 2) the destabilising of my own preconceived ideas. The former highly effected how, and thus what, I was able to explore, while the latter directed my study towards a more emic understanding. Taken together, these unforeseen alterations enabled several accomplishments. Firstly, being forced to open up the informant pool, I was confronted with the fact that there existed similarities and differences that crossed the boundaries I had originally set through my criteria. It enabled me to see how the categories ‘*utlending*’ and ‘*norsk*’ take part in producing senses of belonging not only among those who have themselves been ‘immigrants’<sup>20</sup>, but also among those who were born in Norway. It also highlighted how such categorical identities are inherently relational, and

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<sup>19</sup> A concept used to denote the naturalisation of the nation-state in social sciences. See Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002, 2003) for an overview on this concept.

<sup>20</sup> Here meaning all individuals who were not born in Norway, but who now reside there.

how individuals with one immigrant parent, as well as two, those with and those without citizenship, can claim national belonging in some situations, but not in others. Furthermore, the diversity of the participants allowed me to explore how ideas of gender, complexion, language, time and space, and ‘cultural proficiency’ play a role in how the categorical identities are navigated, performed, and negotiated.

Ellen (1984, 213) notes how ‘the use to which the data is to be put will crucially determine the way it is collected.’ However, in my case, the opposite was shown to be true. As mentioned, virtual fields invite a slightly different practice to those of the physical. And although my fieldwork was not *solely* virtual, its digital character limited what could fruitfully be studied. Sticking to exploring belonging within a virtual field, I was thus directed to investigating how young adults negotiate and perform their senses of belonging through digitally mediated narrative practices using video-interviews<sup>21</sup> and focus groups, following their online activity on social media, and being in mediated contact with them through chat platforms<sup>22</sup>. Following a verbatim principle, I was able to see how national belonging is negotiated through narratives – both in the form of written text, oral statements, and online media such as videos and pictures. I was then able to compare them to the discourse used by public figures and in official narratives.

### The Narrative Production of National Belonging

In this thesis, I am concerned with what Berger and Luckmann (1991) call ‘a sociology of knowledge.’ I take ‘the general ways by which “realities” are taken as “known” in human societies’ as my starting point, an approach that commands attention to both the ‘empirical variety of “knowledge”’ as well as ‘the processes by which *any* body of “knowledge” comes to be socially established *as* “reality”’ (*ibid.*, 15, original emphasis). I seek to explore the ways in which the ‘nation’ becomes and is made meaningful to my informants<sup>23</sup>. To do this, I focus on people’s ‘location’ in the social order of nations (see Anthias 2002, 498), something I understand to be claimed through narrative acts of emplacement (see Farrer 2010) which take place through the use and production of categorical identities. Furthermore, because ‘knowledge’ is ‘developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations’ (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 15), national ‘reality’ must be understood as a consequence of intersubjective processes rather than solely individual ones. Narratives of belonging are shaped, created and

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<sup>21</sup> I also conducted three telephone interviews.

<sup>22</sup> Such as Instagram and Facebook.

<sup>23</sup> Due to its digital form, exploring when and where the nation becomes important has however been limited.

challenged in a number of different and interconnected contexts; by state institutions, politicians, media, and everyday practices of ‘ordinary’ people and by the social and material conditions that individuals are a part of (see Wodak *et al.* 2009, 29).

Anthias (2002, 498) notes how ‘narrative accounts by actors are often the most accessible for social researchers who are interested in the ways individuals understand and interpret their place in the world and are of particular interest to scholars of collective imagining around belonging.’ (see also Stær and Madsen 2015, 68). Narrating a life, of course, neither needs to reflect the objectivity of things, nor its elements or sequence. Because narratives allow us to reshape and re-live experience (see Lems 2016, 322; Tisdell 2020, 129) they ‘do not necessarily have a beginning, plot or ending [but] are composed of fragments whose place in the whole text is emergent and at time contradictory.’ (Anthias 2002, 499). Fictional aspects are thus an ‘inevitable and an irreducible feature of life stories, however pronounced the narrator(s)’ desire to be true to factuality, since life itself is ambiguous and always made up with our making sense of it.’ (Erel 2007). Thus, narratives never give us a description of ‘life “as it was actually lived”’, but rather tells us about processes of meaning-making that happen through conscious acts as well as unconscious ones (*ibid.*; see also Anthias 2002, 501; Dyrliid 2017, 37, 80).

Narrative accounts are often seen to be of limited value because what people say they do differ from what they actually do (see Jenkins 2002, 53). As noted, people forget situations, as well as embellishing some while downplaying others. Moreover, in presenting themselves and their actions, people may unconsciously or consciously alter the accounts given. If we try to decipher some form of ‘hidden’ truth that lies exterior to the conversations we have with people, then a narrative account would be of dubious character (see *ibid.*). However, if one understands ‘truth’ as a social construct – one that indeed becomes produced and performed through narratives – such an approach is not only fruitful but warranted. Narratives allow us to explore how an individual ‘*at a specific point in time and space is able to make sense and articulate their placement in the social order of things.*’ (Anthias 2002, 501, original emphasis; see also Dyrliid 2017, 22). While there are obvious pitfalls using material derived mostly from written and oral accounts – some produced for the purpose of this study and others not – we cannot neglect that saying is also a form of doing<sup>24</sup>. And while I believe it would have

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<sup>24</sup> We may note the invalid nature of the saying ‘sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.’



strengthened the argument to have material derived from physical interaction, this was not something that was possible at the time.

Taking the narrative production of belonging as my point of departure – while recognising that belonging may be produced through other means – I explore how the participants of this study relate to more dominant discourses of national belonging. I explore two dimensions of belonging – the sense of belonging and the politics of belonging – through four points of entrance. Firstly, I analyse citizenship legislation through a historical and contemporary perspective to understand the context in which my informants make claims of national belonging. Matters of national belonging are, as we will see, however, not solely matters of juridical definitions, but also of intersubjective relations. Secondly, then, I use one-to-one interviews to explore understandings of belonging and to see how they negotiate such terms with me. Thirdly, focus group discussions has enabled me to see how they negotiate terms of belonging with people who have similar and dissimilar experiences as themselves. Fourthly, I analyse private social media profiles to see what role national belonging plays in their online presentation of themselves. To explore how language figures part of the construction of national belonging on these different yet interlinked levels, I turn to discourse analysis.

### Setting the Ontological and Epistemological Scene

Discourse analysis has come to mean several things to several people, and has, as Copland and Creese (2015a, 55) note, ‘become a victim of its own success.’ Accordingly, I find it vital to set the ontological and epistemological scene of its use in this thesis. I build on social constructivism and a Foucauldian post-structuralism in treating knowledge about the world not as an objective truth, but as a product of performances that seek to produce it as such (see Butler 1997; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 5). Discourse thus denotes ‘practices that systematically form the object to which they speak.’ (Foucault 1972, 49). ‘Truth’ is further ‘linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it.’ (Foucault 1984, 74). Discourse is thus both constructed by, and constructive of, regimes of truth, delimiting and defining what one at any point in time is able to say and think (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000, 448; Foucault 1984, 73; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002; Jenkins 2002, 156). Such practices are not frozen in time, but dynamic and themselves ‘a fragment of history’ (Foucault 1972, 74, 117; see also Burr 1995, 3), meaning that ‘the ways in which we understand and represent the world’ are historically

and culturally situated (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 5). Discourse analysis, then, ‘refers to methods used to analyze the content, sociopolitical significance, and interactional effects of practices for the purpose of systematically showing how these practices shape social processes’ (Dick and Nightlinger 2020, 1). I analyse my informants statements, as well as official narratives, in light of the context at hand.

While building on a Foucauldian discourse analysis interested in how regimes of truth ‘allow some, and not others, to make assertions about the world’ (Dick and Nightlinger 2020, 2), I align with critical discourse analysis (CDA) in understanding language as a social practice which takes part in producing relations of power (Bielicki 2017, 63; Eide 2018, 12; Wodak *et al.* 2009, 8). This approach takes as its object of study the situated and dialectic nature of discursive performances, taking into account ‘the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embedded’ (Wodak *et al.* 2009, 8). The goal of CDA is to ‘unmask ideologically permeated and often obscured structures of power, political control, and dominance, as well as strategies of discriminatory inclusion and exclusion in language use.’ (*ibid.*). With this latter focus, however, I move slightly away from CDA and its overt focus on how language *reproduces* existing power-relations, acknowledging the possibility of how ‘creative acts [may] cumulatively establish restructured orders of discourse.’ (Fairclough 1989, 172). I thus understand my informants to be acting beings whose strategies of action are, to a varying extent, shaped by structures of power, while at the same time allowing such strategies to reshape said structures (see Giddens 1979, 1984; Ortner 2006).

I take narratives of belonging to be situated stories that my informants tell about who they are, and who others are, as well as about what their own and other’s practices mean and how they experience them (see Anthias 2002, 498; Josephides 2012, 100; Thomas 1996, 13). Such narratives are more than just stories; they are places where social ontologies are uttered, reproduced, and remade (Anthias 2002, 498-499). Because individual narratives are never merely the product of free will, nor the product of structural determinism, they at once function as regulatory mechanisms and as loci for inventiveness (Erel 2007). They are not static, but emergent; they are ‘produced interactionally and contain elements of contradiction and struggle.’ (Anthias 2002, 500). In terms of this thesis, then, the aim is to see how social categories are attributed and drawn upon in ways that both naturalise the essentialist ideal of the nation and the national, as well as how it is question. While it is mostly directed at what Erel (2007) calls a ‘cultural reading’ that focuses on individual acts of meaning-making, it also takes on a ‘structural reading’ as it explores ‘the impact of social structures on people.’ I thus understand my informant’s sense of national belonging to be an outcome of the interplay

between formal and informal discourses, and the way in which they come to negotiate the terms of these.

### Discourse-Centred Digital Ethnography

In the same way as Lems (2016, 322), my research focus has ‘continually moved between storied, reflected and immediate, lived experience.’ Unlike her, however, the majority of this experience was *immediated*; that is, experience mediated through digital means. Following Nørreby and Møller (2015) and Stæhr and Madsen (2015), I find the digital to be an indispensable window into my informants’ performances of belonging. Taking a digital approach, I am ‘interested in the ways in which people use language, interact with each other, employ discourses and construct communities, collectives, knowledge and [categorical] identities, through and influenced by digital technologies.’ (Varis and Hou 2020, 230). Rather than taking the digital as a direct object of study, I follow Boellstorff (2012, 40) and Pink *et al.* (2016) by de-centring the digital, treating it instead as a *methodological approach*. This still means, however, that we should investigate the context rather than assume it (see Rampton *et al.* 2004, 4; see also Jenkins 2002, 152).

Central to this thesis, then, is a ‘close analysis of situated language in use’ (Copland and Creese 2015a, 29). I build on Androutsopoulos (2008, 2) ‘discourse-centred online<sup>25</sup> ethnography’ that ‘combine the systematic observation of selected sites of online discourse with direct contact with its social actors.’ (see also Varis and Hou 2020, 232). This approach involves both synchronous and asynchronous communication styles (Przybylski 2020, 10; Varis and Hou 2020, 235). Although infection control guidelines forced most of this communication to take place online, there were also instances of face-to-face interaction – making it what Przybylski (2020) calls a *hybrid* field. As Nørreby and Møller (2015, 48) note, a ‘combination of ethnographic field sites provide us with a knowledge of individual histories of use and uptake of ethnic identity categories.’ Furthermore, considering how the digital ‘shapes the performance of social acts instead of merely facilitating them’ (van Dijck 2013, 29, cited in Varis and Hou 2020, 231), I believe a ‘[...] close analysis of situated language use can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity’ (Rampton *et al.* 2004, 2). This combination of methods has allowed me to ‘document how persons simultaneously maintain and shed cultural

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<sup>25</sup> In concurrence with Varis and Hou (2020, 229-230), I understand digital technologies to be part of both the ‘online’ and the ‘offline’, and thus prefer the use of the term ‘digital’ over ‘online’, to avoid prioritising one over the other.

repertoires and identities, interact within a location and across its boundaries, and act in ways that are in concert with or contradict their values over time.’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, 1013). It allows me to account for complexity.

### Interviews and Conversations

In respect to the practical limitations at hand, but also the novel research aim, interviews became a natural choice. Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008, 539) note how verbal methods such as interviews and focus groups make implicit nationhood explicit by ‘shedding light on the processes through which nationhood is discursively constructed.’ They allow us to dig into ‘ordinary people’s discursive representations of nationhood in terms chosen by the interviewee’ (*ibid.*, 555). Furthermore, Goode and Stroup (2015, 731) note how ‘individual interviews may be useful for suggesting a range of meanings that individuals are likely to invest in categories of action in relation to nationalist idioms.’ The problem is, however, that discourse occurring in an interview is not the same as the discourses happening in a “natural setting.” With a heavy focus on this type of speech act, however, I recognise that I cannot account for how central the national framework is, in contrast to other frameworks of belonging, in relation to their everyday processes of belonging (see Mann and Fenton 2009, 518). I am also less able to explore for myself the diversity of social contexts in which national belonging becomes meaningful (*ibid.*), and thus rely on my informants re-telling of such experiences.

Digital video interviews allowed for mediated face-to-face interaction irrespective of geographical distance, opening a research range otherwise limited due to time and cost considerations. I was able to video- and audio-record all conversations, enabling me to make notes of changes in voice, hand gestures, sneers and laughs, as well as the overall body-language, supplementing speech with observations of behaviour (see Tonkin 1984, 220; see also Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 555). It also meant that I was able to grasp more of the situation, as I was able to go back and re-watch. I must note, however, that the notes I made *during* the discussions were often more fruitful than the ones I made *post factum*. Through my own screen, I was able to ‘enter the homes’ of a variety of individuals. Albeit limited to the frame of the camera, I cannot guarantee I would be able to do so ‘in real life’. It allowed me to observe how participants interacted with other people in their homes, and how they navigated through different rooms and resting places throughout the conversations. Taking the age group into consideration, as well as the fact that many were home-based, video interviews were an extremely fruitful entry point into exploring how my informants produce notions of belonging.

Taking a discursive approach, I take interviews to be ‘socially-situated “speech events”’ (Mischler 1986, 2, cited in Copland and Creese 2015b, 28), where my informants and I engage in the co-construction of text (see Erel 2007). After all, ‘[m]eaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter.’ (Holstein and Gubrium 2004, 141). Taking a dialogical approach to language, I understand the meaning and significance of discourses to rest ‘not only in its denotational content, but also in its *interactional* text: how people articulate those words, to whom, to what effect, when, and why.’ (Dick and Nightlinger 2020, 1, original emphasis). I have analysed both the content of the interview, and the interview setting itself, in order to take into account how my own ideas and presence (see Copland and Creese 2015a, 35).

The interviews I conducted were, if in need of labels, mostly semi-structured and open ended. I also used some limited life histories. Such an approach allowed for an *emic* perspective vital for understanding my informants’ experience; to learn from the participants what they knew and the way they knew it (*ibid.*, 32). Using interviews, I was able to discover the *etic* nature of my own categories, and thus to induce new analytical categories that the participants themselves articulated or presupposed (Wortham 2003, 18, cited in Copland and Creese, 2015b, 28; see also Cohen 1984, 225). The degree of openness of each interview was something I had to get a feeling for, as some informants were more comfortable with speaking freely than others. This was also something that changed throughout the fieldwork, growing exponentially with trust. Although still planned and with a purpose, the interviews became more akin to conversation between friends as time went on (Cohen 1984, 226; Skinner 2012, 37), with the participants seemingly reflecting less and less ‘on the consequences of the exchange’ (Rapport 2012, 58). When the restrictions lifted a little during the summer, I was also able to have less ‘planned’ conversations with some of the participants by inviting them on walk-and-talks and café visits, as well as being invited to a holiday home and for a night out.

As noted earlier, the methods used in digital fields are not very different from physical fields. Neither, arguably, are their adhering difficulties. Sidney Mintz (1979, 23, cited in Skinner 2012, 28) warns us that ‘until the interview relationship is firmly established, the ethnographer may be figuratively at the mercy of the informant.’ This was as true for me as it was for Evans-Pritchard (1940) in the 1930s. During an interview I had with Jens, a twenty-four-year-old male born in Norway to Tibetan and Nepali parents, I experienced first-hand how our conversations may be ‘transformed by the interviewees as something for their own use.’ (Josephides 2012, 103; see also Rapport 2012, 58). When talking to me about his family in a

video-interview, Jens, seemingly carelessly, throws out the notion that his grandparents are *norske*. Curious as I was to understand what he meant by the word, I probed him further. Although Jens was not after tobacco in the way Evan-Pritchard's Cuol was, his agenda was vividly felt. Seemingly trying to 'sabotage' my question by treating them as superfluous, Jens tipped the power-relation in his direction, making me appear both naïve and ignorant. Jens's reaction also touches upon the issue of how reality is often so much more complex than what our categories allow us to see.

Nina: You say your grandparents are *norske*...

Jens: Yes, my grandparents are *norske*; they are white people [smiles in a provocative way].

Nina: Could you expand on that? [Rather perplexed]

Jens: [Silence]. [Laughs]. My mother is born in Tibet, and then China tried to take over, and she had to move to Nepal. My grandparents tried to adopt, but because of a lot of paperwork and bureaucracy, it didn't quite work out. But when she came to Norway, she was of legal-age, and then she could do as she pleased, so she was in a way "adopted" [air-quotes] by my grandparents. [...]

This example also reveals how ideas of national belonging are challenged, something which I will come back to in Chapter 4.

### Focus Groups

To account for how the participants negotiated narratives of belonging with others, but without the possibility of observing it 'in action', I decided to conduct two digital focus groups towards the end of the fieldwork that built upon the material I had gathered from individual interviews. The focus groups served a 'cross-checking purpose', allowing me to explore whether individual claims had wider significance or if there were competing explanations present (see Goode and Stroup 2015, 730). In addition, the focus groups were helpful in revealing cleavages and convergences of opinion (Kemp and Ellen 1984, 233) that did not appear in the one-to-one interviews. Each meeting lasted between one and two hours and were structured around popular media. The first focus group was organised around the Norwegian miniseries *Førstegangstjenesten*. I chose this as the organising topic as it was something all the participants were familiar with, and because it touches upon different axes of belonging such

as gender, ethnicity, class, and exclusion. The second group was organised around another miniseries called *Norsk-ish*. In contrast to the other series, the participants were less familiar with this one. We watched the first episode together and discussed whether they could relate to the situations that unfolded or not, and in which ways they did or did not.

### Social Media Platforms and the Co-Production of Knowledge

Understanding participant observation as a practice that simply – yet far from easily – attends ‘to what others are doing and saying and to what is going around and about [...]’ (Ingold 2014, 389), necessarily implies that we must take seriously *all* the spaces through which participants create meaning. For the participants of this study this necessarily means taking into consideration their ‘online personas’. Exploring social media platforms allowed me to study ‘the contents and contexts of the nation’ in tandem (see Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 541), seeing how the ‘nation’ becomes drawn upon when presenting oneself and others online. Here I was able to explore how ‘various observable and deliberately public means of honoring the nation feature in daily [mediated] interaction’ and how they were not only a means of ‘sustaining differences between majority and minority people’ (Goode and Stroup 2015, 731) but also between the latter.

Although one might argue that all ethnographic work research is collaborative, digital ethnography invites ‘different collaborative ways of co-producing knowledge with research partners and participants.’ (Pink *et al.* 2016, 12). It is no longer solely the task of the anthropologist to ‘inscribe’ social discourse (Geertz 1973, 19), as our participants are engaging in new ways of documenting their own lives. Where I was given permission, then, I have analysed pictures, captions, videos, livestreams and comments that figure part of the participants personal profiles on both Facebook and Instagram, as well as some public profiles made by and for children of immigrants. Furthermore, digital media opens for the possibility of 24/7 observation depending on how active the participants are. This means that you are never ‘out of the field’, and constantly feel as though you must pay attention – something that is in practice impossible (Varis and Hou 2020, 235). I thus limited already posted material to three years back and spent most of my spare time keeping up to date with their day-to-day activity.

## Some Ending Methodological Remarks

### The Norwegian Centre for Research Data

This project has been approved by and conducted in accordance to the guidelines of the Norwegian centre for research data (NSD). They ‘ensure that data about people and society can be collected, stored and shared, both safely and legally, today and in the future’ (NSD 2021). In practice this means that the participants of this study have given their consent in either written or verbal form, that they have been given an information sheet, that all names have been anonymised, and that some details have either been left out or altered to ensure anonymity. Due to the traceability of online posts (Przybylski 2020, 149), material which emanates from personal platforms has not been reproduced in full. Moreover, having video- and audio-recorded the interviews, password protecting storage has been all the more important as statements are directly linkable to identifiable bodies.

### Ethical Considerations

Anthropological research, being founded on personal relationships with participants and drawing on sensitive information, brings with it an inherent need for ethical reflection (Scheyvens, Nowak and Scheyvens 2006; Wikan 1996, 199). The appropriate considerations must be seen in context with the fieldwork at hand (AAA 2019; Scheyvens, Nowak and Scheyvens 2006). As such, I reflect upon the effects of knowledge production and the story I can tell, the use and translation of language, the use of a digital approach, and the notion of reciprocity.

As much as our frames of reference enable us to see what we cannot expect to see they also limit what we are able to see and how we see it (see Cañas Bottos 2008; Chin 2019; Rivoal and Salazar 2013; Simonsen 2018; Wikan 1996; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Accordingly, as with all research, this thesis presents *one* of many stories and available interpretations (see Josephides 2012, 101), a result of my intellectual and personal upbringing, the field context, and my position within that context (see Boyer 2005, 147; Cerwonka and Malkki 2007, 37; Cohen 1984, 223; Ellen 1984, 213; Hockey and Forsey 2012, 77; Ortner 2008, 2016; Skinner 2012, 35; Stoller 1989, 39; Tonkin 1984, 222; Wadel 1991, 156; Wikan 1996, 201). By narrating my interpretation, my work also ‘becomes part of a library that [takes part in processes of belonging] which confront people as reifications of what they are’ (Josephides 2012, 102), meaning that I too stand the risk of reproducing narratives which



‘distorts, alienates and expropriates.’ (*ibid.*). What is important to remember, then, is that this is indeed the story of my informants; but it is *one* such story told through me.

Speaking the same language as my informants *can* put me in a better position to understand their utterances, but this is not an absolute, as (Borchgrevink 2003, 106) reminds us all ‘codes for what should be stated explicitly and what is left implicit (and where and when) are inherently social and cultural’. It is thus not a given that I understand such codes; in fact, knowing the language might even create the illusion that I understand when I do not (Agar 2008, 151). Words may have different meanings to different people at different times, and one must therefore take into consideration that our understanding might not be the same as that of our informants (Borchgrevink 2003, 106; Kemp and Ellen 1984, 234). Furthermore, building on Ellen (1984, 213) who notes that ‘writing a text is a monstrous simplification of an orally delivered speech’, I need to account for the fact that having translated my informant’s statements into English I necessarily add another layer of simplification (Borchgrevink 2003, 105-106).

Another aspect of my fieldwork which commands some reflection, is its digital character. In virtual fields, the anthropologist’s ability to become a ‘covert participant observer’ is heightened (Murthy 2008, 849). In my case, this is especially so for the use of social media, where I am able to pay attention to the social practices of the participants without them being reminded of it. However, a similar issue also arises in, for example, the walk-and-talks, café, pub, and home visits I made, where participants might not ‘recognise that they are in a research context and may be more off-guard than in, for example, a formal interview setting.’ (Copland and Creese 2015a, 34). Furthermore, the presence of video must also be considered in relation to the focus groups I conducted. Here it was not possible to ensure anonymity among the participants. They were, however, informed that although anonymity was difficult to achieve, confidentiality would be upheld (see Morgan 1998, 88). In addition, I gave the participants the option to use an alias if they wished (see Halkier 2010, 74), as well as noting that personal information was not needed in these group discussions (*ibid.*, 91).

Being based on relations, Kemp and Ellen (1984, 231) note how we must ‘be prepared to *exchange* information’ (*ibid.*, 232), something that I was reminded of the hard and uncomfortable way. During a video interview, one of my informants asked whether it was okay if he prepared dinner as we talked. Wearing wireless headphones, he walked into the kitchen while simultaneously shouting ‘just speak, I can hear you. You won’t be able to hear me very well... So, you just say something.’ For the first time in a while, I was stuck for words. After a moment of silence as I was figuring out what to say, he shouted out: ‘Just tell me something

about you!’ The discomfort was heightened by the fact that he was not in frame, while I knew that he could probably still see me. I tumbled my words, having forgotten completely who I was. Mid a horrendous sentence, he laughed loudly and proclaimed: ‘It’s not so easy when it’s the other way around ey!’ For one thing, this scenario illustrates how difficult it might be to be on the other side of the metaphorical table. It also illustrates what I think might be a taken-for-granted aspect of fieldwork; namely, that *we* are studying *them*. Should not this active learning be a reciprocal process? I, for one, was able to take part in a deeper form of learning when I approached the participants as an anthropologist friend, rather than a friendly anthropologist.

## Chapter 3 – The Official Game of National Belonging

For the idea of the ‘nation’ to exist, there must be a distinction between those who can claim to belong – the national – and those who cannot – the non-national (see Bourdieu 1986, 252; Gullestad 2002a, 80). Like a game of chess, then, the game of national belonging is dependent on the constitution of two opposing sides. As Brubaker (1992) showed with the case of France and Germany, citizenship practice is a ‘conceptual place’ where this distinction finds expression (see also Fenster 2005, 244; Lamont and Molnár 2002, 185; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2018). Categorisation emanating from such discourses have a direct impact on people’s lives in terms of one’s rights and duties, as well as being ‘powerfully constitutive of social reality’ (Jenkins 2008, 72) enabling people to make sense of the world, and who they are in that world (see Paasi 1999, 11; see also Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 4-5; Durkheim and Mauss 1963, 81; Goode and Stroup 2015, 732). State practices take part in moulding mental structures by ‘imposing common principles of vision and division’ in law (Bourdieu 1999, 61, 68; see also Wodak *et al.*, 2009, 20; Yuval-Davis 2006, 205). As we saw with Adem in Chapter 1, citizenship plays an important role in the negotiation of a sense of national belonging.

I thus take citizenship legislation to constitute the first level of the game of national belonging – a board I have called the official game. The rules of this game are set by the Norwegian authorities, manifest in legislation and policy surrounding the issues of citizenship, naturalisation, and ‘integration’. National belonging is here, at least discursively so, an absolute; an individual can either claim national belonging or they cannot – something which is dependent on their citizenship status. The national capital of this board thus takes an institutionalised form (see Bourdieu 1986), playing an important role in policing and maintaining the boundaries of the nation. There are two categorical identities: ‘*norsk*’ which denotes a citizen, and ‘*utlending*’ which denotes a non-citizen. The official game does, however, enable a born ‘*utlending*’ to become ‘*norsk*’, yet requires them to prove their similarity first. In fact, it is a normative and egalitarian game that forces players to play in a disadvantaged position if they do not work to become a citizen. We will, however, see that the official game is an inherently unequal game, where citizenship is neither equally available, nor equally valuable for all players. The divide between citizens and non-citizen must thus not be thought of too harshly, as citizens as well as non-citizens are further divided into subgroups that create a hierarchy of belonging<sup>26</sup> (see Anderson 2013).

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<sup>26</sup> Focusing on irregular migrants in Norway, Bendixsen (2018) illustrates how a hierarchy of belonging is also created through a differentiation of rights in the Norwegian welfare state.

In Norway, as with the rest of Europe, the notion of citizenship took form alongside ideas of ‘cultural nationhood’, intertwining a territorialised political community with the idea of an imagined community (Anderson 1991; Brochmann and Seland 2010, 431-432; Brubaker 1992; Wickström 2017, 688). As an ideological force, nationalism came to naturalise the unity between polity and people. Citizenship has thus come to symbolise two different, yet interlinked, forms of belonging. While the two are often conflated with each other, I follow Cañas Bottos (2008)<sup>27</sup> example and argue that we need to, at least analytically, separate statal-belonging from national belonging if we are to explore the meaning of the latter in a productive manner. On the one hand, then, I take citizenship to manifest a vertical belonging between individuals and a state which entitles the former to certain rights and assigns them certain duties. I call this *statal-belonging*, which assumes that the citizenry shares an *equality as rights* that separates them from non-citizens. On the other hand, the citizenry is also perceived as strung together by being members of the same ‘nation’. This is what I call *national belonging*, a perceived *equality as sameness*<sup>28</sup> that often circles around ideas of ancestry, common culture, and origin. Citizenship merges these two forms for belonging and is thus a statal-national belonging which fuses a political/juridical status with that of an imagined sameness<sup>29</sup>. Through exploring citizenship legislation and its adhering issues, we may better understand what it means to be ‘*norsk*’ in a Norwegian context.

While equality as rights – and thus statal-belonging – is what Norwegian citizenship legislation and official discourses often ground national belonging on, I argue that the naturalisation process reveals that equality as sameness is in fact more than equality as rights. This equality of sameness is assumed on the basis of equality as rights and is thus more of a perceived sameness than an actual one. I further argue that, in the official game, the idea of equality as sameness requires individuals to be *similar* – something which is institutionally defined and recognised – to be eligible for equality as rights, an equality that itself translates into an assumed equality as sameness. In other words, if one has not been born to equality as rights, and thus not equal as sameness, one must prove one’s *norskhet*<sup>30</sup> to become so. I thus understand there to be a difference between similarity and sameness, where – if you are not already born so – you must prove the former to be considered the latter. It is only when one has been granted equality as rights – being a ‘*statsborger*’ – that one’s similarity – one’s

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<sup>27</sup> Rather than focusing on the difference between statal- and national belonging, Cañas Bottos (2008) stresses the distinction between trans-statal and transnational processes.

<sup>28</sup> See Gullestad (2002a, 2002b) for more on this concept.

<sup>29</sup> See Gullestad (2002b) for more on the idea of an ‘imagined sameness’.

<sup>30</sup> Norwegianness.

*'norskhet'* – is translated into an equality as sameness, and thus being *'norsk'*. One can therefore, as we will see with Sophie, a twenty-four-year-old female who came to Norway as a three-month-old baby, tick the boxes set by the authorities per say, yet not acquire equality as sameness before one is granted equality as rights. *'Norskhet'* in and of itself is not enough for national belonging in the official game. Being *'norsk'* is being a *'statsborger'* and being a *'statsborger'* is being *'norsk'*. A matter that is easier for those who are already considered similar.

### Being and Becoming Juridically *'Norsk'*

Of the Scandinavian countries, Norway was first in defining the terms of citizenship with the introduction of Riksborgarrettlova of 1888<sup>31</sup>. Citizenship was (and is) defined somewhere in-between *jus sanguinis*<sup>32</sup> and *jus domiciles*<sup>33</sup> (Brochmann and Seland 2010; Gullestad 2002a, 2002b). The official game of national belonging has thus continuously been a game where an individual is born a citizen, yet where non-citizens can work to *become* citizens through application or declaration (see table 1). Following the *jus sanguinis* principle, being born a Norwegian citizen is dependent on being born of another Norwegian citizen<sup>34</sup>. Obtaining citizenship at birth is thus independent on territoriality; it does not matter whether one is born on Norwegian sovereign territory, or whether one is born abroad. As already noted, Norwegian citizenship developed alongside the idea of a Norwegian nation. Being a citizen has thus entailed certain rights and duties – a statal-belonging – as well as the *'national identity'* of being *'norsk'* – of having a national belonging. We may note, for example, how contemporary official Norwegian discourse use the word *'norsk'* interchangeably with that of *'norsk statsborger'* to denote the latter (see UNE 2020).

On the other hand, this established link also implies that the acquisition of citizenship is *'assumed to be an acquisition of nationality'* (Hage 1998). The official discourse thus further notes how *'If you are granted citizenship this means that you are no longer an utlending. You are norsk, with all the rights and obligations that this entails.'* (UNE 2020, own translation). Becoming a citizen, is thus becoming *'norsk'*. While they are interlinked, the above statement also shows how having national belonging – being *'norsk'* – is separated from statal-belonging

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<sup>31</sup> Followed by Sweden in 1894, and Denmark in 1898.

<sup>32</sup> Citizenship through descent.

<sup>33</sup> Citizenship through residency.

<sup>34</sup> I am here disregarding the issue of adoption.

– having rights and obligations. This is also apparent in Jens’ statement: ‘you can call yourself what you want, but if you don’t have any rights, then I don’t know what it means to be *norsk*.’

Furthermore, the terms of *jus sanguinis*, as well as *jus domicile*, have shifted throughout time. Due to the scope of this thesis, however, I will direct my attention ideas of ‘cultural similarity’ in regard to the former, and the issue of parental gender and marital status in term of the latter. Both cases, albeit to a greater extent the issue of becoming a citizen, reveals that national belonging is perceived as more than statal-belonging; that equality as sameness is more than equality as rights, and thus that achieving the latter is made dependent on proving one’s achieved or inherent cultural similarity.

Place of birth	Born abroad	Born in Norway	Born abroad			Born in Norway			Born in Norway
<b>Parental status</b>	Two parents <i>without</i> Norwegian citizenship	Two parents <i>without</i> Norwegian citizenship	One parent with Norwegian citizenship and one parent without	Two parents <i>with</i> Norwegian citizenship	One parent with Norwegian citizenship and one parent without	One parent with Norwegian citizenship and one parent without	One parent with Norwegian citizenship and one parent without	Two parents <i>with</i> Norwegian citizenship	
<b>Parental marital status and gender</b>	-----	-----	Father with Norwegian citizenship <i>not</i> married to mother	-----	Father with Norwegian citizenship <i>not</i> married to mother	Father with Norwegian citizenship married to mother	Father with Norwegian citizenship married to mother	-----	
<b>Citizenship (those born <i>before</i> the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2006)</b>	Through application	Through application	Through application	At birth	Through application	At birth	At birth	At birth	
<b>Citizenship (those born <i>from</i> the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2006)</b>	Through application	Through application	At birth	At birth	At birth	At birth	At birth	At birth	

Table 1: Simplified Overview over Norwegian Citizenship Practice

### Being ‘*Norsk*’: The issue of Parental Gender and Marital Status

Anderson (2013, 93) notes the importance of gender and parental relationship in citizenship regimes that are based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. From 1888 until 2005, automatic obtainment of Norwegian citizenship at birth was dependent on one’s parent’s marital status and whether one’s father was the source of one’s citizenship<sup>35</sup>. If an individual’s parents were married at the time of their birth, they became a citizen independent of whether it was their mother or father who was a citizen. If an individual’s parents were unmarried, however, they only acquired citizenship at birth if their *mother* was a citizen. This might have to do with the fact that ensuring the existence of a bloodline was easier with females, something which strengthened the underlying *jus sanguinis* logic. With the introduction of a new law in 2005, citizenship through birth was nevertheless made independent of the marital status and parental gender<sup>36</sup>. The new law applied to those born after the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2006, when it came into force. The definition of the born ‘home team’ has thus changed throughout time, something that also determines who has had to actively play the official game of national belonging. While the aforementioned players born before 2006 had to play to belong, the same players would be exempt from taking part in the struggle if they had been born at a different point in time<sup>37</sup>. Already here we see the important role blood ties have played throughout history.

### Becoming ‘*Norsk*’: The issue of Cultural Similarity

For people like Adem who are born non-citizens, or judicial ‘*utlendinger*’, the official game opens for the acquisition of statal-national belonging through a process that is often called ‘naturalisation’. This means that if a person is born into the categorical identity ‘*utlending*’ they may change their player status to that of ‘*norsk*’ through the attainment of the institutionalised capital of citizenship. Naturalisation processes are of particular interest when trying to explore what national belonging entails bar statal-belonging, requirements enable us to unravel what it takes, and thus what it means, to be ‘*norsk*’ (see Anderson 2013; Brochmann and Seland 2010; Wickström 2017). With a historic lens we may reveal how equality as sameness is based on notions of ‘culture’, something that throughout Scandinavian historical

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<sup>35</sup> This period did, however, see some minor changes in language, a clarification about a situation where the father was deceased, and the introduction of a paragraph concerning adoption.

<sup>36</sup> It was however made dependent on ‘*barneloven*’ (Law of Children) of 1981 which again defined the father as the person who is married to the mother at the time of birth but adds the possibility of presenting a written clarification of paternity outside of wedlock.

<sup>37</sup> Yet, in comparison to other non-citizens, this ‘struggle’ was not particularly fraught with difficulties.



practice has put certain non-citizen in a preferential player position due to their perceived ‘cultural closeness.’

#### Scandinavian Immigration and Naturalisation: The Creation of an ‘Already Similar’ Player

Historically, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden have been connected to each other through different political constellations. Norway was under Danish rule from 1380 to 1814, and Swedish rule from 1814 to 1905 when it was declared independent. The three countries are also tied to each other through nearly a hundred years of citizenship legislation cooperation that lasted from the 1880s till 1979, making the Scandinavian case unique in the European context (Brochmann and Seland 2010). As mentioned in the introduction, migration to and from the Scandinavian countries was in the latter part of the nineteenth century relatively unregulated and characterised by emigration to the United States, while immigration remained low and mostly intra-Nordic prior to WWII (Wickström 2017, 677). When legislation regulating ‘foreigners’ was first introduced in Denmark in 1875, in Norway in 1901, and Sweden in 1914, its purpose was less about keeping alien others out in general and more about controlling ‘potentially subversive foreign nationals’ and preventing ‘access of undesired aliens to poor relief’ – aims that especially targeted the Roma (*ibid.*).

In the mid-1920s, the three countries joined in an intergovernmental cooperation with the aim of creating a pan-Scandinavian citizenship legislation (Midtbøen 2015). During the interwar period, Europe experienced a peak in racist and nationalist ideologies – something that also became reflected in Scandinavian naturalisation policies of the time which built on a ‘supposed biological superiority’ of the ‘Nordic race’ (Wickström 2017, 678-679). Rather than being based solely on a national ideology, however, Wickström (*ibid.*, 679) explains how the naturalisation policies of the three countries built on the idea of Scandinavian kinship and was thus a form of pan-nationalism. According to Brochmann and Seland (2010, 433, 440), low levels of non-Nordic immigration left the ‘much-underlined equality of the Scandinavian states relatively unchallenged’ and matters of naturalisation did not spur discussions about the individual ‘nations’ of each country. The differences between the countries were overwritten in preference of the ‘pre-political past of ethno-cultural unity’, underlining that ‘pure’<sup>38</sup> Scandinavian citizens should ‘not be treated like any other foreigner of culturally and racially distant descent’ if they ‘decided to make a new home in one of the neighbouring Scandinavian states’ (Wickström 2017, 679). Their new naturalisation policies were thus based on a supposed

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<sup>38</sup> The non-naturalized citizen/the born citizen.

ethno-cultural closeness that translated into requiring less from the respective citizens<sup>39</sup>. Because Scandinavian citizens were perceived to ‘integrate’ more easily than others on the basis of their cultural similarity, the minimum time of residency was considerably lower for such individuals (*ibid.*, 678). In this period, the true ‘foreigner’ was made ethno-culturally distinct from a pan-Scandinavian family, and thus perceived as needing a longer period of time to adapt. We thus see how categorical schemes such as citizenship regimes are ‘constituted within a network of hierarchical social relations and imbalances of power’ (Jenkins 2002, 175), and thus both historically and socially situated.

From the 1950s, the Scandinavian area saw an increase in non-Nordic immigration, sparking ‘revived interest in Scandinavian cooperation’ with a common draft of citizenship legislation being introduced in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway alike<sup>40</sup> (Brochmann and Seland 2010, 432; see also Midtbøen 2015). The post-war period saw the boundary shift from the concept of Scandinavia to that of Norden as the legitimating ideology of the citizenship regimes of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark (Wickström 2017, 681). The privileges of the interwar period thus came to include all non-naturalised *Nordic* citizens<sup>41</sup>. In their initial efforts to create a pan-Nordic citizenship regime, the ethno-cultural logic of Scandinavianism lingered as the special treatment of Nordic people became legitimated on the idea of a ‘real’ and ‘existing togetherness’ (*ibid.*, 681, 682). While the boundary was geographically stretched, the preferential position remained exclusive to those considered ‘pure’ – i.e., the *non-naturalized* citizens of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. Naturalised Nordic citizens were subject to the same treatment as non-Nordic *foreigners*, as they were not perceived as ‘true Nordics’ – clearly discriminating based on descent (*ibid.*, 683). Again, the perceived close-knit kinship underpinned an idea that non-naturalised Nordic citizens would ‘integrate’ much quicker than immigrants from other places. The legislations also saw the introduction of a declaration process that made it even easier for Nordic citizens to become citizens of other Nordic countries. This new feature, Wickström (*ibid.*) argues, must be seen as a mechanism of boundary making that goes back ‘to the Scandinavianist differentiation between applicants on the basis of the ethnic and racial nearness to the Scandinavians.’ (*ibid.*) While the *explicit* ethno-nationalist notion of similarity lost its hold, the idea of natural and historical

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<sup>39</sup> Due to the ethno-national dimension, Swedish-speaking Finns also had a preferential position, yet Finnish-speaking Finns were left out (see Wickström 2017).

<sup>40</sup> At the end of the 1960s, revisions had been implemented in all three countries as well as Finland.

<sup>41</sup> Sweden and Norway expanded its exception to include the *non-naturalised* Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, and Norwegian citizen. Denmark opened up for the possibility of including Finland and Iceland at a later point. Having been left out based on matters of ‘race’ in the interwar period, Finnish-speaking Finns now became included yet on the precondition that they could prove proficiency in a Scandinavian language (see Wickström 2017).

‘togetherness’ continued. The idea of the Nordic community became legitimated through the perception that it was ‘populated by culturally similar and politically like-minded people(s) who shared the same model of citizenship.’ (*ibid.*, 684). Nordics, then, were to be considered equals on the basis of similarity.

The citizenship laws of the three countries departed from each other after 1979, and the political ideology of Nordism lost its hold in the 1980s. Brochmann and Seland (2010) suggest that divergence can be seen in relation to the changes – both in the international sphere with the rising relevance of the EU, as well as the rising non-Nordic immigration – that the Scandinavian region experienced from the 1950s onwards. The move from a focus on pan-national to national interests removed the call for a Nordic norm, strengthening the need for national sovereignty instead (*ibid.*, 440). This increased national interest happened in tandem ‘with a more differentiated immigration policy making’, that, arguably, reflected a divergent perception of immigration and thus also perceptions of the nation itself (*ibid.*). While the idea of ‘togetherness’ stopped being used as a justifying mechanism for the preferential treatment of Nordic-citizens, the policy has remained – now spoken about as a matter of ‘tradition.’ (*ibid.*, 432; Wickström 2017, 684). And while immigration has become a central debate in each country, the preferential position of the Nordic-citizen remains excluded in these discussions. Nordism’s idea of the ‘superior integrative capabilities’ of a Nordic person, an idea of ‘cultural closeness’ has increasingly come to influence the contemporary politics of exclusion (Wickström 2017, 691). The idea of ‘*like barn leker best*’<sup>42</sup> is still present, distinguishing between players in the contemporary official game of national belonging.

#### National Cohesion: When Citizenship meets Civic Integration

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Scandinavian countries approached immigration through principles of multiculturalism. ‘Integration’ was thought of in terms of a positive diversity, and as an issue of labour market and welfare system inclusion (Brochmann and Seland 2010, 432). Yet, the perceived failed ‘attempts to use welfare state mechanisms and tools for cultural recognition to integrate newcomers’ triggered a political reaction; a focus on *national cohesion* came to the fore (*ibid.*, 431). Since the 1990s, naturalisation policies once again became lodged between the idea of a nationality and of socio-political rights and duties (*ibid.*, 430), between an equality as sameness and an equality as rights. The need for cohesion reinforced the natural link between a people and a polity, and thus also a need to make ‘unnatural’ foreigners ‘natural’. We also

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<sup>42</sup> The notion that similar children play together better than children who are different.

saw a wider trend of moving away from seeing immigration in more positive terms – as being a resource – towards seeing it as a problem (Gullestad 2002a, 30, 31). The latter being something that was heightened after the events of 9/11.

At the turn of the century, we saw all three Scandinavian countries introducing revisions to their citizenship legislation. In Sweden, Denmark, and Norway alike, debates on naturalisation were grounded on an understanding that matters of citizenship should be linked to an integration process (Midtbøen 2015, 12). They all approached integration in functional terms, wanting ‘well accustomed, working, good parenting and participating new members of society’ (Brochmann and Seland 2010, 411)<sup>43</sup>. They were, as such, ‘attempts to establish a framework of cohesion and equality’ thought ‘to integrate a diverse population into a social community.’ (Midtbøen 2015, 13)<sup>44</sup>. They differed, however, in whether they saw this social community as mainly political or national, where the former underlined equality as rights and the latter equality as sameness (Brochmann and Seland 2010; Midtbøen 2015). Often understood to have taken the most liberal route through a demos approach where ‘relatively free access to equal treatment including political rights’ is thought to ‘spur the individual’s political interest’ is Sweden (Brochmann and Seland 2010, 435). Being and becoming juridically Swedish is about statal-belonging, and citizenship is thus understood as ‘an instrument of integration.’ (*ibid.*, 441).

Denmark and Norway, on the other hand, came to take more of an ethnos approach to ideas of ‘national identity’, seeing citizenship as a ‘reward for completed integration.’<sup>45</sup> (*ibid.*). In the two latter cases, then, citizens were understood to share an equality as rights, but also an assumed equality as sameness that is something more than the possession of the former. They were assumed to be ‘culturally’ as well as ‘legally’ equal, and thus national-statal belonging came to require cultural similarity in both Denmark and Norway<sup>46</sup> (Brochmann and Seland 2010; Midtbøen 2015). Prospective citizens now became required to prove their similarity before they could become citizens. In their respective revisions in the early 2000s, then, both

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<sup>43</sup> Anderson (2013, 114) notes that while the debate concerns social cohesion, restrictions and tests function in practice as obstacles towards obtaining citizenship – and not as enablers of integration.

<sup>44</sup> Midtbøen (2015, 12-13) also sees this as a feature of the wider European development.

<sup>45</sup> While Denmark introduced exams with this revision, Norway solely required proof of participation until 2017 when they too introduced exams in civic knowledge and language proficiency for those in the ages between 18 and 67.

<sup>46</sup> It is further interesting to note how Sweden differs from Denmark and Norway in their official statistical practices. While Swedish practices refer to individuals who have obtained citizenship through application as ‘*svenske*’, Norwegian and Danish statistical practices both continue to consider such individuals for ‘immigrants’ rather than ‘*norsk*’ and ‘*dansk*’ respectively (see Gullestad 2002a, 26-27). In the Norwegian context, this practice seems at odd with the authority’s statement that once a person becomes a citizen, they are considered national.

Denmark and Norway introduced language and cultural knowledge requirements – a need to prove one’s cultural *similarity*<sup>47</sup>. The official games of the latter two are games played to *become* national. Due to their assumed position as ‘already *similar*’, Nordic citizens remained mostly outside of this civic integration policy.

### The Contemporary Game of Norwegian Becoming

As already noted, players who are born non-citizens – such as Adem – may change their relative position of force in the official game. If the player in question is not a Nordic-citizen, they may only become Norwegian through application. To apply for Norwegian citizenship today, you must fulfil several requirements. Firstly, the law requires that an individual has ‘clarified his or her identity’ (UNE 2020). The *Utlendingsnemnda*<sup>48</sup> (UNE) posits that ‘for a person to be granted Norwegian citizenship, his or her identity must be clarified, meaning that we have to know who the compliant is [...] we usually require the compliant to submit a passport.’ (*ibid.*, own translation). One’s ‘identity’ is thus understood in terms of citizenship<sup>49</sup>. Norwegian authorities here claim the power to determine what a ‘compliant is’ *prior* to becoming Norwegian, as well as how ‘identity’ is assumed to be something one *has*. One must in addition be over the age of twelve, intend to remain in Norway, have or meet the conditions of a residency permit, not have been punished or subjected to any other reaction for criminal offence, and one must have stayed in the country for at least seven of the last ten years.

The above requirements have, in some form or other, been repeated in the different revisions. However, with the 2005 revision of the Norwegian citizenship legislation, additional requirements in the form of cultural capital were introduced – a consequence of the turn to the idea of national cohesion. Brochmann and Seland (2010, 435) note how, through linking the citizenship legislation to the Integration Act, the law partly institutionalised requirements of language proficiency by introducing a mandatory three-hundred-hour language course.

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<sup>47</sup> A requirement of language proficiency was already carried out in the 1950s. Although it was not written in law, assessments and requirements of national language were part of the official application forms (see Brochmann and Seland 2010, 435).

<sup>48</sup> The Immigration Appeals Board.

<sup>49</sup> Due to the differential treatment of different non-citizens in Norwegian law, we may see such a requirement in practical terms as a consequence of the authorities needing to know which requirements said individual must fulfil.

Included in these hours are fifty hours of Norwegian social studies<sup>50 51</sup>. Individuals must thus document their participation in language and cultural knowledge classes. In addition, if they are between the age of 18 and 67, they must also prove that their verbal language proficiency is at a certain level and, as of 2017, have taken a social studies exam in Norwegian<sup>52</sup>. Paasi (1999, 6) notes how national integration is one of the means through which ‘the physical and social space of a nation is transformed into cultural spaces, which are then typically represented as being internally homogeneous homes of “us”.’ In a similar fashion, Erdal, Doeland and Tellender (2018, 719) illustrate how the attainment of citizenship is grounded on an idea of ‘becoming “one of us”’ in Norway (see also Erdal and Strømsø 2018) – something that is also visible in the shifting Scandinavian naturalisation processes outlined earlier. Such a focus has in Scandinavia had an unfortunate backlash in treating immigrants ‘in terms of what they are lacking, rather than what they can offer to the receiving society’ (Olwig 2012, 7). Naturalisation processes are vital in establishing an illusion of the uniformity of national players, of making ‘unnatural’ players ‘natural’; (see Butler 1991, 24; see also Bourdieu 1986, 252; Valentine 2007, 19). As such, naturalisation could just as well have been called *nationalisation*<sup>53</sup>. Because the accumulation of this type of national capital ‘presupposes a process of em-bodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labour of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor’ (Bourdieu 1986, 244), we may also note how, in the official game, ‘integration’ is considered a willingness to self-improve (see Ferguson 1999, 101).

As already noted, however, some players are perceived as already similar, and are thus not required to prove themselves in the same way. Player strategies are thus further dependent

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<sup>50</sup> In March 2021, the Government proposed to revise the requirements of naturalisation. They proposed to increase the requirement of permanent residency to eight years (with the exception of asylum seekers) for individuals without ‘sufficient’ income, and to lower it to six for those with – thus bringing back idea of financial status first found in the 1924 law. They also propose increasing the number of hours of social studies from 50 to 77 hours (see Regjeringen 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Citizenship through application (naturalisation) has a fee of 5500kr.

<sup>52</sup> As of 2020, the authorities have proposed to increase the requirement of Norwegian language proficiency from A2 to B1. They are also moving away from obligatory participation in language and social studies courses, yet the exam must be taken (UDI 2020).

<sup>53</sup> I find it interesting to delve into the definition of the word ‘naturalisation.’ The Merriam-Webster (2021) dictionary defines ‘naturalisation’ in two ways. The first has to do with the process of interest of this chapter, namely ‘the course of action undertaken to become a citizen of a country other than the country where one was born’. The second, which has to do with biology, is nevertheless the one I find the most interesting. In this setting ‘naturalisation’ is understood as ‘the process of becoming or the state of being established in the wild so that growth and reproduction is possible without human intervention.’ Firstly, we see how naturalisation has to do with becoming ‘natural’, and thus the assumption that something is ‘unnatural’. Secondly, to become ‘natural’ has to do with ending the need for ‘human intervention.’ This latter definition is more akin to the true meaning of naturalisation, where the unnatural foreigner must be made natural. This speaks to the established link between polity and people so entrenched by nationalism.

on what type of non-citizen one is. As a Nordic citizen, or a previous Norwegian citizen, an individual may either choose to become a Norwegian citizen through ‘*melding*’<sup>54</sup> or through ‘*søknad*’<sup>55</sup> – both of which are more liberal in terms of requirements than the strategies available to all other types of non-citizens. Citizenship through ‘*melding*’ requires, among other things, that an individual has lived in Norway for seven years but has no requirements of language proficiency or knowledge of the Norwegian society. For Nordic-citizens, citizenship through ‘*søknad*’ requires that an individual has lived in Norway for two years and that they ‘understand the language’<sup>56</sup>. There thus exists a hierarchy of belonging between non-citizens who are considered to be already similar, and non-citizens who must prove their similarity. I found a similar differentiation between ‘*utenlandske*’ players in my informants’ statements, which I will pick up on in Chapter 5.

The flipside of being able to *become* a Norwegian citizen, is of course, the possibility of undoing this becoming. Norway is one of the few countries in Europe that does not have a temporal restriction on the revocation of citizenship (see Birkvad 2019, 800). If we compare the born citizen and the naturalised citizen, we will then come to see the existence of an implicit hierarchy of belonging. Because the former attains their citizenship status through solely being born, and thus do not have to prove themselves, such individuals also bypass the possibility of being ‘caught out’ by the authorities for attaining citizenship on false pretences. The latter, however, are continuously subject to a (possible) rescindment – a decision which is at the hands of the authorities. There are multiple cases where naturalised citizens have lost their Norwegian citizenship status after many years in Norway due to the *Utlendingsdirektoratet*<sup>57</sup> (UDI) deeming that it has been attained on illegitimate grounds. This is the case of bioengineer Mahad Adib Mahamud who had his citizenship revoked after seventeen years when the authorities accused him of lying about his place of birth (Winther and Holm 2017). Another family of twelve, who remained anonymous, were subject to losing their citizenship after having been in Norway for twenty-seven years (Olsen 2017). Here, UDI’s decision was grounded on the perception that the mother and father had lied about being stateless Palestinian asylum seekers when they applied for asylum in 1990. What is particularly interesting with the latter case, is

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<sup>54</sup> By ‘declaration’. Requires that an individual is over 18 and that they have lived in the country for seven years.

<sup>55</sup> By ‘application’. Requires that an individual is over the age of 12, has lived in the country for the last two years, that they understand the Norwegian or the Sami language, and, if they have turned 15, that they have a valid vandal certificate.

<sup>56</sup> Something that must be approved by one’s employer, rather than by the state.

<sup>57</sup> The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.

the fact that even citizenship which is granted through birth is subject to removal if the grounds upon which one's parents attained citizenship is deemed incorrect.

While both cases stirred popular debate, I find Sylvi Listhaug's (2017) Facebook response to the former thought provoking. While she expresses sympathy with individuals who find Mahad's case heart breaking, she proclaims that the verdict is the consequence of a fair and just system that treats individuals *equally*. She notes how citizenship is never revoked willy-nilly, but that there must be a legitimate reason behind it. In addition, she explains how individuals like Mahad may appeal UDI's decision. After critiquing the political left, she proclaims that 'those who cheat their way to residency and citizenship must be exposed and deported. It is both reasonable and just.' (*ibid.*, own translation). In the comment section she continues:

I've noticed that there are a lot of people who react because the person in this case has integrated himself and is working and contributes. But like in all other cases, we cannot differentiate between Kong Salomo and Jørgen Hattemaker<sup>58</sup>. The law must be equal if we are to retain a just system (Listhaug 2017, own translation).

While I agree with the latter sentence, the problem is that the law is not equal from the onset. What Listhaug blissfully ignores is that there does in fact exist a distinction between Kong Salomo and Jørgen Hattemaker in the official game of national belonging. While she is right that this distinction is not necessarily between naturalised citizens, it is in fact between the latter and born citizens. The law is unequal, as being born a citizen – unless your automatic obtainment is grounded on another person's naturalisation – will not find their right to citizenship questioned in the same way as the naturalised. While no longer explicitly so, the historical perception of a 'pure' citizen – of a *born* citizen – repeats itself. Only some children are born naked – without citizenship – and the grass is not always as green for naturalised individuals. Some players are thus more likely to lose than others. While he is not one of my informants, I find it interesting to add how both Mahad and his proponents respond to the authority's decision by underlining his achieved similarity; he is integrated, he works, and he contributes to society. One's right to national belonging is thus claimed through using the

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<sup>58</sup>Kong Salomo and Jørgen Hattemaker are two fictional characters in Norwegian artist Alf Prøysen's song *Jørgen Hattemaker*. In the song, the two are compared to each other where the former is born into an aristocracy, while the latter is born into the working class. While the differences between the two are drawn upon, similarities between them are too. They were, as the song goes, both born naked, and the grass is just as green for everyone.



discourse produced by those who withdraw it. Yet in Mahad's case, his proven similarity was not accepted as proof of his equality as sameness.

Birkvad (2019, 800) also notes how matters of revocation in Norway especially target naturalised citizens from Afghanistan and Somalia. Citizenship retains a latent character of liminal legality (*ibid.*, 810)<sup>59</sup>. While naturalisation seems to 'relieve immigrants from legal liminality', from the possibility of being deported, citizenship revocation reveals 'that certain categories of immigrants and entire immigrant communities, such as the Somali, are not exempted from experiencing liminal legality, regardless of the legal status of individual members.' (*ibid.*, 810). While such acts of power blur 'the legal distinction between permanent legal resident and citizens' (*ibid.*), I would add that they accordingly sediment a hierarchy of belonging where having to prove or being born to someone that had to prove themselves, is a more precarious situation than obtaining citizenship through a genealogy of blood. These examples show the need to move away from 'thinking about citizenship as the door-opener to all rights in the state and the end of precariousness.' (Bendixsen 2018, 164; see also Anderson 2013). Notwithstanding, this is a game that Adem must accept if he wants to be considered juridically Norwegian. If he chooses *not to play*, however, he will find himself forced to play the game anyway, and then in the disadvantageous position of '*utlending*' – an issue that is clear in the case of Sophie.

### Being Forced to Play

On a hot summer's day in June, Sophie walks towards me in a floaty yellow summer dress. The infection control guidelines having been loosened up, I had started asking participants who lived close by if they wanted to go on walk-and-talks with me. Sophie said she would love to see me, but that she preferred a local café over a walk. We both ordered an ice-coffee and sat down in a charming little area next to a window. I asked her if it was okay if I recorded the conversation on my phone, which she was fine with. In the conversations I have had with her, Sophie usually does not blink twice about asserting claims of national belonging although, juridically speaking, she is an '*utlending*'. This time was no different. Sophie reflected over the relationship between her own feelings of belonging and her legal status.

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<sup>59</sup> We may also note that in 2016, the Norwegian government replaced the birthplace of individuals originating from 31 countries with 'birthplace unknown'. Erdal and Midtbøen (2021) explains how this act underlines the precariousness of being '*norsk*' for naturalised citizens, and how it came to devalue citizenship in emotional, practical, and symbolic ways for their informants.

[...] I don't have a Norwegian passport or a Norwegian citizenship, but I still feel very Norwegian. On the other hand, I have an American citizenship, but even so, I would say that I feel more Norwegian maybe, than I do American because my everyday life is situated here and most of my relations are established here.

For Sophie's sense of belonging, the location of her everyday life and relations is more important than her lacking citizenship status. The Norwegian authorities, however, see her as American – and thus also as an '*utlending*' – based on her foreign citizenship. We here see how the politics of belonging sometimes clashes with a personal sense of belonging, showcasing the importance of considering what Barth (1969) calls self-ascription as well as what Gullestad (2002b) terms the power to categorise others. This clash is not very apparent in her everyday life yet comes to reassert itself every now and then. The game sometimes reasserts the notion that one cannot be considered equal as sameness without an equality as rights. Or put differently, it reasserts that one cannot be legitimately '*norsk*' in this game without being a citizen.

In the middle of answering one of my questions, Sophie suddenly stops her train of thought, moving the conversation to something she was in the midst of dealing with. 'I have newly experienced that being an immigrant on paper has its disadvantages too; it brings forward some extra challenges.' While Sophie's feelings assert a Norwegian player position, she must face the reality that she is 'an immigrant on paper'. Because of her status as a non-citizen, every two years she must re-apply for a residence permit. She explains how she has always thought that the process itself was annoying, but that she had not really put much thought into it before. However, after speaking with her brother who was going through the same ordeal, Sophie became aware of a new matter that had been introduced to the process. The application now required her to 'give notice of all the travels you have done in the last four years.'<sup>60</sup> Visibly in awe, she explained that she did not believe it at first, thinking that her brother must have misunderstood it. When she saw it for herself, she could not believe her eyes.

I just, how the fuck am I supposed to find all this information, and he [her brother] asked what do they need this information for? I got really annoyed because I believe there are a lot of things that are, if not racist, then discriminative in the legislation. [...] I'm not interested, this is not a time where they should have accounts of immigrants

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<sup>60</sup> This information must be given to the authorities as the law stipulates that anyone with a permanent permit of residency who has stayed outside of the kingdom for more than two consecutive years, loses their right to stay in the country (see Einarsen 2008, 56-57; see also UDI, 2021b).

who travel. [...] *I can't envision my Norwegian friends having to give notice of where they have been, or how long they have been there.* And I'm American, and that brings with it a line of its own problems<sup>61</sup>. I know how Trump is acting in America with his lists and bans and this and that. I'm not interested in anybody having any form of list like that. I was insulted by the whole thing. [...] that I'm obliged by law to give up such information. [...] *I felt it was a real demarcation between me and other Norwegians. I find it very clear that us immigrants are something different on paper too. Socially it's fair that we are something else, that's just how it is, that's something you must work on over time.* But in the legislation, I find it, it's a little too right winged for me [emphasis added].

In her reflection, her lack of citizenship makes Sophie's sense of national belonging vulnerable to a process of delegitimising. We thus see how creating and maintaining a sense of self and belonging is 'permeated with questions of hegemony and power' (van Wolputte 2004, 261) 'because what is legitimate, appropriate, and possible is strongly influenced by the state.' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, 1014; see also Foucault 1980). It is interesting to see how, while Sophie has chosen to withstand from the game by remaining a non-citizen, the game forces her to play out her position as '*utlending*'. As such, she must continuously prove her right to remain on Norwegian territory. Her lacking statal-national belonging thus puts her in a more precarious situation than that of citizens. Furthermore, Sophie was particularly wound up about having to report these details, as giving up false information can result in – in a worst-case scenario – the withdrawal of her residence permit and have her deported. For players who are in a '*utlending*' position, then, it is not only a forced, but a precarious game at that. What is further interesting is the way in which Sophie mirrors the official discourse, using notions of equality as rights, equality as sameness, and the idea of similarity. She comes to capitalise on the 'other sides of herself' in her reaction to the 'unfair treatment' of non-citizens compared to citizens. While retaining her feeling of being Norwegian – using the phrasing 'me and other Norwegians' – she is through such policies also placed in a position of non-belonging, where belonging instead takes the shape of 'us immigrants.' Structural ascriptions in a way force her to perform her 'non-Norwegian' position, explaining how 'they' are different from 'Norwegians'.

In situations such as the one noted above, Sophie's sense of belonging clashes with that of the politics of belonging. Structural ascriptions determine how people are treated based on

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<sup>61</sup> Being an American citizen also means that she must report taxes to the US regardless of where she lives in the world.

where and to what they are deemed to belong. In the case of Sophie, she encounters a situation where she is placed in a box that she usually does not find herself in.

I think it's a bit of 'get your privilege checked', because I view myself as Norwegian and what I understand to be juridical issues I've originally seen as a problem more related to refugees because they have a lot of things they have to do, a lot of requirements they have to fill. [...] I never thought I'd experience it myself. That made me extra annoyed; it doesn't matter how long you have been here or how Norwegian you are, as long as it is written on a piece of paper then you'll be treated as something else.

In this excerpt, we see how Sophie's lack of citizenship comes to devalue the rest of her accumulated cultural capital. While she fulfils the requirements to apply for citizenship – she is perceived as similar enough – such capital is not valued as long as it is not legitimised by citizenship status – only the latter can grant national-state belonging. Similarity thus does not always translate into equality as sameness/rights. Citizenship functions as a legitimiser as it grants 'institutional recognition of the cultural capital possessed by any given actor' (Bourdieu 1986, 243). Failing to accumulate this quality insurance sticker will move an individual back to start. For the players born into the '*utlending*' position, obtaining citizenship may thus in some situations be crucial if they want to have their sense of belonging legitimised. If they refrain from playing the game, players will find that their accumulated national capital is not so national after all. In terms of vertical belonging, then, a decision to not change her citizenship status necessarily translates into Sophie's Norwegian language proficiency not being granted value as national capital. While situations where the importance of structural ascriptions come to the forefront are few and far between, the times when they do are so determining for her response that they necessarily play a part in shaping her sense of belonging.

Sophie's situation reveals how the official game is a game where players either choose to play or become forced to do so. The official game of national belonging thus brings together 'notions of national identity, sovereignty, and state control' (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2008, 153). At this level, then, the analogy of a game breaks down. If we understand a game to be an activity where players *agree* to play, and where the 'outcome of the contest is [not] certain' (Bailey 1969, 1; see also Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98), the official game cannot be considered a game. As Bailey (1969, 1) notes, political structures only remain comparable to games to a certain point. I will, nevertheless, retain the analogy despite its inaccuracy on the official level as I find it fruitful to understand the entirety of national

belonging as a game. Bailey (*ibid.*) further explains how ‘the comparison between a game and politics is inept because politics is a serious business, while games are, by definition, trivial.’ This is particularly the case on the official level, where one’s player status can quite dramatically affect one’s life. After all, as Erdal, Doeland and Tellender (2018, 705) note, ‘the power of citizenship lies in its ability to define’ – a power that can either ‘yield security or insecurity in individuals’ lives.’ The official game of national belonging is therefore more than just a game. Both these limitations are apparent in Sophie’s experience.

### New Rules and Tactics: The Question of Dual Citizenship

Historically, Norwegian citizenship has followed the principle of singularity, where an individual cannot hold another citizenship alongside their Norwegian one. This changed, however, in 2020 when dual citizenship was introduced. While it seemed to promise a ‘liberal’ turn, the political debates reveal a different story. Behind them, we may see that ‘some political projects of belonging [...] present themselves as promoting more open boundaries than they actually do’ (Yuval-Davis 2006, 209). Until 2020, Norwegian citizenship could be rescinded if 1) an individual becomes a citizen in a different state, 2) an individual lives in a different state for a prolonged period, or 3) the grounds upon which citizenship was attained was found to be false. Norwegian legislation, however, prevents the state from making anyone stateless<sup>62</sup>. If the Norwegian citizenship is the only citizenship status an individual has it is difficult, and even impossible in some cases, for the authorities to rescind it. However, with the introduction of dual citizenship in January 2020, this changed.

Dual citizenship has since the implementation of the 1888 citizenship law been understood as something that must be avoided (see Christensen 2020, 13; see also Hansen 2011), an understanding that withstood three legislative revisions. In 2005, the Government – lead by the then leader of the Christian Democratic Party (*Kristelig Folkeparti*), Kjell Magne Bondevik – in fact suggested that the principle of singular citizenship be strengthened (Christensen 2020, 14). There is, nevertheless, an ounce of irony in the 2005 revision; while the Government suggested further restrictions, five years prior to this a committee – that they themselves had introduced – recommended opening for dual citizenship. In a preparatory committee meeting, the majority voted for a liberalisation of the law, while a minority voted against. The majority focused on the idea of equality as rights and argued that formal

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<sup>62</sup> Yet, in cases where the naturalised citizen is deemed to have given false information knowingly, citizenship can be revoked regardless of whether it makes a person stateless (see Birkvad 2019).

citizenship had been ‘drained of its original meaning’ (Brochmann and Seland 2010, 439), and that the issues of dual citizenship previously considered disadvantageous – such as conscription, diplomatic protection, and voting rights – were of minor importance (Midtbøen 2015, 7). They also noted how the matter of divided loyalties among immigrants was illogical, as revoking one’s old citizenship in favour of a Norwegian citizenship does not mean that one’s attachment to another country disappears.

The minority, on the other hand, argued that the majority’s views were too individualistic, and that the introduction of dual citizenship would put the traditional Norwegian ideal of equality at risk (Midtbøen 2015, 7-8). While the minority view spoke of equality as rights – thus focusing on a *statal*-belonging – this form of equality was itself grounded on ideas of equality as sameness, thus linking together the ‘natural’ bond of *statal*-national belonging. The minority perception was more focused on an equality as sameness, underlining notions of ‘Norwegian values, traditions, and knowledge of democratic institutions, public debate, and “welfare-stately nationhood”.’ (Brochmann and Seland 2010, 439). Regardless of the majority recommendation, however, the Norwegian Government endorsed the perspective of the minority by reinforcing the principle of singular citizenship in the 2005 law (see *ibid.*, 434; Midtbøen 2015, 7, 8). Norwegian decision came to be understood in both pragmatical and ideological terms, as dual citizenship would respectively 1) ‘weaken the sovereignty of the Norwegian state to intervene on behalf of citizens in trouble in another country, if the person also were a citizen of that country’, and 2) eradicate the ‘time-honoured-tradition’ of ‘one indivisible juridical affiliation, based on equality among citizens.’ (Brochmann and Seland 2010, 437). While the government decided to go for the minority’s suggestion, then, they refrained from elaborating on what it means to be part of the nation and thus avoided addressing ‘the relation between polity and national culture, as forcefully argued by the minority’ (*ibid.*, 439). Instead, they underlined the importance of democratic participation, thus buying ‘the minority conclusion without the argument’, ‘wanting more ethnos without saying why.’ (*ibid.*). The rule of singular citizenship remained in force until the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020<sup>63</sup>.

The debate about dual<sup>64</sup> citizenship came to the fore again in 2017 (see Regjeringen 2017). The grounds on which the Government had decided to strengthen the principle of

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<sup>63</sup> While dual citizenship was not possible before 2020, it has in some cases been impossible to avoid due to the laws of other countries (see Christensen 2020, 16).

<sup>64</sup> While the UDI (2021a) uses the term ‘dual’, the authorities are actually a little ambiguous as to whether the law restricts a person from having more than two citizenships. While noting that from January 2020, ‘one is allowed

singular legal attachment in the 2005 law, are not so dissimilar to the grounds on which the Government in 2017 suggested to overturn it. In addition, the two parties that had previously been against the introduction of dual citizenship, now became its advocates. The arguments used are also reminiscent of the Danish debate that took place some years earlier (see Midtbøen 2019). Christensen (2020, 82) notes that while the centre-left had focused on how dual citizenship would enable ‘immigrants’ to maintain their ‘ties’ to their ‘countries of origin’, the political right mostly came to focus on how dual citizenship would enable *Norwegians* abroad to retain their ‘ties’ to Norway – once again strengthening the ethnos dimension of citizenship. Ove Trellevik from the Conservative party (*Høyre*) phrased the matter in the following way,

Opening up for dual citizenship will ensure that Norwegian law follows the progression of society. More and more Norwegians have ties to multiple countries. Norwegians travel abroad, work, get married, and settle abroad, but simultaneously wish to keep their ties to Norway. And all the Nordic countries, and most European countries, have already made dual citizenship possible. Today, Norwegians lose their Norwegian citizenship automatically if they are a citizen in another country. This is unfortunate, and we now aim to ensure that Norwegians who settle abroad, can retain their Norwegian citizenship. Those who previously lost it, will now also be able to re-claim it in an easier way. (Stortingsmøte 2018, 1114, own translation).

Dual citizenship, then, was understood as a way of ensuring the continued link between the Norwegian state and its citizens – wherever they may be. The second reason of the political right, with the then Immigrant and Integration Minister Sylvi Listhaug (*Fremskrittspartiet*, The Progress Party) in the front, was grounded in ideas of terrorism. As Norwegian law does not allow the authorities to make people stateless, the principle of singular citizenship made it close to impossible to rescind someone’s citizenship. Dual citizenship, however, would enable such action – an action that was felt needed in cases of serious crime and acts of terror. As voiced by Listhaug, ‘Dual citizenship is a prerequisite to revoke people’s Norwegian citizenship due to acts of terrorism or other such acts.’ (Regjeringen 2017, own translation).

I find it interesting to note how the majority of individuals who may apply for dual citizenship, more often than not, will have some form of migrant background as the source of their second citizenship<sup>65</sup>. On its own, the reasoning behind the acceptance of dual citizenship

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to have one or *more* citizenships in addition to a Norwegian citizenship’, they simultaneously state that ‘you are entitled to have *two* passports, one from each country.’ (see also Regjeringen 2019).

<sup>65</sup> Yet, due to the logic of *jus sanguinis* there will also be cases of dual citizenship for Norwegian citizens born abroad in countries that follow the principle of *jus soli*, as well as dual citizenship for Norwegian born citizens with one non-citizen parent who is under the jurisdiction of a country that also follows *jus sanguinis*.

might not seem so sinister, yet if one notes how the new law does not allow the Government to revoke the citizenship of, and thus potentially deport, people like Anders Behring Breivik<sup>66</sup>, the picture changes. Citizenship becomes a way of punishing particular player's actions, again revealing a latent hierarchy of belonging. The continued value of singular citizenship shift from being the grounds upon which dual citizenship could not be allowed, to being given a new, yet implicit value, in accepting dual citizenship. What the debate on dual citizenship thus shows us is that singular citizenship is continuously perceived as the 'true' form of belonging, where the unit between one nation and one polity remains unchallenged – something that is also reflected in the focus on assuring the natural link between Norwegians who no longer reside in Norway. The ideal Norwegian is a singular citizen understood to be peace-abiding, and who refrains from act of terrorism. Yet, as we have seen the past decade, Norwegian-born citizens do not always refrain from acts of terrorism<sup>67</sup>. It is then interesting to note that such individuals become perceived as anomalies<sup>68</sup>; anomalies that there seem to be an increasing number of.

#### Playing by the New Rules: A Strategic Move

If we take dual citizenship to be the introduction of new rules in the official game of national belonging, this also translates into the constitution of new strategies. While Adem would have been considered solely Norwegian if he had applied for citizenship prior to 2020, by applying now he can be both German and Norwegian. Waiting was a tactical move on Adem's side. Puzzled by his choice of words when I first met him, I came to send Adem a DM<sup>69</sup> on Facebook a while after to have it clarified.

Nina: When you spoke about obtaining a Norwegian citizenship, would you renounce your German citizenship, or would you choose to have dual citizenship?

Adem: I'd have both since that's possible now. I have been waiting for that change really.

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<sup>66</sup> Norwegian terrorist behind the terror attacks on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Philip Manshaus is another Norwegian born citizen who was charged with terrorism after an attack on a Mosque in Oslo in 2019.

<sup>68</sup> In their analysis of two Norwegian newspapers, Ottosen and Bull (2016) found that, prior to Anders Behring Breivik's background being known, *Aftenposten* wrote about the possibility of the perpetrator being an extremist Muslim. They also show how the general perceptions shifted when his 'identity' was made public, now being spoken about as a 'right-wing extremist', but also as an 'attention seeker' and an 'insane person'. Interestingly, they find that the latter case is the most common frame used in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*.

<sup>69</sup> Direct messages on social media platforms.



Nina: Before they allowed for dual citizenship, did you consider just having the Norwegian one?

Adem: Nope. There is no point. With the German passport you have more advantages than you have with the Norwegian. So, there was no point in changing.

It is clear from Adem's case that the strategies available to players depend on their positioning in the game of nations. Due to international agreements, having a German citizenship allows him to stay in Norway with relative ease. As such, Adem can afford to not play the game until it suits his own goals. We may note how a different type of player would not necessarily have the same strategy available. Norwegian citizenship is not important enough that it warrants losing his German passport, a choice he grounds on the political value of different passports. However, Adem's wish to become Norwegian remains and is something he can achieve now that the state has opened up for dual citizenship. What is interesting, then, is that Norwegian citizenship is more about nationality than political rights for him. It is more about being legally recognised as equal as sameness, than equal as rights.

For others, however, it is the political side of the coin that is used strategically. Antonella is a thirty-nine-year-old female who was born in Colombia and who moved to Norway at sixteen. In a video-interview, I asked her whether she had attained a Norwegian citizenship, and if so, why. Like most of my informants who were not given citizenship automatically at birth, yet chose to obtain it at a later stage, Antonella explained how she had come to apply out of practical reasons. This salience of pragmatics is also something Erdal, Doeland and Tellander (2018) found to be present among their informants. She wanted to study abroad in England, and having a Norwegian citizenship made that a whole lot easier. She proceeded to add that 'I could have become *norsk* many years ago, but I hadn't gone through with it.' Like for Adem, citizenship was a strategic choice for Antonella. However, unlike him, it had more to do with the rights that accompany such a change for her. While this difference may be grounded in the relative values of a German and Colombian passport, yet as we will see in Chapter 4 and 5, it may also be grounded in the differential possession of valued national capital. While Adem sees the possibility of being equal as sameness, Antonella does not. I will explore this further in the next chapter.

### Playing by the Old Rules: Challenging the Idea of Singular Attachments

As we saw with Adem, one can now decide to naturalise and become '*norsk*' while retaining another citizenship, making the official game a matter of either/and as well as a game of

either/or. At the café visit I spoke of above, I also asked Sophie whether she would consider applying for Norwegian citizenship. She said the following,

Yes. [laughs]. This is when the American in me comes to show. I don't want to be Norwegian, and if I got a Norwegian citizenship, I think people would assume more quickly that I'm Norwegian. I speak [a Norwegian] dialect, so it is already assumed that I either have lived here a long time or that I'm adopted. Politically I would love one [citizenship]. I have the right to vote in America, and not here, and that isn't very practical when I see my future here. But I feel as though a Norwegian citizenship would erase the rest of me. I often get the question "yes, but you are a Norwegian citizen, right?" when I speak of my background. They are always shocked by the answer, and I find that a little funny. I don't want people to just assume that I'm Norwegian. So, I'm a little unsure if I am going to change, but I have thought about it. I won't lose the Norwegian in me if I don't have the Norwegian citizenship, tricky situation.

Sophie's case differs from both Adem and Antonella's understanding. While the lack of better political advantages is the reason why Adem has chosen to refrain from obtaining it until now, Sophie sees these political advantages as the *disadvantage* of *not* obtaining citizenship. And while the idea of equality as sameness is not the determining factor behind Antonella's choice, Sophie finds the attainment of citizenship problematic because it implies this sameness. In contrast to what the game suggests, Sophie does not understand her Norwegian self to emanate from citizenship.

Erdal and Midtbøen (2021, 3) note that, prior to 2020, the most common factor for not naturalising was grounded in an idea that the denunciation requirement would mean a formal and symbolic cutting of ties to countries of origin. We would then expect that the introduction of dual citizenship would allow Sophie to retain her 'ties', to retain all parts of herself without having to give up one for the other. However, this is not the case. I followed up the above question by airing the possibility of dual citizenship.

Hmm. Yeah. It's kind of the same situation. If I get a Norwegian citizenship alongside the American, then the Norwegian will still be prioritised. They will look at my passport and not ask any more questions. I have been a *utkantbarn* [perimeter child]; I have not had a strong attachment to the different sides of me, and for that reason it is more important to retain the status-quo – all sides of me.

While dual citizenship would allow Sophie to retain her American passport, she believes her Norwegian passport would make people assume that she was only Norwegian. Erdal and Midtbøen (*ibid.*, 4) note how passports make individuals dependent on the state for the

possession of categorical identities. They further note how, when traveling, the passport functions to ‘overwrite’ other differences (*ibid.*; see also Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2018). This seems to be what Sophie is afraid of when adding a Norwegian citizenship to her repertoire. It is nevertheless interesting because, having two passports, Sophie is not forced to present her Norwegian passport when traveling – although it would in some situations be advantageous. She could, when and if she wished, use her American passport instead. It seems to me, then, that Sophie is navigating the official game of national belonging through playing by the old rules. She comes to challenge the idea of singular attachment in a context where duality is possible. The question then becomes, why? The answer, I argue, is to be found in the second game of national belonging. I will however come back to this question in Chapter 5.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that national belonging is a consequence of statal-belonging in the official game of national belonging; that an assumed equality as sameness is achieved alongside an equality as rights. At a first glance, then, the game presents national belonging as a matter of either/or. One is either a citizen or one is a non-citizen, and thus either ‘*norsk*’ or ‘*utlending*’. Being based on an egalitarian and normative logic, the players who must actively play this game are non-citizens. While national belonging is grounded on the idea of equal rights, I have through naturalisation processes shown that there is an implicit idea of equality as sameness that is based on notions of ‘culture’. While players cannot be considered equal as sameness before obtaining equality as rights, they must prove their similarity to be granted such a status. Citizenship thus functions to make cultural competence, of cultural capital, national.

We have seen that the game decides how, and when, a player may win. Players may become Norwegian citizens – with all the explicit and implicit notions of belonging – through proving their similarity. However, due to the rules of the game, the referee – the UDI or the UNE – may at any time annul a player’s win if they deem it a dishonest achievement. The lack of timeframe within which citizenship can be revoked means that the state may annul a player’s win whenever they find fit. Even a player’s child, who reaps the benefits of their parent’s previous win, may find their legacy terminated. Players who must play to be national, as well as the dual citizen, find themselves in this ominous and precarious position. There is thus a covert legal distinction between born singular citizens, and the naturalised and dual citizen. The game also makes it easier for some non-citizen players to win, as Nordic-players are

already perceived as similar. The official game is thus both forced and unequal, presenting itself as more benign than it actually is.

In the next chapter, I will explore the second level of the game of national belonging. I will show that, while my informants build on, and even mirror, the notion of equality as sameness present in the official game, national belonging is not always dependent on equality as rights for them. Being '*norsk-norsk*' is not a matter of legality, but a matter of blood. This game is also a normative and egalitarian game that posits that unnatural players must work to become natural. However, in this game there is a second logic – the aristocratic logic – that ensures that any attempts at becoming equal as sameness is in fact proving one's inherent difference. So, while my informants may become '*norsk*' they are then simultaneously remaining '*utlending*'.

## Chapter 4 – The Aristocratic Game of National Belonging

While the official game seems to explain why Adem can finally claim to be Norwegian ‘no matter what’ with the obtainment of citizenship, and why, considering recent changes, he can claim to be both Norwegian and German, it is unable to explain a few other conundrums and paradoxes I faced throughout my fieldwork. While it can explain Adem’s situation, it cannot explain why Maria – a twenty-year-old *non-citizen* who migrated to Norway from Venezuela at the age of six – also understands herself to be ‘*norsk*’ in addition to ‘Venezuelan’. If citizenship practices proclaim that an individual is either ‘*norsk*’ or ‘*utlending*’ based on being a citizen or a non-citizen respectively, how can some non-citizens claim to be ‘*norsk*’? And why does Antonella, a citizen, still talk about herself as an ‘*utlending*’? How, for example, do we explain that Zamir – a twenty-four-year-old male who was born a Norwegian citizen, yet whose parents migrated from Kosovo to Norway in the early 1990s – claims a sense of national belonging in the same way as Gabriela – a twenty-three-year-old female who moved to Norway as a child – who remains a Polish citizen? Citizenship practices do not alone explain why non-citizens and citizens alike may claim to be ‘*norsk*’, and why citizens still claim to be *utlending*<sup>70</sup>. Neither does it explain the apparent paradox of how my informants’ claims shift between being ‘*norsk*’ and being ‘*utlending*.’ In the game of national belonging, then, there is something that cannot be explained through juridical means.

As already noted, the official game makes it possible for people to become ‘*norsk*’ through the acquisition of citizenship. I argued that naturalisation processes require individuals, albeit to different degrees, to prove their similarity through a defined set of cultural capital. Equal rights are thus dependent on a perceived equal sameness. Being ‘*norsk*’ is also about proving one’s national capital for my informants. Nevertheless, it figures less around the idea of equal rights than around the idea of equality as sameness – it is more about being Norwegian in one’s way of being. Because being ‘*norsk*’ is something one either is, or is not, in the official game, but seems to be something more fluid for my informants, there must be another game that is played simultaneously, where being so is a matter of more, or less – a matter that is context specific. A board where my informants come to swing between the categorical identities of ‘*norsk*’ and ‘*utlending*’, independent of their citizenship status, yet depending on the force of their cards at any time. There must then be a deck of trump cards that are greater in volume on this board than in the official game, and that are less absolute than citizenship.

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<sup>70</sup> Anderson (2013, 7) finds that migrants and asylum seekers generally continue to be designated as ‘foreigners’ regardless of the attainment of citizenship.

On the other hand, an individual can also be born ‘Norwegian’ in the official game, and not need to prove anything. The official game does not, however, *discursively* differentiate between whether one has become a citizen through naturalisation, or if one was granted it through birth<sup>71</sup>. In both cases, individuals are considered categorically ‘*norsk*’. Yet, as we saw, naturalised individuals and individuals with dual citizenship are placed in a more precarious position. Nevertheless, I argue that there exists a board in the game of national belonging where there is a more explicit distinction between players that must work to *become* national and those who simply *are*. Using emic terms, this is a distinction between two categorical identities: between ‘*norsk*’ and ‘*norsk-norsk*’ respectively. Contrary to the official game, however, this logic cannot be based on the way in which citizenship status is attained as neither informants who were born citizens, nor informants who have attained it at a later point can claim to be ‘*norsk-norsk*’. While the official board is a board that enables one to ‘switch sides’, this game only allows players on the non-national side to *move closer* to the border. While being ‘*norsk*’ is moving towards being ‘*norsk-norsk*’, then, it is ultimately remaining ‘*utlending*’.

Regardless of the attempt of naturalisation processes at creating a single standard of what it means to be ‘Norwegian’, we cannot look past the fact that the game of national belonging also involves a more overtly unequal game where the national ideal is made unreachable for some. To solve this conundrum, we must move away from institutional practices, and towards my informants’ statements. I thus introduce the second level of the game; the aristocratic game of national belonging. This is a game that is secured by ‘unarticulated and often inaccessible conventions that grant no entry’ (Stoler 2020, 120), constituted by ‘the relations of mutual identification and recognition amongst various individuals and groups within the state’ (Chin 2019, 718). Like the official game, it is a normative game where becoming ‘*norsk*’ is the goal, and where this task is easier for some individuals than others based on their perceived similarity. Contrary to the official game, however, proving one’s similarity does not translate into sameness in this game, but into an inherent difference. The trump cards of this game are distributed according to two simultaneous logics – namely, an egalitarian and an aristocratic logic of distribution.

This chapter examines the aristocratic game, its players, and their strategies. It is as such about ‘who they are and who they are capable of being’ (McIntosh 2015, 315) on this level. Through the aristocratic game we see that, while the informal discourse is seemingly akin to that of citizenship practices, having a legitimate sense of national belonging is more

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<sup>71</sup> Yet, as we have seen, there exist implicit hierarchies of belonging in the official game.

than being a citizen. While the rules of the official game are written by the authorities, the rules of the aristocratic game take the form of *interior frontiers*<sup>72</sup> and are thus never explicitly laid bare and must thus be decoded (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98; see also Barth 1959, 15).

### The Aristocratic Players

As already noted in Chapter 3, the national order, and thus the game of national belonging, cannot exist without players who compete over its resources. The ‘national practice of exclusion is [also] a practice emanating from [informal] agents imaging themselves to occupy a privileged position within national space such as they perceive themselves to be the enactors of the national will within the nation.’ (Hage 1998; see also Lems 2020). In this chapter we will see how the national imagination professed by the state is kept going through everyday acts of belonging (Paasi 1999, 8), and how it comes to take a particular shape. We may for example note how Sylvi Listhaug, the current leader of *Fremskrittspartiet*, in this year’s election campaign used the slogan ‘*Å stille krav er å ta ansvar*’<sup>73</sup> about their immigration and integration plan. They write the following on their webpage:

We must make clear demands of the individual. Making demands so that people do not end up outside the Norwegian society because they do not know the language or do not get a job, is to care. It is about protecting the strong, Norwegian values that make the country a good place to live for everyone (Fremskrittspartiet 2021).

Gullestad (2002a, 33) notes how this type of discourse stems out of a ‘moral panic’ of ‘bad’ influences that are perceived as a consequence of immigration, something that puts ‘our core values’ at risk, where ‘Norwegians’ are supposedly the ‘good humans.’ Such notions shape the aristocratic game of belonging. Firstly, what we see from this wording reflects what I have argued so far; that national belonging is about accumulating capital. Yet, becoming more ‘*norsk*’ is also about being a ‘good’ individual here. Secondly, we see how some individuals are required to prove themselves as they are not perceived as ‘good enough’. A feature that was also present in the official game. Thirdly, the use of a ‘we’ sets certain individuals up as judges of whether such individuals’ efforts of ‘self-improvement’ are good enough. These

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<sup>72</sup> Stoler (2020, 117) understands ‘interior frontiers’ as a fruitful political concept that enables us to explore the sensibilities that are drawn upon ‘to produce hardening distinctions between who is “us” and who is constructed as (irrevocably) “them”.’ See Lems (2020) for more on the concept and its use on matters of belonging.

<sup>73</sup> ‘To make demands is to take responsibility’.

informal judges are what in the game of national belonging must be considered the aristocratic players – or what my informants call the ‘*norsk-norsk*’.

In the aristocratic game, the logic of nationalism must be understood as the logic of aristocracy that concentrates

the totality of the social capital, which is the basis of the existence of the [nation] [...], in the hands of [...] a small group of agents to mandate this plenipotentiary, charged [...] to represent the group, to speak and act in its name and so, with the aid of this collectively owned capital, to exercise a power incommensurate with the agent’s personal contribution (Bourdieu 1986, 251).

Individuals such as Sylvi Listhaug set themselves up as representatives of the nation, as the members of the group that ‘regulate the conditions of access to the right to declare oneself a member of the group’ (*ibid.*). The aristocracy is thus not a naturally available position, but a consequence of struggles; it emerges out of the dominant’s ‘aim to naturalise the value of their capital’ and their ‘attempt to naturalise their hold on it’ (Hage 1998). It is only through such efforts that the national aristocracy can ‘naturalise their own national order and their dominance within this order’ (*ibid.*). As such, the ‘natural’ Norwegian struggles to make Norwegianness a valuable possession that makes its ‘owners’ clearly Norwegian, while simultaneously struggling to appear *naturally* Norwegian, making ‘being Norwegian’ ‘not a matter of acquisition, but something with which one is born.’ (*ibid.*). Belonging is thus also a struggle for aristocratic players.

My informants often told me stories of times when individuals considered to hold the position of ‘*norsk-norsk*’ set themselves up as judges of their national capital, underlining its accumulated nature. In a video-interview I had in May, Jens told me a story about a time when he and some friends went for sushi.

I hope I haven’t told you this story before, because I told it not long ago. Anyway, we were just sitting there eating, speaking, just talking about random shit really. Then we noticed someone just finished eating next to us, and then came over to speak to us. It was this elderly couple. And then the old lady was like ‘ooh it’s absolutely delightful to hear you speaking proper Norwegian, it’s really nice to hear. Grammar, pronunciation, I mean that was perfect’.

Now I do not know whether the people Jens were with had Norwegian as their first language, but I know this is the case for Jens. Most likely, this is also the case for the elderly lady who felt the need to comment. Both Jens and the old lady then, have learned Norwegian growing



up – they have both *acquired* such proficiency. However, by setting herself up as a legitimate judge, the old lady naturalises her hold of it and denaturalises Jens’. The sheer fact that this lady feels the need, a need she most definitely would not have had with someone perceived to be a fellow ‘*norsk-norsk*’ player, naturalises her national capital, and denaturalises Jens’, where his is perceived as a matter of self-improvement. This is also the case when my informants so often get the question ‘where are you *really* from?’. We see how social situations ‘do not so much allow for the expression of natural difference as for the production of those differences themselves’ (Goffman 1977, 324; West and Fenstermaker 1995, 31), as well as how difference is the outcome of power struggles (see Ferguson 1999, 94; see also Butler 1990).

Seeing national belonging through a performative lens, we see how the ‘national’ is ‘a kind of imitation for which there is no original’; that it is rather ‘a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself.’ (Butler 1991, 21). It is in fact through such performances that its very being ‘gets established, instituted, circulated and confirmed.’ (*ibid.*, 18). If we move back to the first game, we may say that naturalisation processes – a process of imitation, of making oneself more similar – also contributes to produces what it means to be ‘norsk’. In this way, ideas of ‘national cohesion’, ground the idea of ‘national identity’ on the notion of equality as sameness. Furthermore, the national is also ‘a construction that conceals its genesis’, where ‘the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce and sustain discrete and polar’ subject positions – that of ‘*norsk*’ and ‘*utlending*’ – are in fact ‘cultural fictions obscured by the credibility of those productions.’ (Butler 1990, 140). Put differently, ‘the performance of difference is one of the ways that distinctive subjects and social types are themselves constructed and made seem natural.’ (Ferguson 1999, 96). National belonging is thus ‘neither simply received [...] nor simply adopted [...]: it is *cultivated*, through a complex and only partly conscious activity over time.’ (*ibid.*, 101). One does not, as such, ‘simply or ontologically “belong” to the world or to any group within it.’ (Bell 1999, 3). Being ‘an affect performatively produced’, belonging does not have to do with matters of being, but rather of continuous becoming (Bell 1999, 3; Butler 1990, 1991) – whether one is an aristocratic player or not. What we see is that, just as ‘having style’ in the Copperbelt (Ferguson 1999, 98), ‘being national’ in Norway ‘is not achieved simply through having certain ideas or adhering to certain norms; it is a matter of embodied practices, *successfully* performed.’ (emphasis added). While success in the official game is a matter of ticking off boxes, the aristocratic game makes such boxes ‘un-tickable’ for certain individuals.

As judges, Gullestad (2002a, 116) note how it is ‘usually majority persons who decide where, when, and how the categorical differences between “nordmenn” and innvandrere” are

made relevant.’ (own translation). In a conversation I was having with Maria about stigma, I told her about an episode that had come to my attention about a migrant in a work setting. This person speaks Norwegian perfectly, has lived here for many years, and he often passes as a Norwegian in his everyday life. However, in a confrontation with an aristocratic person, it was questioned how an immigrant was even capable of being a leader in a *Norwegian* company. Maria, visibly frustrated, exclaimed the following.

Oh fuck me! Fuck me! It’s like, that’s what annoys me so much with Norwegians is that when they are at their lowest, when you have the upper hand or something, then they just immediately draw the immigrant card! You know they are triggered, that they feel threatened, so then they bring up the immigrant card. Ah stop! Because it works! It works every time!

Gullestad (2002a, 64) notes how such situations illustrate power on a micro-level; showing that a sense of belonging ‘is not something one has once and for all, but rather something that is presented, discussed, negotiated, affirmed – and rejected – in our relations with others.’ (own translation). Individuals such as Jens and Maria find their sense of national belonging challenged in competition with the ‘natural’ aristocracy.

By hiding the fact that they also take part in this struggle, the national aristocracy presents themselves as ‘the natural disinterested protector and guardian of an equally natural national order.’ (Hage 1998.). ‘In this process,’ Hage (*ibid.*) argues, ‘the nationalists perceive themselves as spatial managers and that which is standing between them and their imaginary nation is constructed as an undesirable national object to be removed from national space.’ ‘Unnatural players’ must thus be made ‘natural’. In addition, the ‘natural’ Norwegian undermines the legitimacy of accumulated capital, creating a symbolic barrier that subjugates the ‘achieved’ Norwegian to a lesser value. The aristocracy are thus gatekeepers that ‘have the power to set the rules, take part in the game, and act as judges as well.’ (Gullestad 2002b, 54). Some players will thus have their national belonging delegitimised as they cannot compete with the national ideal<sup>74</sup> (see Chin 2019, 726; see also Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 18). Put differently, they will not have their national capital recognised as *legitimately national*, and thus find their acts of asserting national belonging futile. As such, dominant players ‘foster the belief that no matter how much capital one acquires through active accumulation, the very fact of this acquired capital being an *accumulation* leads to its devaluing relative to those who posit

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<sup>74</sup> I recognise, however, that not all individuals want to have their capital recognised as legitimately national, nor do they always strive for this.

themselves to have inherited it or to possess it innately without having to accumulate it.’ (Hage 1998). The aristocratic position is thus unreachable.

It is, however, not only aristocratic players who move on the board of national belonging that uphold the aristocratic logic. The rules of the game are so ingrained that it is difficult for other players to play without repeating them. Or, as Bourdieu (1977, 164) would have it, ‘[e]very established order tends to produce [...] the naturalization of its own arbitrariness.’ He continues,

Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents’ aspirations, out of which arises the *sense of limits*, commonly called the *sense of reality*, i.e. the correspondence between [...] social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order (*ibid.*).

This seems to be the case with Fariah, a thirty-five-year-old Norwegian citizen who migrated to Norway from Somalia as a twelve-year-old, who often speaks about herself as ‘Sylvi Listhaug’s favourite immigrant’. Through such a narrative, Fariah underlines a non-natural belonging and reproduces the judge position I spoke of earlier. She also reproduces the aristocratic logic where some are what they are, while others must prove to be what they are not.

When I asked Fariah to describe a Norwegian to me, she went on to talk about how her ‘Norwegian partner’ says that she is more integrated than many other ‘ethnic Norwegians’.

He was a little surprised you know, it was the 8<sup>th</sup> of May. Because I had the biggest Norwegian flag on the balcony. And a lot of my neighbours did not. He was very disappointed with the Norwegians, and here there are only Norwegians, and none of them had the flag up on liberation day! Then I was very happy with myself and said, “But I remembered it!”. I am taking it down at eight tonight, but it has happened that I have forgotten it out. And then they have mentioned that “the flag is not supposed to be out past eight!” [annoying voice]. And then I have thought, okay, new rules to remember all the time.

Fariah’s sheer shock of the fact that none of the ‘real Norwegians’ had their flag up on the Norwegian liberation day highlights how, for some individuals, such actions are taken for granted. It is considered their natural habitus; something that they do because of who they are, and when they do not do it, it is met with shock and bewilderment. On the other hand, Fariah must actively work to prove it in order to claim her sense of national belonging. Sophie noted

a similar notion, saying that ‘immigrants need to prove more, they have to be the ideal person, a poster-child, and then they have to prove more than the average Norwegian.’ The irony is, however, that the act of attempting to prove one’s national capital is actually proof of one’s non-belonging.

### Playing the Aristocratic Game

The conversation with Jens that I introduced in Chapter 2, made me reflect over the possibility that this was not the first time he acted in such a manner. In that example, we saw how he partakes using an established narrative to destabilise the listener – something that he indeed manages. In another interview, Jens narrates a different situation where he came to do to others, what he did to me. He often notes how he uses people’s questions to his advantage. At a social gathering, a ‘*norsk-norsk*’ player came to ask him questions about his origins.

I can’t remember how he asked, but he made it clear that that was what he was asking about. About where I came from – and in one way or the other he had managed to do it in a way that didn’t make it sound bad. I answered that I was from Norway. That I am Norwegian, yes I am from Norway. Continued for a while, and then I just said, I’m Norwegian. And I’d known all along what he was trying to do. I understood what type of person he was. At the same time, he had something that I wanted. [...] he was like ooh no, I didn’t mean it! I was just curious! Because he was definitely not a, em, racist... Em... [rolls his eyes] and then he gave me what I wanted. I was able to reap benefits of this situation. [...] He probably knew that I was fucking with him, he knew what I was doing, but he couldn’t say it out loud. We were in a social setting where there were more people, so if he had said it out loud, man you’re fucking with me, you know what I mean, if he had said that, then he would have just looked stupid.

I had long struggled to understand why Jens seemed to put up a fight when I asked him to clarify what he meant with the fact that his grandparents were ‘*norske*’. Other than the fact that it gave me an opportunity to talk about ‘informant agendas’ in my methodology, I did not quite understand how it fit into the whole picture. I came to understand that Jens was competing against me in a game I did not even know I was playing. As well as reproducing the game, then, my informants also come to challenge it; they ‘play’ the game in both meanings of the word.

Jens is not the only one that challenges the aristocratic logic. Adrian – a twenty-five-year-old male who was born a citizen, but who has parents that migrated to Norway from Sri Lanka before he was born – does too, yet in a less overt manner than Jens. In the first couple

of interviews I did with him over Zoom, I was baffled by his use of the word ‘*integrasjon*’<sup>75</sup>. He often spoke about how he had to engage in a process of integration, something which puzzled me as I understood ‘integration’ in terms of newly settled migrants. Adrian was born and bred in Norway, why would he need to integrate? I came to explain this as a consequence of the aristocratic game, as a logic that relegates such players into the eternal position of ‘*utlending*’, continuously having to prove both their willingness to accumulate national capital, and to showcase their accumulated capital. But then Adrian threw some spanners into the works when he noted how the aristocracy must also ‘integrate’.

Integration has a very present function, and that changes all the time. Just because you are born here and your parents grew up here, it doesn’t mean that the situation is the same now. It is about being on the ball, as I like to put it. That you are active and keep up to date with how things are right now. [...] I can say, though, that, logically, if you have parents that were born and bred here then it’s a little easier to integrate. In terms of procedures, language, how you behave and relate to society.

Not only does he explain that players born and bred in Norway must integrate; he also notes that the ‘*norsk-norsk*’ must too. ‘Integration’ for Adrian is thus more about keeping up with the times so to speak, where the ideal is not fixed but changes. However, the ideal remains a *national* ideal, so that the aristocratic players are still understood to have an advantage in reaching it.

Like the official game, the aristocratic game thus also has a comparative, cumulative and unequal nature, where the structure of the game owes its shape to the distribution of national capital. National belonging is the result of ‘the state of the relations of force between players’ at any given time (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99); the position of players in the game of national belonging is relative to their capital vis-à-vis other players competing in the same game. Player positions in turn also dictate the strategies and perceptions available to each player. Strategies, or possible moves, in the game of national belonging are thus

a function not only of the volume and structure of his [or her] capital *at the moment under consideration* and of the game chances [...] they guarantee him [or her], but also of the *evolution over time* of the volume and structure of this capital, that is, of his [or her] social trajectory and of the dispositions (*habitus*) constituted in the prolonged relation to a definite distribution of objective chances (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99).

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<sup>75</sup> ‘Integration’.

In other words, a player's national belonging is a consequence of the amount and the quality of national capital she or he holds or comes to hold. Yet the amount and quality which is available for each player is set by the rules of the game – the politics of national belonging – which seek to distinguish between the national and the non-national player. Due to the principles of division, national capital is 'a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible.' (Bourdieu 1986, 241-242). It shapes the strategies available to the players, and thus makes the game of national belonging something other than a 'simple game of chance' where anything is possible at any time (*ibid.*, 242). National belonging in the aristocratic game is thus more of a network of hierarchical ties 'which combines to place each person in a unique position in the web of local relations' (Barth 1965, 3), than it is a game.

### Becoming 'Norsk': A Question of Accumulation

It was through my conversations with my informants that I came to understand that there must be a second level to the game of national belonging – a game where non-national players must play to belong. The aristocratic game follows a different set of instructions than the first, as citizenship does not always seem to be enough to claim to be '*norsk*'. In this game, there must be some other type of valued trump card which enables citizens and non-citizens alike to claim this categorical identity. In the game of national belonging, then, national capital must encapsule more than just 'citizenship'. The rules also seem to differ from the official board. While the latter creates a crisp distinction between the categorical identities of '*norsk*' and '*utlending*' – at any time, an individual is either one or the other dependent on citizenship status – the aristocratic game enables some players to be both simultaneously. Yet, at the same time, which categorical identity comes to light is dependent on the situation at hand. Rather than making a crisp either/or, national capital here functions indexically and situationally, as a scale of being more, or less, '*norsk*' and '*utlending*' at any one point in time. The trump cards in this game must thus be of a greater number, and of a more ambiguous nature, than those valued in the first game.

In the previous chapter, we saw how the Norwegian authorities made the aim of the game of belonging a matter of being '*norsk*'. For those not born so, it presents the strategy of naturalisation – of becoming similar enough to be considered the same. The aim of the official game is constituted by a vertical politics of belonging presented by the state. The aim of the aristocratic board, however, is produced through the competition between its players who, 'by

the mere fact of playing’, agree ‘that the game is worth playing.’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98). As such, it represents the politics of belonging in its horizontal form. While it is sometimes open for critique, the aim of the game is constituted of a normative aim that takes the shape of an ‘imagined sameness’ (see Gullestad 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). In the Norwegian aristocratic game, as already shown in the official game, we see the production of a national order where ‘social actors must consider themselves as more, or less the same in order to feel of equal value’ (Gullestad 2002b, 46). This egalitarian logic is on this level crucial in making the aristocratic game a matter of more, or less, for some players.

### Becoming More, or Less, ‘*Norsk*’

Becoming national is a matter of obtaining citizenship in the official game. While juridical belonging is a matter of either/or that is dependent on an institutional stamp that either legitimates or delegitimises one’s sense of national belonging, the sense of belonging experienced by my informants’ functions in a slightly different manner. Mirroring the language of official discourse, they also perceive national belonging as grounded in national capital – yet a different type of capital than the one of value in the official game. Antonella, for example, explains that ‘I don’t feel like an immigrant because I feel like, I both speak and think like other people here do, I behave like everyone else here, and I have a feeling of belonging and adaptation to the culture here too.’ Zamir, on the other hand, understands the ‘Norwegian dream’ to be ‘born and bred in Norway, and knowing all the bird types and the trees.’ Where they differ from citizenship practices, then, is in their understanding of what it means to be ‘*norsk*’. While national capital takes an institutional form in the official game, it typically takes an embodied form in the aristocratic game. It is about the ‘long-lasting dispositions of the mind and the body’ (Bourdieu 1986, 243). Furthermore, the possession of this type of national capital is not a matter of either/or. On the contrary, such possession is a matter of more, or less, where one’s level of belonging is relative to the volume of accumulated capital. This mirrors what Bielicki (2017, 88) found in her studies of Yugoslavian born children in Norway, where being an ‘immigrant’, rather than being ‘*norsk*’, is a matter of more, or less. Like the official game, players ‘can play to increase or conserve their capital, their number of tokens, in conformity with the tacit rules’ of the aristocratic game (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99). Being ‘*norsk*’ in this game is thus an indexical categorical identity, rather than static and absolute like it is in the official game.

While we saw in the case of Sophie that citizenship is an important national capital on the quest to national belonging, it is not the only one. In the aristocratic game, there are several possessions, skills, and attributes that function as national capital. In a video-call in mid-June, where I asked Jens to describe a Norwegian to me, he mentioned a few of these.

Biology. Language, behaviour, dress code, and resources [...]. Being Norwegian is specific things. You don't hitchhike, that's not okay. You don't squat when you're waiting for things. You don't spit, that's not okay. You speak relatively quietly. Bread is quite central. Cabin. That excludes me because I don't have a cabin. Very Norwegian thing. To go on walks without any particular purpose. All the Norwegian winter sports. A chill attitude, with an exception when it comes to drugs. A pretty homogenous sense of fashion.

In his answer, Jens lists a few different types of cultural capital which are convertible into national belonging. Firstly, we see that, in this game, national capital takes the form of 'valued knowledge, styles, social and physical (bodily) characteristics and practical behavioural dispositions' (Hage 1998). We then see how being '*norsk*' has to do with embodied cultural capital; the ways of talking, walking, looking, and behaving that are sanctioned by the national order in question<sup>76</sup> (see Jenkins 1994, 211; Calhoun 1997, 5; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 540). Cultural capital in its objectified form (see Bourdieu 1986, 246) may also be considered national in this game, as in the case of the cabin.

As already noted, national belonging is not understood as an absolute for most of my informants, but rather like an indexical scale which moves from non-belonging – of being an '*utlending*' – to belonging, to being '*norsk*'. In a video-interview I had with Jens, the relative nature of national belonging (and non-belonging) is made vividly clear. After I had officially finished the interview, Jens remained in the video-call for another three hours. In this less formal setting, I was reminded of the importance of not turning the recorder off prematurely (Bernard 2006, 227). Whilst speaking about my project, Jens came to ask me an interesting question.

Is there a ranking system? I'm not saying that you're doing it in this way, but like an example. Okay how *utlending* is this person, how *jalla*<sup>77</sup>, 1-10, where Jens is a four,

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<sup>76</sup> Giving a new meaning to the song 'Walk like an Egyptian' by the Bangles.

<sup>77</sup> According to Andreas E. Østby's *Kebabnorsk ordbok* (2005, 99) '*jalla*' is a derogatory label used to denote things and people that are considered 'immigrant' and immigrant-like.



[depending on] how *gebrokkent*<sup>78</sup> Norwegian he speaks. Okay, Jens gets a one there because he doesn't speak *gebrokkent*. Something like that?

While it is difficult to know whether Jens (once again) was 'pulling my leg' or not with this statement, we cannot neglect that this same logic is present in much of what both he and others say.

Both Sophie and Malik, a thirty-year-old male born in Norway to a Norwegian mother and an Algerian father, for example, speak about themselves using percentile. Malik explains it in the following way: 'I feel very Norwegian, but some of my ancestors came from Africa. So, I'm a good 70/30 maybe, since I'm born in Norway, and I have a Norwegian mother.' In this game, the use of categorical identities – and thus the grounds on which national belonging is claimed – is based on the amount of national or non-national capital an individual holds. National capital is thus

the *sum* of accumulated nationally sanctified and valued social and physical cultural styles and dispositions (national culture) adopted by individuals and groups, as well as valued characteristics (national types and national character) within a national field: looks, accents, demeanour, taste, nationally valued social and cultural preferences and behaviour, etc.' (Hage 1998).

Thus, the more of the former one holds, the more '*norsk*' a person is, and the more a person holds of the latter, the more '*utlending*' they are. While national belonging is a consequence of the accumulation of national capital in both the official and aristocratic game, what is considered national capital differs, and thus, consequently, categorical identities function in a different manner too.

Being a matter of more, and less, the ability to claim national belonging is also highly dependent on the situation at hand. Being '*norsk*' is thus always relative; it is something non-aristocratic players are continuously becoming and unbecoming. Players thus move back and forth on the board. In some situations, players might have the right type of capital, while in others might lack it. We may then note how 'culture', language, and taste 'may themselves function as resources that are deployed contextually and situationally' (Anthias 2002, 498). For Antonella, her Norwegian dialect is a national capital that allows her a position of '*norsk*', yet

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<sup>78</sup> According to Språkrådet (2009), the word '*gebrokkent*' comes from German meaning 'to break through' or 'to break with'. Saying that someone speaks *gebrokkent*, then, is to say that while a person can speak Norwegian, their mother tongue breaks through into their Norwegian pronunciation.

which is often cancelled out by her complexion. On a rainy afternoon in August, she tells me a story that illustrates how national belonging is situational and interactional.

A while back, when I was a nurse, I rang another nurse on the phone and asked her if she could bring a drug for me that we needed for a patient – a drug that our ward was empty of. And there was no problem on the phone. She said yes of course you can come then and then, and then just say and we will fix it. But when I come down there where that person was, she is waiting for me, but she doesn't know what I look like. She saw me, and then she just looked past me, and was like can you move a little? I'm waiting for someone to come and get some medicine. And then I said, that would be me. And she was like, oh! Well then! That's what I mean when I say that speaking on the phone with people then I both feel and think like a Norwegian person, so it's easier when you just speak and can't see each other. If it's a personal interaction, then there are more things you have to take into consideration.

While in a situation where the other person cannot see her, Antonella's proficiency in Norwegian grants her a national belonging that is rejected as soon as her complexion is drawn into the mix. As such, she understands her appearances to be something of an 'invisible fence' (Gullestad 2002b) barring her from claiming to be '*norsk*.' In this example we may also note how, being the sum of, different types of national capital are connected to another. Because of her dialect, the nurse expected Antonella to be white – hence why she did not recognise that Antonella was the one who asked for the medicine. Another instance where national non-belonging is a consequence of 'wrong capital at the wrong time' is illustrated by Maria.

During lockdown, a few of my informants noted how they had found new outdoor activities that allowed them to meet people while social distancing. With the snow still falling until early June, skiing became such an activity for Maria. In an interview I had with her over Zoom late March, and in a focus group interview late August, Maria passionately talked about her first encounter with cross-country skiing. While she in other situations speaks about herself as '*norsk*', skiing made her feel like an '*utlending*' in a way she had never experienced before.

I've actually been skiing! I've skied for the first time. Ahh, I have never felt so much of an *utlending* as when I was skiing! I don't know how to ski, and when you see that everyone on the track knows how to... And when they speak about skiing, they have a completely different vocabulary that I'm not familiar with. It is kind of an area of Norwegian culture that does not concern me. But then yeah, I borrowed some skis – I thought that was a little embarrassing – but okay, I borrowed the skis, skied a little, talked a little about it, and then I, I ended up in the back because I was way too focused on trying to master it. I felt I lost out on, the first time, lost out on the social bit of

hanging out because I'm not in my comfort zone when I'm skiing – while they are. For them it is second nature, but for me it is mm okay fine... And the second time I crashed into a lot of people, but it was fine. It was just funny. I felt like a clown, but at least it was entertaining for the people I was with.

For Maria, her lacking ability to ski moves her three steps back in the aristocratic game of national belonging, relegating her to the '*utlending*' position. While she usually feels '*norsk*', skiing makes her feel '*utlending*'. This is reflected in a DM I had from her after I had suggested going skiing together, where she replied: 'hmm, yes, ski trip, hot chocolate, and an identity crisis.' It is interesting to see how a player's repertoire of capital sometimes comes to clash.

Both Maria and Antonella's case show the situational and relational functioning of national capital. The pendulum movement between '*utlending*' and '*norsk*' is also vividly present in Jens's explanation of what an '*utlending*' is.

I think in practice you either have to look like an *utlending*, or you have to speak like one. So, the guy that was in our *utlending group*, well he was, he was from Iceland. He didn't look like he was an Islandic person, but then he opened his mouth. And I mean, that was the weirdest shit I've ever heard. So, you have to have something like that. Because then there was no question like, when he started speaking, if he was *utlending* or not. So, language, skin colour, you have to fit with being an *utlending*.

What is particularly interesting about this excerpt is the fact that we also see that there exists a ranking system between different types of national capital. Looks is what first seems to determine whether someone is an '*utlending*' or not. Furthermore, we see in Jens' statement that, when skin colour grants a person access to being '*norsk*', something else steps in relegating them back to '*utlending*.' Something that in this case was a lack of proficiency in the Norwegian language.

Another interesting issue present in Maria's story is the role played by material items, as already hinted at by Jens and his (lack of) cabin. She notes how it was 'embarrassing' to borrow skis, something I believe is a consequence of the fact that her 'Norwegian' friends had their own. At a later stage in the fieldwork, in a focus group I had with Maria and a few others, she brings up the skiing episode but focused this time on how the lack of material items signified her non-belonging.

I was with two female friends, and they were dressed nearly identically. They had proper professional skiing gear, and I was there with something I had put together at

home – I looked like a complete *noob*<sup>79</sup>. And then we were going to take a photo, and I actually looked like the *utlending* in the picture!

Again, we see how capital – now in the form of clothing and ski gear – relegates her into a position of *utlending*. In an interview I had with Zamir he notes a similar issue, where at his secondary school prom he stood out from the other ‘Norwegians’ as he was wearing his brother’s hand-me-down; a suit that was four sizes too big. Here we see how material capital functions alongside economic capital. Although not as prevalent as cultural capital, economic capital (see Bourdieu 1986) also figures part of national belonging as being ‘*norsk*’ is perceived as synonymous with the middle-class, while being *utlending* is equated with the lower working-class. National belonging is not only a matter of behaving and looking, but also has to do with having nationally sanctioned artifacts and being of particular social strata. The implicit national ideal of the official game – what it means to be ‘*norsk*’ other than an equality as rights – is further filled by the aristocratic game, where different types of cultural capital come to define both ‘cultural sameness’ and ‘cultural difference’ (see McIntosh 2015, 313).

In the official game of national belonging, accumulating national capital was easier for some than others. This is also true for the aristocratic game, where acts of ‘self-improvement’ are differently available to different players (see Dyrliid 2017, 10-11). We may note, for example, how it was easier to attain proficiency in Norwegian for the participants who grew up here than for those who came here at a later age. My informants have different starting points, as ‘the extent to which they can actually accumulate national capital is linked to the cultural possessions and dispositions’ a player already is in ownership of (Hage 1998). Others, who have grown up other places perceived as similar to Norway, will experience ‘the advantage of proximity with the dominant national culture which can quicken the process of cultivating and accumulating national capital.’ (*ibid.*). On the other hand, we may note how some such aspects are difficult to change, and thus remain despite one’s accumulative efforts.

### Simultaneously Becoming ‘*Norsk*’ and ‘*Utlending*’

In all my interviews, I asked my informants what it meant to be ‘*norsk*’ and what it meant to be ‘*utlending*’. Adelina, a thirty-year-old female who was born in Norway to parents who migrated from Kosovo in the late 1980s, answered these questions by respectively exclaiming ‘that’s me!’ and ‘that’s also me!’. Furthermore, Fariah shows particularly well how national

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<sup>79</sup> An inexperienced person.

belonging is relative, and context dependent: ‘When I am in the Somali milieu, with a lot of culturally Somali people, then I am the Norwegian right. But when I’m with my Norwegian friends [laughs] then I am the multicultural immigrant. So, it all depends on the day.’ As already shown in this example, and the ones presented earlier, understanding national belonging as dependent on one’s contextual national capital, explains how my informants can speak of being both ‘*norsk*’ and ‘*utlending*’ simultaneously as they swing between the two. Categorical simultaneity is thus a consequence of the way national capital functions in this game.

For Sophie, as in the case of Antonella and the nurse, this swinging motion often has to do with the combination of one’s capital and the expectations that lie therein. She explains how having grown up in Norway often comes with the expectation of citizenship, and that people find it hard to accept and understand why she has not got one as she is a person that ‘speaks [a Norwegian dialect] fluently, and who behaves in a Norwegian way.’ On the other hand, her complexion often makes people questioning her hold of said dialect as she ‘looks a little too *utenlandsk*; is too *utenlandsk* for someone who speaks [a Norwegian] dialect fluently.’ On the background of her appearances, then, people tend to explain her apparent transgression of impenetrable boundaries by expecting her to be either adopted or ‘that her family has lived here for many generations.’ While her dialect makes people question her lack of juridical belonging, her complexion makes people question the root of this assumed belonging – namely, her dialect.

National capital also explains why their sense of belonging is never a case of either/or. In a focus group, when speaking about stereotypes and being put into categorical boxes, Maria notes how the ‘*norsk*’ and the ‘*utlending*’ boxes are both problematic.

But it’s like, whatever box you fall into, it’s a little wrong. If someone labels you an *utlending* then it doesn’t quite work, because, well yeah, you’re integrated, and you have a lot more in common with them than what they think. But when they label you *norsk*, then it’s like, hang on a minute, I don’t understand what you mean when you talk about waxing the skis in the right way! [...] sometimes people just take for granted that you’ve skied before, because, well, you’re born here.

In life we will always meet situations where we are the odd one out, or situations where we do not understand what people are talking about, or how to carry out a specific task. For Maria, and for the other informants, many such situations either move them forward in the aristocratic game of national belonging or they move them back. Having national capital makes being ‘*utlending*’ wrong, while not having it makes being ‘*norsk*’ erroneous too.

The analogy of a game, where the aim is to accumulate national capital, allows us to understand why, for some individuals, national belonging is a matter of more or less, rather than a matter of either/or. It further shows how one in certain situations may be able to draw on one's accumulated capital in one's claims of belonging, while in other situations this may not be possible. Accordingly, it allows us to see how one may move back and forward between being an *'utlending'* and being *'norsk'*, without ever completely being the one or the other. While the accumulative logic explains why the majority of my informants can be both simultaneously, it does not, however, explain why one of my informants, Rasmus – a twenty-two-year-old male who was born in France to a Norwegian<sup>80</sup> mother and a French father, and who migrated to Norway at the age of ten – never speaks about himself as an *'utlending'* or about the pendulum movement back and forth. Neither does it explain why some, every now and then, speak about their absolute inability to be Norwegian. Furthermore, why do Gabriela, Zamir, and Noor – a twenty-year-old female who migrated from Iran at the age of three – sometimes speak of being *'fornorska'*<sup>81</sup> rather than of simply being *'norsk'*? It is at this point where the benefit of having informants that ticked different participant criteria truly showed itself.

### Being 'Norsk-Norsk': A Question of Inherited Capital

So far, the aristocratic game and its egalitarian logic seems to explain how my informants are never solely one or the other. Yet it does not explain why my informants claimed to be Norwegian while simultaneously explaining the impossibility of being so. While these individuals claimed to be *'norsk'* again and again through their hold of contextually appropriate national capital, there was something that interrupted the force of their national capital even in settings where they were *'norsk'*, and unexpectedly reasserted their position as *'utlending'*. As time went on, I started to see that what citizenship practices portray as the singular categorical identity of *'norsk'*, my informants experience as having a double meaning; a meaning that in fact structures the whole aristocratic game and its possibilities.

Whilst on a skiing trip with my fellow master students Maren and Tonje, I had a welcomed encounter with serendipity<sup>82</sup>. On the route we had decided to take, we suddenly encountered an extremely steep hill marked with a sign that said *'bakke-bakken'*<sup>83</sup>. Having

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<sup>80</sup> Herself having Norwegian parents and grandparents.

<sup>81</sup> The act of being 'Norwegianised'.

<sup>82</sup> See Rivoal and Salazar (2013) and Miller (2013) for a discussion of the value of serendipity.

<sup>83</sup> The 'hill-hill' is reminiscent of the idea of a Torpenhow Hill.

caught my breath after struggling up the monstrous hill on skis that I had so disastrously waxed wrongly, a thought struck me. No wonder they had called this hill for *'bakke-bakken'*; it truly did stand out from the other hills we had crossed with relative ease. And then it hit me: what if the same logic lies behind my informants use of the term *'norsk'* and *'norsk-norsk'*? What if the latter was a way of differentiating two types of 'Norwegian'? What if, in the aristocratic game, there are in fact *two* Norwegian positions, and that my informants claims where not so much of a paradox after all? I came to see that being *'norsk'* was a categorical identity open to all my informants, while *'norsk-norsk'* was a position that was impenetrable for all but one. The question then became, on this board, what exactly is lurking behind these different ideas of being Norwegian? As already revealed, that would be the aristocratic logic.

After speaking to Maria, I came to compare her experience with my own and realised for myself how important one's own frame of reference is for understanding others. Growing up, cross-country skiing for me was nothing more than a tumble and a fall on the fields that surrounded my family's house. I never had any interest in it, and thus I never became any good at it. However, encountering *'ski-dag'*<sup>84</sup> at school – something to which my informant Zamir virtually fist-bumped Maria at, symbolising a common experience – was for me nothing more than a dissatisfaction with the chosen activity and having to be outside in the cold all day. Although I was the antonym of being *'født med ski på beina'*<sup>85</sup> as a child, it never challenged my 'Norwegianness.' When Maria confronts the same situation, however, it heavily affects her ability to claim a sense of national belonging. After a while, I realised that it had to do with the fact that, in the aristocratic game of national belonging, we differ in respect to one vital type of national capital. Mirroring the juridical game, notions of blood ties and kinship – a form of social capital – was present in my informants' explanations. The aristocratic players introduced in the start of this chapter are thus what they are as a consequence of being born to other aristocratic players. National capital is legitimate by social capital, and not by institutional means.

### The Limited Nature of the Nation

While the accumulation of national capital enables my informants to claim to be *'norsk'*, the accumulation of national capital 'does not necessarily translate into the position of national dominance.' (Hage 1998). As already noted, Anderson (1991) understands the nation as

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<sup>84</sup> 'Ski day' is where the school spends most of the day outside in the snow.

<sup>85</sup> Norwegian proverb meaning 'being born with skis on one's feet', and as such symbolising an inborn proficiency at skiing.

imagined as both sovereign and limited. I argue that this latter characteristic is why so many of my informants are unable to claim a position of natural belonging – of simply being Norwegian. Being imagined as limited, the ‘nation’ never ‘imagines itself coterminous with mankind’; not even the most dedicated nationalists ‘dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation’. (*ibid.*, 7). On the contrary, upholding a limited nature is of crucial importance if the meaning of the ‘nation’ and the national’s positions in it is to at all be maintained (Hage 1998). Firstly, the naturalisation process available in the official game is at odds with such a practice as, in theory at least, they do not set a limit to the number of individuals who may *become* Norwegian. Secondly, if it simply is the case that the accumulation of national capital in itself is enough in the aristocratic game, we could imagine that the number of nationals would increase drastically as people became better and better at skiing. For the nation to maintain its imagined limitedness, however, there cannot be a ‘free circulation of [valuable] cultural capital’ (Bourdieu 1990, 187). After all, ‘a prize that everyone wins is not a prize.’ (Bailey 1969, 21). There must be something that limits such a ‘democratic’ logic of distribution (Hage 1998), something that thwarts the egalitarian logic presented above.

Without a scarcity of valuable capital – upon which the distinction between the national and the non-national rests – there can *ipso facto* be no nation to belong to. This scarcity is something that ‘runs the risk of being de-instituted at every interval’ of naturalisation and of every act of accumulation (Butler 1991, 24). The game of national belonging thus heavily relies on upholding a ‘criterion of entry’, as at stake with each new entry lies its whole ontological being (Bourdieu 1986, 252; Butler 1991, 24; Valentine 2007, 19). While the aristocratic game is structured in a similar fashion to the official in being a board that is divided into a national and a non-national side, it differs in its function. While the latter has a border that resembles a dotted line, the border between the two sides is more of a solid line in the former. And as we shall see, this line is ‘heavily policed precisely because [it] contain[s] the potential to disrupt the game.’ (Ortner 2006, 151). So, while the national game of belonging ‘seems to offer a safe, even “natural” belonging [...], it is haunted by a basic insecurity: apprehension about its own authenticity, the need to prove itself by unmasking “fake” autochthons, that inevitably leads to internal division’ (Cueppens and Geschiere 2005, 403). Through unmasking fake nationals, the game remains unequal, and the ‘nation’ limited.

Furthermore, the game of national belonging cannot remove the non-national, as ‘the total elimination of all opponents would mean that the game could never again be played.’ (Bailey 1969, 1). To paraphrase Butler (1991, 22), the national requires the non-national ‘in order to affirm itself as an origin, for origins only make sense to the extent that they are



differentiated from that which they produce as derivatives.’ A ‘we’ is constructed dialectically with a ‘they’, as on their own such terms do not mean anything<sup>86</sup>. In this way, Gullestad (2002a, 118) argues that ‘it seems as though the sameness ideal *demands* that somebody is constituted as not belonging, in order to strengthen sameness, unit and belonging to the nation as an imagined community in a situation where it feels threatened’. ‘Honour’, Bailey (1969, 21) explains, ‘has meaning only when some people are without honour; power and wealth are got at the expense of other people.’ The limitations of this game of national belonging are introduced by what Bourdieu (1984, 23-24) calls ‘the aristocracy of the field’; a logic of distribution that ensures a distinction between players that are understood to take part in the process of self-improvement, and those who are *naturally* ‘improved.’ Contrary to citizenship practices, this distinction is not between the naturalised and the automatic citizen; it is rather between the ‘*norsk*’ and the ‘*norsk-norsk*’.

### Playing to Self-Improve?

An interview I had with Antonella, made me think about what it means to be Norwegian. Making her explain what it means to be ‘*norsk*’ seemingly made her a little annoyed, as she was having to explain something that for her was crystal clear. Puzzled by the seeming contradiction with what she had stated earlier in the interview – that ‘you must be born Norwegian; you cannot become it’ – I had to ask her whether citizenship makes a person Norwegian. She answered the following with a tone that made me think I was asking a stupid question, but which assured me that behind ‘being Norwegian’ lurked a double meaning.

You are *norsk* when you are born here to *norske* parents. Everything else is a case of definition. It’s a paper mill. You have a document that says you have a citizenship, and that’s fine, but I know that I am not *norsk*, that I am not *etnisk norsk* – but the paper is just giving the information that I have been here for a long enough time to call myself a *norsk* person.

There are many interesting issues in this excerpt, and I want to start with the fact that it mirrors citizenship practices in its understanding of ‘becoming norsk’. However, it also differs as Antonella differentiates between being Norwegian on paper – of holding the national capital of citizenship – and of being ‘born Norwegian’. Behind the moniker ‘*norsk*’, then, I argue there in fact lies not one categorical identity, but two, where one signifies becoming Norwegian and

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<sup>86</sup> Silverstein (2005) shows this is also the case of the terms ‘autochthonous’ and ‘allochthonous’ in the Dutch debate.

one signifies simply being so. We see that she differentiates between being '*norsk*' and being '*etnisk norsk*'<sup>87</sup>. After having asked another 'obvious' question of what constituted the latter, Antonella explained how it had to do with having parents that themselves also were '*norsk-norsk*'; parents that had parents who were born and bred in Norway. Being '*norsk-norsk*' thus has to do with one's blood ties.

As explained, the official game does not require Zamir to prove his Norwegianness as he was simply born, juridically speaking, '*norsk*'. Nevertheless, in Zamir's everyday life, and for other informants the story is a little different. This is also the case for Jens. While explaining over Zoom how he was in both a '*norsk*' and an '*utlending*' group at school, I asked him to reflect over what enabled *him* to be in both.

I think it came from the fact that I already came from, I mean a primary school and a secondary school where I was only with *norske folk*<sup>88</sup>. So, I already knew a lot about *hvite folk*<sup>89</sup>. As such, I was already in the *norske* group, if you want to call it that. And then I already knew how to speak Norwegian correctly. I mean, fitting into the *utlending* group, that is obvious. More like, I don't know if that needs explaining... need more of an explanation for why I was in the *norske* group. Because in the *utenlandske* it is enough that we have something in common. What it's like to be brown like [laughs]. We know what it is to be brown, should we get together or something? But to be in the *norsk* group... because my name is Jens, that's a pretty good icebreaker. And I speak proper Norwegian. I think that is a really big... that I speak Norwegian in like a proper manner, I can speak Norwegian like really properly. Do you get what I mean? [...] Yeah, just like, I think that was it. And I wasn't aggressive. I wasn't a loud *utlending* who wanted to start a fight.

His explanation made me question: why is being part of the 'Norwegian group' something that must be explained, while being part of the '*utlending* group' is obvious? And why is being part of the former require so much, while the latter does not? And why do so many of my informants explain situations where they are told things like 'you're more Norwegian than me' by what they call 'ethnic Norwegians'? What function does it play that some players are obviously '*norsk*', and others must have this categorical identity reasserted?

In a video-interview I did with Adrian in the summer, he noted how some of his 'ethnic Norwegian' friends used to tell him that he is more Norwegian than them. Interested as to why, I brought it up again in a later interview.

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<sup>87</sup> 'Ethnic Norwegian'.

<sup>88</sup> 'Norwegian people'.

<sup>89</sup> 'White people'.

Nina: Last time you said your friends often say that you are more ethnic Norwegian than they are, why do you think that is?

Adrian: Yeah, or just because, if we speak about Norwegian then we can, then it's a little about identity like we spoke about before, but it's also about what one has done, what it is that represents you as a person. I have been skiing, snowboarding, I have taken part in all the winter sports really. And been on winter trips, eaten Norwegian food, taken part in Norwegian culture, I've been pretty active in all this in general. The reason why there was more focus on me, I mean no matter how we twist or turn it, there is no getting away from the fact that I am not ethnic Norwegian – I have parents from a different country. So, there was more focus on the fact that I was integrated, and that's what they thought that, I mean there are not that many [ethnic Norwegians] that have been skiing and snowboarding as much as me or who eat as much [Norwegian food] as me or who knows as much Norwegian history for example. They felt that, even though they were born and bred in Norway, they were not as integrated as me.

What this excerpt shows particularly well is how Adrian's Norwegianness is negotiated on different terms than that of his 'ethnic Norwegian friends'. While he must prove his accumulated national capital, that he has done things that are considered Norwegian, his friends do not. Adrian, due to the impossibility of being 'ethnic Norwegian', must claim his belonging through showcasing his hold of national capital. His friends, on the other hand, do not rely on proving, as they simply *are* 'norsk'. Adrian has to prove his Norwegianness because he does not have Norwegian parents (who themselves have Norwegian parents). In this excerpt we see how he can up his 'norsk' ante by proving his accumulated national capital, yet in doing so he also underlines how he differs from his friends – how he is not 'norsk-norsk.'

The idea that some individuals are what they are, and not what they do, is also vivid in Maria's understanding of what it means to be 'norsk-norsk'.

Being *norsk-norsk*, it's a bit like when you first see the person in their natural habitus, then it's the first thing you associate with them. Yeah, and that it doesn't become like "where is that person from", more like they are Norwegian. So yeah, the way they behave, and one of the first associations you get to that person.

We see here that being 'norsk-norsk' is about there being no questions asked. Such individuals do not have anything to prove, as what they do is national simply because of who they are. We can see from Maria's statements that the aristocratic logic distinguishes between nationals who 'behave nationally because they are born national' and 'other groups who have to behave

nationally to prove that they are national.’ (Hage 1998). In doing so, it disguises the ‘social conditions of transmission and acquisition’ (Bourdieu 1986, 236) of the national capital held by ‘*norsk-norsk*’ players, to ensure that it is ‘unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence’ (*ibid.*, 245). By ‘sanctioning the hereditary transmission of cultural capital’ (*ibid.*, 244), the national order produces a national aristocracy constituted of those who are *naturally national* due to their social capital, ensuring that the structure of the national order is upheld. Being ‘*norsk-norsk*’ is thus based on an understanding of ‘an innate quality’, rather than something that can be achieved (see Gullestad 2002b, 53).

The combination of the egalitarian and the aristocratic logic, where individuals prove their position of ‘*norsk*’ is particularly present in a focus group I had with Jens, Zamir, Antonella, Gabriela, Maria and Sophie over Zoom late August. In this focus group we watched an episode of *Norsk-ish*, that, in one scene, showcases a female character of Turkish descent who is confronted by two characters of Norwegian descent for not wearing a *bunad*<sup>90</sup>. Even though these two ‘Norwegian’ characters are not wearing the national costume either, they feel the need to comment that she ‘has the full right to wear one’. This scene was brought up in the discussion presented below.

Maria: I really want a *bunad*, but again I feel like I have to become more Norwegian to wear a *bunad*. I don’t feel *norsk* enough to wear a *bunad*. And if I wore one I would feel very stressed. Like please! Don’t ask me about anything on this day [The Norwegian Constitution Day]! I just want to blend in!

Sophie: Maybe when I get married, I will get one. I mean my partner is *norsk* right, so then I think, he is my shield. No questions. Like that’s why I wear a *bunad*. [...]

Maria: I also think the best thing you can do is to ask back. Why have you chosen to wear it? Do you feel a strong connection to the nation? Ah, where are your grandparents from?

Antonella: It’s that business of having to defend oneself all the time! [...]

Zamir: I think, I mean all this with the *bunad*. I mean for me, I would gladly wear one as a celebration to Norway and the culture, because I’m fucking thankful for living here, and glad for the fact that I grew up here. And all that about the question of where you’re from, I can’t quite relate to that either. For me, I am really happy when people ask me where I am from, the only thing I struggle with is what they mean. Like where I live,

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<sup>90</sup> The Norwegian national costume. It comes in a female and a male version, and different places in Norway have their own version. As such, they symbolise both local and national ties. The local then becomes national in a way.

where my dad is from, my parents? [...] my family is a mix too, I mean I was born and bred in Norway, I have a Norwegian partner, and I have mostly Norwegian friends... so... I just see it as a plus.

Antonella: I understand that you have that approach, because you, you're born and bred here, and well I am neither of those things. I came here as a young adult. And you have that culture printed into you, the culture, the food, everything, when you were born and grew up here. I don't have that. [...] on the other hand, then, I feel like I am being attacked when they ask in that way.

Maria: I mean, for me it really depends on the situation. It's not wrong to ask where you're from, I also do it if someone looks a little *spicy*. But I think the series showed that, when it's the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, that like a celebration of the Norwegian culture, and then you kind of want to be part of it, and if you're then asked where you are from, or questions about your ethnicity, then it makes you feel very outside. Because that day, that's the Norwegian day right. And you're trying to blend in, to fit in, and then you get all these questions. It makes you feel completely rejected! But when getting to know someone that would be a completely normal thing to ask about. I mean, I have a whole manuscript of what I say! So, it's all about the setting really.

Antonella: I want to address this *bunad* business since we are speaking about it. I have a *bunad*. I bought it this year, as it is the first year I have been able to afford it. I feel like, I mean for Gabriela, it wouldn't be, I mean while she is Polish, she is white and looks Norwegian, so there would not be that many questions. For her, who looks different to me. I got that question, so where is your *bunad* from? I was like it's from Rogaland, and then they were like why is it from Rogaland, do you have any family there? [...] I was just glad I was asked where my *bunad* was from, and not directly where *I* was from!

Firstly, Maria notes how her right to possess national capital in the form of a *bunad* is dependent on her existing repertoire of national capital. It is about whether she is '*norsk* enough'. It is a matter of accumulation, and of being equal enough to the national ideal. This reveals the egalitarian logic and is something that is repeated – yet in different ways – in Sophie, Zamir, and Antonella's statements. Secondly, Maria's statement also reveals the aristocratic logic. Having accumulated enough national capital, having become '*norsk*' enough, Maria is of the perception that she will still encounter questions if she decides to wear a *bunad*. While there would be no questions asked if a '*norsk-norsk*' player made such a clothing choice, this choice makes individuals like Maria stand out, unable to blend into the national order of things. This issue is repeated by Sophie and Antonella. For Zamir who often passes as a '*norsk-norsk*' player based on his looks, the story is different. Yet, it is interesting to see that he too 'defends'

his choice on the egalitarian basis, but that the aristocratic logic in his case does not make him feel a sense of non-belonging.

In the aristocratic game, then, there is a hidden hierarchical differentiation between those who are perceived as needing to actively engage in accumulating capital that is convertible to national belonging, and those who are already born to and with it. As such, some players who are born into citizenship will also find their national belonging delegitimated in this game. There thus exists a distinction between holders of ‘uncertified cultural capital’ that ‘can always be required to prove themselves because they *are* only what they *do*’ and ‘the holders of titles of cultural mobility’ that ‘only have to be what they are, because all their practices derive their value from their authors’ (Bourdieu 1986, 246, original emphasis). Valuable cultural capital is thus *not* available to all players equally, but rather unequally distributed to the national aristocracy. Accordingly, while some players can come to accumulate national capital in a way that allows them to claim the categorical identity of ‘*norsk*’, they will find that the same capital does not allow them entry to being ‘*norsk-norsk*’. And thus, that they will have their national belonging delegitimised when put up against the ‘stronger’ players. In this way, ‘the aristocratic logic ensures that, regardless of how much national capital one accumulates, how one accumulates it will make an important difference to its capacity to be converted into national recognition and legitimacy.’ (Hage 1998). Accumulated capital cannot buy entry into the aristocracy.

Anthias (2007, 788) underlines how social capital are social ties and networks that are mobilizable in pursuit of potential resources. Such networks of relations are thus never natural nor socially given, but rather a product of strategies that serve a purpose; they are ‘the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term [...]’ (Bourdieu 1986, 249). In the game of national belonging, social capital in the form of blood ties functions to enforce a scarcity of trump cards and thus to limit the number of possible national players. It ensures that the distribution of valuable national capital is fixed to the aristocratic players on the basis of their ties to each other. It ensures that social capital gives some player’s national capital a value that cannot be attained through simply accumulating the latter. In this game then, national players are distinguished from the non-national players on the basis of their social capital which provides the former ‘with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit’ (*ibid.*, 248-249) – a credit that itself cannot be accumulated. National capital is thus only truly national if owned by an aristocratic player.

Being an aristocratic player is not only about actually having the right type of social capital, of having *‘etnisk norske’* parents and grandparents. It is about the assumed national capital that follows said social capital. As explained earlier, different types of national capital come with the expectation of other such capital. The national ideal of the official game is presumed to be equal as sameness on the basis of equality as rights, and thus the institutionalised cultural capital of citizenship functions to legitimate or delegitimate player’s national belonging. In the aristocratic game, the national ideal is not grounded in an equality as rights, but on a more profound and exclusive form for equality as sameness. As noted above, Maria understands a player to be *‘norsk-norsk’* to be a player that simply is so, yet the way in which she comes to decipher such a person is through ‘associations.’ At last, my final conundrum of Rasmus’ sense of belonging is solved. As already noted, Rasmus differs from the rest of my other informants. He never speaks about himself as an *‘utlending’*, nor really about being *‘norsk’*, and where he is from never really comes up. Malik, on the other hand, often speaks of himself as both an *‘utlending’* and as *‘norsk’* and is more often than not asked about his background. Furthermore, Rasmus was not born a Norwegian citizen, while Malik was. They both also speak with a distinct Norwegian dialect. What, then, enables Rasmus to play in the position of the *‘norsk-norsk’*, while Malik is relegated to being *‘norsk’*?

The simple answer is the way they look. What we see if we compare the case of Rasmus with that of Malik is that national belonging functions on a national ideal that is different than that of the official game. Like in the previous game, however, the aristocratic game is also a game where ‘only those who meet the ideal belong.’ (Chin 2019, 725-726). Aarset (2015), Erdal, Doeland and Tellander (2018), Gullestad (2002b, 2002c), McIntosh (2015), all find that ideas of ‘race’ are implicitly and explicitly used as a frame of reference for non-belonging in the Norwegian context. Once you are deemed an aristocrat, then, not even having another citizenship weakens your claim to being *‘norsk-norsk’*. Or rather, as long as you look *‘norsk-norsk’*, your other citizenship cannot harm your aristocratic status. Lacking Norwegian looks, however, threatens your aristocratic attempts.

If we go back to Antonella and the nurse, then, we may understand why, when she speaks to her on the phone, and then meet her in person later, it becomes an ‘odd situation’ where they walk straight past her and ‘towards the first Norwegian person they see.’ This explains why Jens, despite his Norwegian dialect, his Norwegian name, and his Norwegian upbringing, is perceived as a ‘poser’: ‘I mean my name has no connotation except for the fact that it sounds funny. That I am a poser, that I pose as *norsk*, or that I am adopted or something.’

It also explains how the story is a little different for Adelina, who explains that if people do not know her name, people would assume it was ‘Birgit Hansen’.

They would never have noticed that there was anything different. Or that I had *utlending* parents, or that I was Muslim or that I didn’t eat pork when I was little. But if I was brown in the skin, then there might have been a mismatch. Then it would be like, do you have Norwegian parents? Then there would be more of a ground to ask questions – something there isn’t unless they know my name.

While Adelina simply must refrain from saying her name, it is not as simple for Antonella.

Nina: [...] what enables you to call yourself *etnisk norsk* if citizenship doesn’t matter?

Antonella: Then I’d have to be born again and look, I mean look typically Norwegian. to call myself that. But I mean, it’s completely wrong to think in that way – it is not possible. That’s why I said, hinted that it has to be a feeling, you have to have, or to feel. I feel very Norwegian in my thinking, and I feel very Norwegian in my, I mean the way I behave, the feeling, but at the same time my looks don’t allow others to necessarily see me as Norwegian. So that’s where the information may crash for another person.

We must recognise that ‘certain aspects of an individual’s position are ascribed to him [sic] by birth and residency’ (Barth 1965, 3) and thus are more difficult, or impossible, to change. Some players have it easier than others in the aristocratic game, where some may trespass the boundary of ‘*norsk-norsk*’ – albeit only in some situations, and for a short period of time – and others cannot. It also means that some types of capital enable or disable a player’s position more than others. While I managed to get up the hill with some dodgy grip, then, for some of my informants the struggle to truly belong is impossible as the game equips them with soap rather than the right type of wax.

There is another interesting dynamic to the aristocratic logic too, one that makes the whole game come around full circle. When describing what it means to be ‘*utlending*’ in a focus group discussion, Maria shows that this position also has to do with accumulating national capital – something that those who are considered ‘*norsk-norsk*’ simply ‘inherit’. This ‘natural’ and hidden accumulation of capital by aristocratic players was also vivid in the episode of Jens, his friends and the old lady that I mentioned at the start of this chapter.

You have a lot of common areas with people that have themselves immigrated. You still lack a few, I mean prior knowledge about the Norwegian culture that you don’t get



through your parents. *Nordmenn* get a lot of their knowledge from their parents, and that whole generational line. But when your parents are from a different culture then you're a little cut off, and you, you have to start it. That's when you're *utlending*. [...]

If being '*norsk*' denotes those who perceivably must work to accumulate national capital, who must self-improve because their capital is not sanctioned by their social capital, then we see from Maria's statement that being '*norsk*' is necessarily to be an '*utlending*'. Put differently, becoming '*norsk*' is an available position for '*utlendinger*' that must actively start the process of accumulation.

In the game of national belonging, 'the aim of accumulating national capital is precisely to convert it into national belonging; to have your accumulated national capital recognised as legitimately national.' (Hage 1998; Chin 2019, 725). In the official game, this happens through the accumulation of citizenship, of being equal in terms of rights. In the aristocratic game, however, the *accumulation* of a capital which is legitimately national is impossible. So, while the official game requires similarity before you can be granted equality as rights and thus be perceived as equal as sameness, the act of proving one's similarity in the aristocratic game is not translated into the notion of sameness, but into an inherent difference.

The field of national power is, then, a field where people's position of power is related to the amount of national capital they accumulate. This dynamic of accumulation reaches its limitations, however, when it comes face to face with those whose richness in national capital does not come from a struggle to accumulate and 'be like' [nationals], but who appear 'naturally' [national] (Hage 1998).

Players who are '*norsk-norsk*' are perceived to simply hold such cultural competence. Although they too take part in accumulating most of their national capital through childhood socialisation, the aristocratic logic makes it seem as though they are simply born with it. Parallel with the official game of national belonging, the outcome of the aristocratic game is thus in some ways certain, yet it hides this fact under the banner of indexical 'Norwegianness.' This façade makes it *seem* as though, to paraphrase Bailey (1969, 1), the weaker player has 'a sporting chance of winning.' But, in fact, it is in such players *willingness* to play the game – to prove themselves as '*norsk*' – that their inherent '*utlending*' is located.

## Self-Fulfilling Prophecies and Irreconcilable Differences

While the aristocratic logic reserves the position of '*norsk-norsk*' to particular players, the game still prefers to have '*utlendinger*' who are more, rather than less, '*norsk*.' In the aristocratic game, then, there is a mixing of an egalitarian logic with an aristocratic logic. What this entails, Gullestad (2002a, 116) illustrates, 'is defined from a majority perspective, as a requirement for similarity.' This was made clear in a video-interview I had with Adelina, where she told me about how it was to grow up in a very '*norsk-norsk*' neighbourhood.

I was often told that you are like, you are Norwegian Adelina. As if it is good that you're *norsk*; that you are choosing something else. So, they had an expectation, a wish, and they gave me compliments as long as I was not different, as long as I was not *utlending*.

In expecting her to be '*norsk*', the aristocracy are in fact making her an '*utlending*'. We see the paradox of the natural link between policy and nation, where 'unnatural' people must be made 'natural' so as to ensure for national cohesion, yet due to the limited nature of the nation, cannot be made the same. Following this logic, the aristocratic game also differentiates between good and bad '*utlendinger*' on an understanding of how '*norsk*' they are. This dynamic is further illustrated by how Fariah is continuously compared to another female from Somalia.

Fariah: They always compare us. It's the one that will never be *norsk*, and the one that has become *norsk*. I mean had I also worn a hijab, then *nordmenn* would view me differently. They would not have seen me as a *likestilt*<sup>91</sup> *nordmann*, they wouldn't. That's what's difficult with being a Norwegian slash a non-Norwegian.

Nina: What do you mean?

Fariah: I mean that girl, she is integrated – after my standard. She isn't assimilated. She will never get into the Norwegian milieu as integrated; she will never have that opportunity. And, to critique what she is wearing, like I do, it makes it a lot more difficult for her. That puts me in a bit of a predicament all the time. [...] It's important that you differentiate between the user and the ideology right. It's important to differentiate between them, and I think a lot of people struggle with that. So, there are a lot of people that have said I have taken her Norwegian crown, and then I'm like oh my God... I have made it clear that nobody can call hate on her on my name and say that she isn't welcome. Because she is!

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<sup>91</sup> 'Equal'.

Fariah thus experiences being celebrated for being ‘*norsk*’ in her ways, yet the other lady is shamed for being ‘*utlending*’. National belonging is thus not only measured between ‘*norsk*’ and ‘*norsk-norsk*’ players; it is also measured between players of the former category (see Adur and Purkayastha 2013). Nevertheless, both players remain barred from the aristocracy.

While the strategy available to non-national players in the aristocratic game of national belonging is based on their willingness and ability to become Norwegian, the game itself prefigures that such players’ capital can never be considered truly national. Rather than being a question of one’s ability to self-improve, then, being an ‘*utlending*’ in this game is a consequence of the rules and the logics of the game itself. The analogy of a game breaks down, yet again, as the outcome of the game is not made dependent on the skill of players, but rather determined by the rules from the start (see Bailey 1969). What in the official game is understood to be lacking in non-national players – yet which can be achieved – is understood as irreconcilable differences in the aristocratic game. The latter game is thus run on a self-fulfilling prophecy that reproduces its own logic. Interestingly, this seems to mirror another, yet structural, self-fulfilling prophecy that Bendixsen (2018) makes note of in relation to the Norwegian welfare state. While paying taxes is considered a moral duty, asylum seekers are structurally barred from contributing as the state makes it close to impossible to join the labour market. In turn, this further fuels the preconceived ideas that irregular migrants are ‘a source of social problems and expensive welfare’ (*ibid.*, 168). While the game Bendixsen speaks of is more of a structural game which produces an ‘undeserving’ player, the logic in the aristocratic game is strikingly similar. The rules of the game are misinterpreted as the inability or resistance of ‘unnatural’ individuals to play it. The notion of ‘irreconcilable differences’ in the aristocratic game creates an understanding that ‘immigrants stubbornly choose to resist integration into Norwegian ways of being’ (McIntosh 2015, 312, 313), while it is in fact the game itself that makes such ‘integration’ impossible.

The need for uniformity, of what Gullestad (2002b, 60) calls the egalitarian logic, tends to be ‘one of the reasons why the perception of incompatible cultural differences has so quickly entered the common sense.’ Olwig (2012, 4) notes how increasing immigration has thus contributed to a ‘cultural anxiety’, one that can be seen across Europe. As McIntosh (2015, 312) explains in the European context, ‘the dislike for “forced marriage” and “the veil” are grounded in the rising idea of ‘immigrants’ “inability” to adjust to the “values of the West.”’ This reflects the ‘neo-racism’ Balibar (1991, 20-21) speaks of; a form of racism which surrounds ideas of ‘culture’ rather than explicitly the notion of ‘race’. McIntosh (2015, 312) understands it as ‘an ideology distinguished by popular assumption about the *ability* of the

immigrant to be European and the seeming impossibility of accomplishing such a challenge'. As such, we see the rise of discrimination that is 'justified by the existence of irreconcilable cultural differences rather than by hierarchical "races"' (Gullestad 2002b, 59-60; see also Antonsich 2018, 1; Cueppens and Geschiere 2005, 399; Vertovec 2011, 243). As Ghorashi (2009, 85) illustrates in his study of Iranians in the Netherlands, there is a rise of rightist discourses that come to link national and cultural identity in such a manner, portraying immigrants as holders of incompatible 'other' cultures. This 'new culturalist struggle' blames immigrants 'not only for their culture, but also for not distancing themselves from it.' (*ibid.*). While we see a move away from 'race' towards 'culture' the value of one's culture is still grounded in ideas of 'common culture, ancestry and origin' (Gullestad 2002b, 45)<sup>92</sup>. 'Consequently', McIntosh (2015, 314) argues, 'all suspected *innvandrere* (immigrants) are impacted by everyday technologies of racialization that encode phenotype, descent, family name, accent, dress and religion as signifiers of national belonging and citizenship status.' While some become awarded for their efforts and others are not, this award is also another way of making sure the irreconcilable differences stay put.

### National Belonging ≠ Citizenship

National belonging is often equated with citizenship in studies trying to account for 'identity' constructions (see Antonsich 2010; Erdal and Midtbøen 2021; Brochmann and Sedal 2010). While citizenship practices make it seem as though citizenship is enough to belong, I have shown that this is not always the case. Statal-belonging is not always enough to create a sense of national belonging. Or put differently, equality as sameness is not always grounded in ideas of equality as rights. We must recognise that 'entitlements and belonging do not always automatically constitute features of citizenship' (Yuval-Davis 2006, 207). So, while T. H. Marshall (1950, 14) famously claimed that citizenship is 'a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community', and therefore those who lack it are not considered 'full members', the game of national belonging tells a different story. As we saw in Chapter 3, not all citizens are considered full members even in the official game. While formal institutions are crucial in determining the language of belonging, we cannot neglect that being a 'full member of a group'

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<sup>92</sup> The thick perceptions of nationality, seen both in the Dutch and the Norwegian context, may explain why the existence of hyphenated identities remains sparse in such areas (Ghorashi 2009, 86).

[...] is to be *recognized* as such, not simply, and perhaps not mainly, because recognition is a good in itself, but more fundamentally because its absence tends to erode technical entitlements and turn formal equality into a sham. (Crowley 1999, 29, original emphasis).

Although citizenship practices open for the possibility of becoming '*norsk*', we see that informal ideas of national belonging build on a logic that makes becoming '*norsk-norsk*' impossible. That the 'social yield' of citizenship actually 'depends on the social capital, again inherited, which can be used to back it up.' (Bourdieu 1986, 251). This is the reason why my informants make note of the relative insignificance of citizenship; because citizenship simply is not 'enough to generate a sense of [legitimate] place-belonging' (Antonsich 2010, 650; see also Erdal, Doeland and Tellander 2018, 716). It also explains why McIntosh's (2015, 318-319) informant Inaco, despite his efforts to become '*norsk*', was not able to truly belong. While citizenship would make Maria and Adem, and has already made Antonella, 'Norwegian seen from a legal perspective' it does not enable them to become 'more ethnically Norwegian'. 'People will', as Maria noted, 'still look at me and ask me where I am from.' We here see particularly well how the politics of belonging is not only constituted of formal means, but also of informal ones.

What all this implies for the study of belonging, is that we cannot equate citizenship with nationality when studying the latter. While studying naturalisation processes does enable us to reveal the shifting ideas of what constitutes the 'nation', ideas that are often mirrored in the narratives of individual beings, we cannot neglect the fact that such ideas are also reshaped and reformed through the everyday lives of ordinary people. While equality as rights is the grounds upon which an equality of sameness is acquired through a notion of similarity in the first game, it is not the case for the second game. In the latter, similarity actually proves one's lack of equality as sameness. It would also neglect the fact that national belonging is not 'naturally available' but is rather the outcome of a struggle to make it so. Such studies thus risk reproducing the existing power logics, rather than showing 'how people experience and deploy their claims to national belonging in the everyday life.' (Hage 1998). It would miss out on the fact that belonging is both static and dynamic, both an either/or, as well as a more/less. It would miss out that some players may play to become more '*norsk*' but cannot play to become '*norsk-norsk*'; there are both qualitative and quantitative differences in Norwegian national belonging. So, while I recognize that states have 'the material and symbolic resources to impose categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting',

not even the most powerful states ‘monopolize the production and diffusion of identification categories; and those it does may be contested.’ (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 7). It is, after all, through their use that individuals invest common classificatory systems with a particular meaning (see Bourdieu 1984, 479). While Adem, Maria, and Sophie’s lack of citizenship denies them right to legally belong, state practices cannot stop them from *feeling* Norwegian and of claiming that feeling. Neither does possessing citizenship always translate into a legitimated sense of national belonging.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have explored a second level of the game of national belonging in Norway. Unlike the official game, the rules of this game are implicit and constituted in the interaction between national and non-national players. This is also a game of normative egalitarianism, where some individuals must work to become ‘*norsk*’ while others are born so. Rather than being based on an absolute trump card like in the official game, where one is either ‘*norsk*’ or not, I have shown how national capital in this game is of a larger and more ambiguous nature. National belonging is thus not solely a consequence of citizenship. Being ‘*norsk*’ is a matter of more, or less, highly dependent on one’s situational and relational repertoire of capital. The categorical identities of ‘*norsk*’ and ‘*utlending*’ are thus not absolute, but indexical in the aristocratic game; categories that some players swing between. Nevertheless, in this game one’s acquired similarity does not translate into an equality as sameness. This game has a second logic, the aristocratic logic, which ensures the limited nature of the ‘nation’. Trying to ‘fit in’ denotes your inherent ‘unnatural’ position and thus prefigures your exclusion, as those who really belong simply do. Only aristocratic players’ capital is ever truly national.

In the next chapter I will further explore my informant’s quest to ‘fit in’. As we have seen in this chapter, they swing between being ‘*norsk*’ and being ‘*utlending*’ depending on the context and their repertoire of capital. What we will see in the next chapter is that processes of belonging do not always follow the normative trajectory which the game of national belonging demands of them. On the other hand, we see that ‘fitting in’ is also a quest of being ‘*utlending*’ enough. We will see that, rather than simply proving their similarity, many of my informants also draw upon their difference – both in order to be ‘*norsk*’ and to be ‘*utlending*.’ We will also see how they challenge the ideal of the game, and thus also the game itself.

## Chapter 5 – Strategies of Belonging in a Norwegian Context

*Everyone wants to feel a part of something. To feel like we fit in, to belong. – Gabriela*

Until now, we have seen how national belonging is about ‘fitting in’ – of feeling and being considered equal, or equal enough, in relation to a national ideal – something which is achieved through the possession of national capital. In the official game, national belonging – being ‘*norsk*’ – is about being a Norwegian citizen. Some are born into being equals, while others must prove their similarity before being granted the right to be considered so. While engaging in processes of self-improvement grants non-citizens the right to claim national belonging, we have also seen that such an achieved belonging is more precarious than an inherited one. In addition, that a position of dual attachments is a shakier position than that of a single. The official game is thus built on a hierarchy of belonging where the ideal Norwegian is the born, singularly so, citizen, to which others are compared and must compare themselves to. The national ideal of the aristocratic game – the ‘*norsk-norsk*’ – is, however, not necessarily a citizen. Being able to claim a legitimate sense of national belonging in this game is a matter of blood relation and is as such not something that can be achieved, but something that you are born into. This game also demands similarity, yet in this game similarity is not translated into sameness. On the contrary, the normative trajectory ensures the maintenance of the national ideal as something that non-national players must strive to become yet ensures the impossibility of such acts. While my informants also understand belonging as a matter of ‘fitting in’, as feeling and being understood as equal – something that is dependent on capital – belonging is not always a struggle to be ‘*norsk*’.

While the games of national belonging position the national ideal at the end of a scale of normative progression, what is often understood as the aim of ‘integration’, my informants do not always have this in mind. Because matters of belonging are in part ‘dependent on our reproductive imagination’, we may see that ‘there is no fixed or unitary route’ that claims of belonging may take (van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer 2005, 3; see also Lems 2020, 116). As I have already shown, being ‘*norsk*’ is grounded on an idea of holding the same or similar forms of capital as the national ideal; a quest that is easier for some than others. In this chapter, I want to illustrate how belonging is a struggle of ‘fitting in’ and ‘fitting together’ with more than just one social group simultaneously. ‘Being in the middle’ is asserted as a positive, yet demanding, position to be in. Furthermore, I want to illustrate how the pendulum movement between being ‘*norsk*’ and being ‘*utlending*’, established by the aristocratic game, is not

understood as the situational failure of becoming the former. Unlike what the games posit, my informants' narratives reveal that one does not gain 'utlending' capital by failing to obtain 'norsk' capital; 'it is perfectly possible to fail to achieve either sort.' (Ferguson 1999, 107). It is thus possible that some individuals fail to 'fit in' anywhere, something which becomes the case for Malik in certain situations. Belonging is thus a continuous process of trying to fit in, a process that is played to bolster their own positions. While the games require non-national players to prove their similarity, I argue that my informants also play to prove their difference – as a way of claiming to be '*norsk*' and '*utlending*' separately, as well as being both simultaneously. In doing so, they both challenge and reproduce the national game of belonging.

### Highlighting Difference as a way of 'Fitting in'

Throughout my fieldwork, I found among the informants who could not claim to be '*norsk-norsk*' a tendency to amplify difference as a way of asserting a sense of belonging. As well as engaging with processes of becoming 'similar', as we saw in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, many of my informants engage in processes of being and becoming 'different'. As we have seen, struggles for similarity do not always function in a straightforward manner. Neither, I argue, do struggles for difference. On the one hand, in the official game, proving one's similarity is a means to obtain national belonging – albeit a more precarious one at that. On the other hand, in the aristocratic game, proving one's similarity translates into proving one's difference. Mirroring the games, I find difference to be drawn upon by my informants in a struggle to create belonging in national *non-belonging*, as well as to claim national belonging itself. We will see that a sense of belonging may be found in common difference – a difference that is measured against a national ideal – and that being '*utlending*' serves as a point of belonging when put up against those who are '*norsk*' or '*too norsk*'. Inverting the official game, we will thus also see how the former category is transformed into a notion of being 'different enough' – one that very clearly mirrors the 'similar enough' player of the Nordic citizen. Lastly, while difference is a means of asserting one's belonging in national non-belonging, it may also be skilfully used to claim a sense of *national* belonging in a game that translates all attempts of similarity into an inherent difference. I thus want to illustrate how difference – what the game of national belonging considers non-national, and thus non-valuable, capital – is drawn upon to claim a sense of belonging in being '*utlending*', being an '*ekte utlending*' and in being '*norsk*' respectively.



## Finding Belonging in a Shared National Non-Belonging

As touched upon earlier, many of my informants find the question ‘where are you *really* from’ frustrating as it denies them a sense of national belonging. At the same time, some of my informants – such as Zamir, Sophie, and Maria – noted that being called an ‘*utlending*’ could be a good thing too<sup>93</sup>. Zamir framed it in particularly interesting way in a focus group discussion where all three were present:

When people say that I am an *utlending* it makes me a little happy actually. For me that means that they have accepted that *utlending* can also be *jævla godt integrert*<sup>94</sup>, that they speak Norwegian fluently, that they understand the Norwegian society, that they get an education in Norway, and that they do everything that *nordmenn* do and the things that are common in this society.

In his reflection, Zamir comes to reproduce the notion that national capital is not enough to be granted national belonging; while they may *do* everything that Norwegians do, they remain ‘*utlending*’. And as Adur and Purkayastha (2013, 423) notes, ‘the co-optation of the mainstream’s stereotypes as a frame to prove assimilation and belonging inadvertently sustains the very hierarchies embedded in the stereotype.’ Nevertheless, what is interesting is the fact that, while he comes to reproduce his own national non-belonging, he does so in an overtly positive manner. Unlike what the game of national belonging posits, being ‘*utlending*’ is not understood as a failed attempt at being ‘*norsk*’ (as in the official game) or being ‘*norsk-norsk*’ (as in the aristocratic game). Instead, being ‘*utlending*’ comes to have its own value as it functions as a source of belonging in national non-belonging. For this aim, the act of measuring difference is important.

In a video-interview I had with Jens where we talked about *tilhørighet*<sup>95</sup>, he comes to draw on an idea of common difference. Reminiscing about his childhood, Jens said the following.

We could talk about ah man, mum and dad are crazy. Ah mine are too! Do they make you do loads of homework? Mine too! And then you could sit there and feel like, I mean the weird shit that none of your *norske* friends do, we do! So, you feel *tilhørighet*.

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<sup>93</sup> Something that was understood to be dependent on the sender and the received of the message, as well as the context at hand.

<sup>94</sup> ‘Damn well integrated’.

<sup>95</sup> ‘A sense of belonging’.

We here see that a common ground is found on the basis of a ‘fellow weirdness’, where being ‘weird’ is a consequence of not being ‘*norsk*’. ‘*Utlending*’ – a symbol of national non-belonging – becomes a frame of reference where anything that is not Norwegian is given room to create a fellow space of non-belonging. Or, put differently, a sense of belonging is found in a shared national non-belonging. Here, as well as in other instances, notions of belonging seem to emanate from actual and perceived similarities *in relation* to actual and perceived differences from those understood as the binary others – a position that we will see is filled by different individuals at different times. We may note, for example, how the categorical identity ‘*utlending*’ takes shape in relation to the ‘*norsk*’ position. In this way, an ‘us’ is always produced in relation to a ‘them’, so that the content of the two changes in tandem with each other. Processes of belonging are thus inherently situational processes that measures difference.

Yet reasserting a common difference is not always the case for Jens; he also questions the implied similarity that is often assumed when speaking about ‘*utlendinger*’. In the same interview, he came to add the following.

I mean, it’s weird really. When I speak to other people from different places. How it works in Norway, how you become an *utlending*. Because they don’t have any, I mean there is nothing that should bind us together really. But because *utlending* is a thing in Norway. A Turk, a Pakki, a Nepalese, an Indian, and ah, a Sri Lankan, what do they have in common? Nothing. People from Island like. A person from Island that spoke worse Norwegian than all of us! [laughs]. Which was very funny. Because that was shitty Norwegian.

Through this statement, Jens critiques the aristocratic game – yet he does so in the language of the game. We see how he questions the alleged homogeneity of the ‘*utlending*’ categorical identity. But he does so through distancing himself from the Islandic individual on the basis of their lacking proficiency in Norwegian. After all, Jens is more ‘*norsk*’ than him. Being ‘*norsk*’ is thus also about measuring distance.

Nevertheless, ‘fellow difference’ is something Maria also draws upon in a focus group, where the participants were discussing humour. Once again, the ‘Norwegian’ becomes a point of reference for a sense of belonging which is built on difference.

I think the difference between *utlending* humour and [air quotes] “normal” humour is that *utlending* humour is something all *utlendinger* have in common. It’s a way of saying like, that all *utlendinger* have strict parents, and then you joke about that. Like my mother doesn’t want me to, or if my mother knew that I did that, or if I had spoken

to my mother like that then [lifts her arm as to symbolise hitting, laughs] hell would break lose! I was speaking to a friend of mine from Vietnam, and we were like saying that have you seen the way Norwegians speak to their parents? I mean if I had done that then I would never be allowed to leave the house. So, we bonded a lot because there are many things that, I mean things that *utlendinger* have in common no matter what culture they are from, it's just a meeting point.

While highlighting one's difference in relation to Norwegians enables them to create a sense of belonging in non-belonging, it simultaneously reasserts and upholds the established distinction between the categorical identities of '*utlending*' and '*norsk*'. Highlighting difference, however, does not only function to create a divide between the two former categories. While difference is used to claim a sense of belonging in being '*utlending*' in contrast to being '*norsk*', it is also used to differentiate between different types of '*utlendinger*' – something which is reminiscent of the differentiation between non-national players in the official game.

#### The '*Ekte Utlending*': The Creation of a Truly Different Player Position

On some occasions, the notion of 'already similar' players seemed to reproduce itself in my informant's statement, yet with a different purpose. While it presents itself as a normative scale that players draw upon to claim the categorical identity '*norsk*', it is also a scale that is used to produce and claim a new categorical identity. While becoming '*norsk*' in the official game is made easier for players perceived as 'already similar', this 'cultural closeness' becomes the grounds upon which they are excluded from the categorical identity of '*ekte utlending*'. Put differently, this latter category is used to designate players who enter the official, but also the aristocratic, national game with the least force – players whose route to 'self-improvement' is perceivably the hardest. In a focus group where the participants were discussing what it means to be '*utlending*', Maria said the following.

I have a friend, I had to laugh a little because she, she is half Norwegian and half Swedish, and she was like I'm an *utlending*, and I was like ehh no [rubs her hands on her forehead in frustration]. Firstly, Sweden is nearly Norway, and for the other, your father is Norwegian right. So, you've got a lot of the Norwegian culture through him. [...] Sweden and Norway, it's Scandinavia, they follow nearly the same principles! [...]

Zamir brought up a strikingly similar idea in one of our one-to-one interviews. He explains an *utlending* in the following way:

It's as simple as the fact that you have roots, or you come from another country. But really, particularly when I use the term, then I use it more in relation to culture. A lot of people try this whole "Yeah I'm a quarter Swedish" thing, but it's not the same.

Like in the official game, 'Nordic' players seem to be excluded when they talk about who can claim to be a true foreigner. While their position enables them to gain a greater force in the national game, the same logic comes to exclude them from claiming to *really* be 'utlending'. We see how the game of national *non-belonging*, if you please, also functions to 'unmask fakes'. While possessing capital that is akin to national capital in the national game is a source of force in matters of national belonging, such capital comes to assert one's exclusion in other games of belonging. We see how a different form for 'us' is produced in relation to different 'them'; that an '*ekte utlending*' is created in opposition to the 'not *utlending* enough'. Categorical identities that are a source to stigmatisation and humiliation may thus also be a source of empowerment (see Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 31).

It is, however, not only 'Nordic' players who are excluded from being '*ekte utlending*' on the basis of their capital. My informants also mention that American and British players, as well as those who have one Norwegian parent, cannot be a true foreigner<sup>96</sup>. I find the distinction between '*utlending*' and '*ekte utlending*' to be strikingly similar to SSB's dataset on immigrants and their children<sup>97</sup>. Not only do my informants divide the two categories into countries; they also mirror SSB's distinction between individuals who have two immigrant parents and those who have one immigrant and one Norwegian parent. In SSB's dataset on immigrants and their children, only those who have *two* immigrant parents are counted. Those born to one Norwegian parent, and one immigrant parent, instead figure part of the 'general population'. Gullestad (2002a, 42) notes how the relationship between categories used in everyday life and those used in official statistical discourses is often one of dynamism, something which seems to be the case here. Maria repeated the above sentiment a little later on in the same focus group.

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<sup>96</sup> As my informants were aware that I have a Norwegian father and a British mother, jokes were made at my expense that I did not make the cut.

<sup>97</sup> As noted in the introduction, SSB divides immigrants and their children into two blocks depending on the country in question. The one block includes 'The EU27/EEA, United Kingdom, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand', while the other includes 'Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania except Australia and New Zealand, and Europe except the EU27/EEA/United Kingdom' (SSB 2021a).

You might have an Asian mother and a Norwegian father. You're not an *utlending* then. Yes, you might look a little *spicy* [two of the other participants laugh], but you have the same type of knowledge as all other Norwegians. [...] But if you have both your parents from a different country, then you are the one that has to start that line, to start to fit into the culture. And that's, that's when I would say that you are an *utlending*.

Mirroring the aristocratic game, we see how being an '*ekte utlending*' is made dependent on the way in which national capital is accumulated. This position is exclusive for those who are perceived as having to accumulate national capital, in contrast to those who are perceived to inherit it. Yet, in this context, skin complexion seems to play a lesser role, while the *accumulative* nature of cultural competence becomes salient. Nevertheless, the importance of blood ties is reasserted in both my informants, and in SSB's statistics, in determining whether an individual is, or has to become, '*norsk*', and thus whether they can claim to be an '*ekte utlending*' or not.

Furthermore, we may then note that individuals such as Malik sometimes find themselves excluded from both ends of the spectrum. Unlike Rasmus, his '*utlending*' capital of dark skin disables him from claiming to be '*norsk-norsk*' and sometimes even from being '*norsk*'. On the other hand, his social capital of a Norwegian mother disables him from claiming to be a real '*utlending*'. While the aristocratic game highlights his difference in terms of his skin colour, the '*ekte utlending*' game highlights his similarity to the national ideal on the basis of his kinships. The two 'games' thus function on differing logics. At once, Malik is not '*norsk*' enough, nor '*utlending*' enough. This type of social categorisation cannot cope with gradations. Both the idea of being '*norsk*' and being '*utlending*' are built on ideas of 'purity'. So, while the latter category is ascribed the duty of bringing together every individual that cannot be categorised as '*norsk-norsk*', it simultaneously cannot compute with there being some who are both.

#### Beat them by Joining: Exaggerating Difference to Prove National Belonging

Until now, we have seen how highlighting difference distinguishes '*utlendinger*' from '*norske*', as well as '*utlendinger*' from '*ekte utlendinger*', and how such categorical identities become the grounds for a sense of belonging in national non-belonging. As paradoxical as it may seem, difference in the form of being '*utlending*' is also used to claim to be '*norsk*'. One day, when I was scrolling through Instagram, a picture of one of my informants popped up on my phone. In the picture, Zamir was standing in front of what can only be described as a typical Norwegian landscape; steep snow-covered mountains which surround a beautiful blue lake. As

the picture had been geotagged, I could see that the picture was taken at one of Norway's very famous mountain destinations. On its own – other than being aesthetically pleasing – the picture is not necessarily anything of interest to this thesis. However, seen in relation to the caption and the comments, the post made me think. Under what I could only describe as a very 'Norwegian' motif, Zamir had written the phrase '*Norsk statsborger*'. Well-knowing that Zamir has been a Norwegian citizen since birth, I was puzzled by his act of stating the obvious. Comparing it to my own experience I came to question why he would write this, and not something cheesy along the lines of 'living my best life with my friends!'<sup>98</sup>.

Through some quite existential conversations, I came to learn that Zamir has a grand taste for irony – something that truly shined through in his Instagram feed. This post showed nothing less, and what he does is quite astonishing. Through his post, Zamir is playing the Norwegian game of national belonging in both meanings of the word. Using the language of the official game, he makes explicit what the aristocratic game makes implicit, and consequently ends up destabilising the hidden aristocratic logic. By capitalising on the fact that he must prove to be *juridically* Norwegian – something that he has never had to do, as he was born a Norwegian citizen – he ridicules the game. He actively takes part in breaching the taken-for-granted nature of the national doxa. While Zamir challenges the game to the point of, albeit temporary, rupture, his post also illustrates how national ruptures are followed by national repair-work (see Fox 2017; see also Lems 2020).

Although I am not able to say anything about the intent of their comments, I argue that the aristocracy<sup>99</sup> curtail Zamir's attempt at reasserting his 'Norwegianness'. One person had commented 'the hottest Albanian spice you can get', and another had commented something along the lines of 'the most authentic Trønder<sup>100</sup> moustache I've ever seen.' The first comment re-establishes – although arguably in a positive manner – Zamir's difference, while the latter comment re-establishes his need to prove himself, and thus also the aristocrat's 'natural' position. While I find Zamir's picture and caption to tip the power balance, nationalism comes to assert its stability. We may see how – in Bailey's words (1969, 36) – 'leadership is an enterprise', where being 'successful as a leader is to gain access to more [and better] resources than one's opponents', and where to 'attack an opponent is to try to destroy his resources or in other ways to prevent him from having access to them or from making effective use of them.'

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<sup>98</sup> A very common occurrence among my own '*norsk-norsk*' friends.

<sup>99</sup> Their player position of '*norsk-norsk*' is an educated guess.

<sup>100</sup> A local Norwegian categorical identity of a person from Trøndelag.

Being a national is thus not only making sure that one's capital is perceived as valuable; it is also to ensure that the non-national cannot claim any legitimate hold over it.

While Zamir has not responded to the above comments, under another similar post he confronts an institutional and aristocratic player through his caption. In this photo, he is also posing in front of a famous Norwegian mountain destination<sup>101</sup>. Yet, in this photo the caption reads 'Working hard for the citizenship status, Anundsen.' What I can only assume to be his brother, joins in on the joke, commenting 'Congratulation! I was there last year and got my passport!'. Unlike the previous case, there is no national re-pair work going on in the comment section of this photo. Instead, we see how Zamir's ironic measures are strengthened. Some background information is needed to understand this caption. Anders Anundsen is a member of the Norwegian political party FRP. A few years back, when he was the Norwegian Minister of Justice, he was subject to political and popular critique for being responsible for the return of children of refugee status who had lived in Norway for an extended period. Here too we see Zamir playing two levels at once, bringing together official discourses with both the aristocratic and egalitarian logic. On the one hand, as Anundsen had been responsible for returning children who had been in Norway for a long time, Zamir is underlining the precarious situation of being subject to state power. On the other, he is also capitalising on how such individuals must prove their worth not only to the state, but also to aristocratic players. He brings together the two understandings of national capital; the institutionalised form of citizenship and the embodied cultural capital of hiking like 'other Norwegians' do. And he does so, I argue, to prove his Norwegianness – a performance that the likes of Anundsen do not have to perform as they are not what they do but do what they are.

Zamir does a similar thing when he captions another photo of himself and his girlfriend on the Norwegian constitution day<sup>102</sup> with 'Celebrating permit of residency with a *norsk* girl in *bunad*.' What is interesting with this photo is the way in which he purposely creates a distinction between himself and his girlfriend, and how, as a residence permit is not applicable to him as a citizen, he even exaggerates these differences. In this caption we see particularly well how capital is, both explicitly and implicitly, tied to categorical identities that signify belonging. By asserting his girlfriend's categorical identity as 'norsk', in contrast to him as an individual who holds a 'residence permit', Zamir – albeit ironically – comes to underline his illegitimate belonging *in relation to* a 'true Norwegian'. While the aristocratic logic usually

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<sup>101</sup> In his Instagram feed, this mountain motif seems to repeat itself.

<sup>102</sup> The celebration of the signing of the Norwegian Constitution that happened on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1814.

forces *'utlendinger'* to prove themselves, the assertion of being *'norsk'* functions differently for those who are perceived as simply being so. His girlfriend does not become less Norwegian as a consequence of Zamir *'stating the obvious'* in regard to her position, neither does it translate into his position being reasserted as *'utlending'*. On the contrary, it helps to underline the ironic tone of the matter. In all the posts I have spoken of until now, Zamir actively and overtly plays on the need to *'prove himself'* beyond what the game, at least the official one, actually requires of him. With his case in particular we see how dominant discourses may entail a possibility for inventive boundary crossing, and thus *'an escape into radical openness'* (van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer 2005, 4). As Jenkins (1994, 211) notes, jokes such as these *'facilitate categorization where it may not be socially acceptable'*. I argue that this is the only way for Zamir to claim that he is *'norsk'* without reproducing the logic of the game – where proving to be *'norsk'* is proving to be *'utlending'*. Put differently, reasserting his *'utlendingness'* in an overt and ironic manner is a way to escape the Catch-22 of the game.

### Challenging the National Ideal

As well as trying to escape the game, my informants often take part in challenging it. In chapter 3, we saw how Adem, as well as Sophie, challenged the ideal of being juridically *'norsk'*. While Adem retains a wish to become so, he challenges the – albeit legal – relative value of a Norwegian citizenship in comparison to his German one. Sophie, on the other hand, reasserts the legal value of the Norwegian citizenship, yet downplays its value in terms of belonging. Sophie's case needs further exploration and is, as promised, something I will come back to towards the end of this chapter. In chapter 4, we saw how Adrian and Jens came to discredit the value of the aristocrat's national capital, and thus also the idealised position of the *'norsk-norsk'*. I maintain that we should understand the above as counterstrategies of the game of national belonging, where non-national players come to *'valorize the species of capital they preferentially possess'* in order *'to change the relative value'* of their own positions (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99) – both within and outside of the national collectivity (see Yuval-Davis 2006, 205). In tandem with McIntosh (2015, 309, 320) who explores negotiations of belonging among Norwegians of African descent in Oslo, I too find that my informants *'(re)construct the ideological processes through which they are incorporated into understandings of the nation'* by creating a space of belonging where they *'challenge and denaturalize the unexamined category of 'Norwegian.'* I found that many of my informants' statements came to devalue the homogenous and singular categorical identity *'norsk'*, while simultaneously reasserting the



value of having a larger repertoire of capital to choose from – a feature perceived as part of the ‘*utlending*’ position.

The excerpt below is from a focus group discussion where Maria and Zamir come to reproduce the singular and homogenous meaning of the ‘Norwegian identity’ in order to critique it, and to assert the value of their own positions.

Maria: [...] You often think that it has to be so “pure” right: like pure *norsk*, or pure something or other. And you, often you can’t choose, or I mean it would be wrong to choose because then you have to throw away a part of yourself.

Zamir: I often feel that I mean the whole thing when people say to me that ‘but you are Norwegian’, then I feel, to a certain extent, that that’s the optimal. That’s what you must strive for like. That my parents came to Norway just so that I could at some point or other outgrow the Albanian in me, and finally become *norsk*. That’s not how it is at all. It’s not like saying to a professional athlete that congratulations, you’ve been chosen for the Olympic team. That’s not how it works.

Maria: Yes! That’s exactly how it feels!

Zamir: Because it is important to combine, it is fucking important and fucking good to retain both sides, where we have the ability to choose from two fucking great worlds in many situations!

Maria: Yes, it’s like it’s of greater value *å bli norsk*<sup>103</sup> just because you live in Norway. Like yeah, I’m *norsk*, but I’m also this right. But people always try to make their minds up so quickly, I mean [frustratingly waving her hands in the air] there are, I mean you can be in the middle too.

Zamir: And that, that is great! I mean it’s a real strength. A fucking ton of people who you can relate to. Loads of cultures you can relate to. A lot easier. Loads of languages you can learn or understand a hell of a lot easier. It’s compositions and, I don’t know, but I think that children of immigrants and immigrants are maybe immune against these extremist right perspectives, and racist attitudes<sup>104</sup>.

Firstly, Maria begins the dialogue with questioning the idea of a ‘pure identity’, and she does so on the basis that such a notion would warrant ‘throwing away’ a part of herself – something which she finds problematic. This seems reminiscent to Sophie’s decision to abstain from

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<sup>103</sup> ‘To become Norwegian’.

<sup>104</sup> While I cannot be sure as to what Zamir is referring to here, the focus group took place during a time when SIAN (*Stopp islamiseringen av Norge/ Stop the Islamification of Norway*) demonstrations were very prominent in the Norwegian political debate.

becoming a Norwegian citizen. Furthermore, and mirroring Maria's sentiment, Zamir quite explicitly challenges the normative value of the 'Norwegian identity' and thus the national game itself. He then goes on to reassert the value of his own position – a position that is characterised by positively 'being in-between' and thus having a larger repertoire of capital at hand. At the end of this excerpt, Zamir reproduces the idea of the blanket categorical identity '*utlending*' yet does so to reassert its positive value. The above strategies represent counterstrategies that I found repeated in interviews, conversations, focus group discussion, and my informants' Instagram profiles. What we see is that, in order to challenge the value of being '*norsk*', they must reproduce the idea of a homogenous and singular 'national identity'. On the other hand, to reassert the value of difference, they also come to reproduce '*utlending*' as an all-encompassing blanket term.

### Reasserting the Value of Difference

As I argued earlier in this chapter, a sense of belonging is found in being '*utlending*'. And as hinted by Zamir, this categorical identity is often underlined as something positive. While both the official and the aristocratic games of belonging present being '*norsk*' as a prize to be won through players acts 'self-improvement' – of becoming similar – many of my informants also come to claim the value of being and remaining different. Having been given permission by Zamir to follow his private Instagram account, I found myself shamelessly 'stalking' him from the comfort of my own living room. In a picture he posted in 2019, Zamir capitalises on his '*utlending*' capital in an ironic manner to reclaim its value. In a picture where he poses in an adidas t-shirt, arms around his 'Norwegian'<sup>105</sup> girlfriend in Kosovo, Zamir quite obviously uses humour to critique contemporary debates on Islam and Eastern European stereotypes. In the caption, he writes the following: 'ad. Use the discount code "*Snikislamisering*"<sup>106</sup> at [www.adidas.com](http://www.adidas.com) and get a 20% discount on one whole order!' While he does not use the phrase '*utlending*' explicitly, he draws on an established narrative of what an '*utlending*' may entail. In popular youth culture, adidas – characterised by the black tracksuit with three white stripes – has come to symbolise the stereotype of a 'Slav' with the popularisation of the 'Slav squat'. Zamir thus seems to be capitalising on his Eastern European background. Drawing it back to a conversation I had with him earlier, and how he noted that it is nearly impossible to

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<sup>105</sup> Zamir uses the term '*norsk-norsk*' to describe her.

<sup>106</sup> A term introduced by FRP's previous leader Siv Jensen to denote Islam's perceived covert functioning as 'taking over'.

see that Kosovo is a Muslim country<sup>107</sup>, the use of his ‘discount code’ is fascinating. In a highly sharp and reflected manner, Zamir ironizes over the contemporary discourse which posits that the ‘Western’ world is being taken over by a covert and clandestine Islam. Through taking ‘the absolute mickey’, it seems Zamir actively tries to ridicule the negative value associated with being ‘*utlending*.’

In less of an implicit manner, Zamir also asserts the value of being different when it comes to making friends and ‘avoiding getting my arse beaten’ – something which is enabled by his ‘*utlending*’ capital. This is similar to the approach Malik takes. As explained in Chapter 4, Malik’s appearance often relegates him into the disadvantageous position of ‘*utlending*’ in the aristocratic game of belonging. However, he comes to reclaim the value of this capital – and he does so, funnily enough, in relation to the female aristocracy. Talking about the advantages of his background in a telephone interview, Malik said the following: ‘I mean, on the ladies front it is definitely an advantage. There are a lot of *norske* girls that like more exotic dark boys who come from other places.’ It is interesting to see how, in revaluing his capital, Malik explicitly claims to be from another place. Yet in other contexts, where he is claiming his national capital, his being ‘*norsk*’, he comes to stress the fact that he is born and bred *in Norway*. Downplaying and highlighting difference is thus dependent on the aim of the player in any given situation. This illustrates how people may stress and mute different parts of themselves depending on the situation at hand (West and Fenstermaker 1995, 30; see also Goffman 1959). In addition to focusing on the personal value – in this case not being beaten up and being a lady’s man – of being different, they also come to highlight its relational value. And in doing so, I argue that they come to reproduce the hypernym of ‘*utlending*’ which Jens critiqued.

For many of my informants, being ‘*utlending*’ was described as having a type of all-encompassing capital which enables one to understand other ‘*utlendinger*’ – irrespective of what country they come from or are affiliated with through their parents. The notion of being a ‘cultural translator’, or a cultural understander, was vividly present in most of my conversations. Sanjay – a twenty-four-year-old male born in Norway to parents who migrated from India in the 1970s – for one explained in a video-interview that his background enabled him ‘to learn many cultures’ making him ‘very good at adapting to people’ and ‘to the situation at hand’, a notion Adelina too had mirrored in another interview. While focusing on such a cross-national commonality asserts the value of being ‘different from Norwegians’, it does so

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<sup>107</sup> He is here explaining how the religion does not manifest itself *visibly* very clearly in society.

in a way that reproduces the categorical identity of ‘*utlending*’. In two separate interviews, Malik and Zamir explained being ‘*utlending*’ in strikingly similar terms as Sanjay and Adelina.

To come from a different place and to be different from *nordmenn*. To have a different culture. You don’t need to be from another culture – I am not from another culture, but I know a lot of cultures. To be a little different, to be darker in the skin. To have a different name. [...] – Malik

[...] the advantage immigrant groups have is that it is all very similar. Surprisingly similar. And it doesn’t need to be Balkans, it can be Somalis, Afghans, Mexicans – surprisingly similar culture taking into consideration that it should be very different. [...] I mean like culture-wise, if you’re from Kosovo then you can understand the culture of many other countries independent of geographical location, something I find fucking weird, but also fucking good and interesting. – Zamir

These examples are reminiscent to the those of Vestel (2009, 186) who conducted fieldwork in amongst youth on the East side in Oslo. With the example of his informant Miriam, who explains that she is ‘both a little Pakistani, Turkish, Kingston-Jamaican, African and Norwegian’, he argues that hybridization<sup>108</sup> ‘must be seen as an interpretational outcome of the processes deeply embedded in the shared social experiences of multicultural situations as it appears in their place of dwelling.’ (*ibid.*, 197-198). While I do not contend that the local setting is of importance, I find very similar processes to emanate from informants who were raised and live in completely different places in Norway. This phenomenon thus also seems to have a national character, something that emanates from the idea of the ‘*utlending*.’ The ‘sharing of a common *habitus*’ (*ibid.*, 182), then, seems more national than it does local.

Furthermore, it is worth noting how Malik contrasts the ‘*utlending*’ position to the ‘*norsk*’ in order to explain the meaning of the former. Being ‘*utlending*’ is thus again understood to be what being ‘*norsk*’ is not. This comes to create a commonality in difference, which my informants draw upon in order to valorise their positions. We see how they come to value holding a repertoire of different types of national capital based on being ‘*utlending*’, something that stands in contrast to simply being ‘*norsk*’ – and thus having, perceivably so, a limited repertoire. However, this larger selection of capital comes with its own struggle. It is in this struggle I argue that we will find the answer to Sophie’s decision to remain a non-citizen that I questioned in Chapter 3.

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<sup>108</sup> That cultural forms are ‘derived from already existing practices and recombined into new forms of cultural expression’ (Vestel 2009, 181).

### The Act of Balancing Capital

In Chapter 3, we saw how Sophie chooses to remain a non-citizen, basing her choice on the rejection of a singular attachment. This rejection of singular attachment was also present among many of my other informants, as we saw with Maria and her critique of a ‘pure identity’. While the egalitarian logic in the aristocratic game makes the aim of the game to become *more* ‘*norsk*’ and *less* ‘*utlending*’, it seems as though it is more important for my informants to uphold some form of equilibrium. And, as already noted in the introduction of this chapter, failing to become ‘*norsk*’ does not necessarily mean that one is sufficiently ‘*utlending*’. While retaining the position that the game places them in – what I call the pendulum – they reject its normative value. I understand this to be grounded in the fact that such players often play multiple games of national belonging, games that are not always compatible. Maria, for one, noted how she told her mother that she wanted to become a Norwegian citizen, to which her mother had replied ‘remember that you’re Venezuelan.’ While literature makes it seem as though children of immigrants are ‘stuck’ in-between two worlds (see Silverstein 2005, 374), in a liminal space, where they can never please anyone, I argue that many of my informants also find strength in this intermediate position. For such players, the act of balancing is an important part of the constitution of their selves, their loyalties, and their senses of belonging – yet it is not always easy.

In the second focus group, the participants and I watched the trailer to the series *Norsk-ish* together in a video-chat room. They had neither watched the trailer nor the series before, so after watching it together I asked them to discuss what they thought the series might be about. As in many one-to-one interviews, the notion of ‘balancing’ took centre stage. Sophie noted how she thought the series would be about ‘the game rules we as immigrants, or children of immigrants, have to play by, when having multiple cultures.’ Maria built on Sophie’s comments believing it would be about the ‘role conflicts and the expectations people have to you, and the expectations you have to yourself, and that you think others have of you’. Zamir echoed the sentiment yet put it more explicitly: ‘I think it’s about the mask you put on everywhere, where you’re trying to be *norsk* in the one moment and *ekte utlending* in the other and so on.’ The participants actively speak about this balancing act as being dependent on individual choices where one is ‘constantly trying to keep that balance levelled’. If an individual has chosen to be ‘*norsk*’ in one setting, they must choose to be ‘*utlending*’ in another setting. A person must then constantly make sure that they are moving between the two, never remaining one on or the other side for too long.

These choices are not understood to be about trivial matters. As Maria noted, ‘it’s not that I am standing between choosing *pinnekjøtt* or *hallacas* for Christmas dinner. It is more about principles that maybe are really important to your parents, and that you find important because you grew up with them, and the principles that the society around you follows.’ As such they are at once choices that one must make, and choices that have real consequences.

So, it’s a choice you must make, and the consequence that accompanies those choices – sometimes these choices lead to exclusion from different cultures. And well, you must choose. It’s not like you can stand in the middle and just ah I will wear this and then not do it. You must choose sometimes, and it is demanding.

Placed in a context where the different positions are understood as homogenous and mutually exclusive entities, fitting into one categorical identity often means being excluded from the other. What makes such choices even harder, Sophie adds, is that ‘not only do you have to make these difficult choices, but you also have to continuously defend them, both in relation to your parents, families, friends, and the *norske* society in a way.’ What makes belonging difficult for such individuals is thus the fact that they must prove themselves to more than one set of judges; they have stakes in more than just one national game of belonging. As Gullestad (2002b, 47) notes, individuals tend to ‘need relevant others who are able and willing to recognize and support them’ if they are to have their categorical identities, and thus a sense of belonging, approved<sup>109</sup>. For these individuals, relevant others are constituted by more than one social group.

While making choices that are unpopular among one’s parents is often a matter of a young adult’s life, my informants understand such choices as signalling one’s decision to move away from, and thus towards, the different parts of themselves. This type of choice is not something everyone must go through. Maria explains the following.

If you are born, if you are born and bred in Norway and you have Norwegian parents, then you’re not forced to make choices – you might have to take choices that your parents aren’t happy about – but you are not forced to constantly chose between two perspectives.

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<sup>109</sup> Zamir understands this latter point to be mostly dependent on one’s parents, and I thus assume he is speaking about the choices of being ‘norsk’, where ‘you might have parents who understand it, that you have chosen to balance between culture, where you are able to pick the best of both worlds, or you might have parents who have expectations about how you should behave.’

It is interesting to note that, while the aristocratic game makes ‘*utlending*’ capital an automatic attainment through the failure to become ‘*norsk*’, acts of balancing are understood as *choices*. As such, they understand their player position as more difficult than that of the ‘*norsk-norsk*’. This is reflected in Jens’ notion that it is more ‘*chill* to be *norsk* in some situations, as they have fewer rules.’ The balancing act is not always spoken of in relation to others’ expectations, however, it also has to do with one’s own sense of belonging.

In the same focus group, Gabriela, Maria, and Sophie came to speak about how wearing a *bunad* could tip the scale towards being ‘*norsk*’ a little too much. What we see here is that Gabriela’s sense of self makes it wrong to wear this national capital. She is, after all, also Polish, something that would be compromised by wearing a *bunad*, because that is something one does if one is ‘*norsk*’. Like in the aristocratic game, we see how categorical identities and their adhering capital function along a scale that moves individuals from one side to the other, depending on the sum of capital. As she has already ‘given up’ a lot of her ‘Polishness’ by living here, she must ensure that she does not accumulate more Norwegian capital than what can be balanced out with her Polish capital. Sophie is of a similar perception to Gabriela, where being less ‘*norsk*’ has to do with being more of something else.

Gabriela: I don’t feel so *norsk* that I would wear a *bunad* anyway. There is something in the back of my mind that says I am Polish; I want to retain my Polishness. There is that side of me too. I think that would be a bit like a sell-out in a way.

Maria: So, you feel like you would lose, like lose the Polishness then?

Gabriela: Yes.

Maria: Because of wearing a *bunad*?

Gabriela: I mean I don’t think I would feel comfortable. It would be, I mean I live in Norway, and I am here all the time, I am not in Poland that often anymore, and then in addition I am going to wear a *bunad*? That’s just the feeling I get.

Maria: So, you feel like you’re erasing a part of you more and more in a way?

Gabriela: Yes, I am in a way wanting to retain more and more, I am on that stage.

Sophie: Yeah, I completely agree with you Gabriela. I have that relationship with *bunad* too, then I am trying a little too hard to, I mean, I am trying a little too hard to fit into something that isn’t quite me. Not completely anyway. And then you, like you said

Maria, you erase a little; you live in Norway, you grew up in Norway of course it is a culture that is a part of us. But then I feel like I am trying a little extra. Not when I was a teenager, definitely not then, but now I try a little extra at retaining what's mine, what I can't really obtain in Norway, those cultures, the culture I am from.

While Gabriela is not explicitly linking it to any notion of '*utlending*', it may still be considered a form for non-national capital which is put up against national capital. While Gabriela and Sophie differ in terms of other national attachments, they navigate belonging in the same way.

Being able to claim more than one categorical identity, where retaining one's multisided sense of self is dependent on balancing capital was also present in a one-to-interview I had with Sophie. As noted in Chapter 4, many of my informants speak of themselves as divided individuals, in percentile. For Sophie, however, it is not about balancing two, but three types of capital.

We [her and her brother] are always asked what language we think in, or what language we dream in. And I'm like, that's not something I think about. Sometimes I think in Norwegian and speak Norwegian, and sometimes I think in English and speak English. But it's just as natural for me to think in both languages and speak both. That also contributes to the fact that I don't get that, yeah same connection to, it's not the only alternative I have. So yeah, I don't know if I should think that I have a hundred percent and then I use fifty percent of my time doing that and then fifty percent of my time doing this, or of my capacity then. Or that I have a hundred percent, but that this hundred percent in a way grows for each culture that is integrated. Because is it like that, that I give away some, or do I not give away some but rather become more? That's been difficult for me to understand, and that I've juggled a little between the two ways of thinking. That if I am to be *norsk* then I have to give away some of my Malayness, or some of my American side. Or more like, no, why should I? I can be everything at the same time, it doesn't mean anything. But then you think that oh shit, am I *norsk* enough now, or American enough, maybe I need to go a little extra out this 4<sup>th</sup> of July. You feel that you have to compensate a little.

If we take into consideration that one's claim to categorical identities is a matter of the *sum* of capital, we may understand why it is so problematic for Sophie to obtain citizenship. While dual citizenship allows her to retain her American side, her Norwegian repertoire of capital is already larger than the other repertoires as a consequence of her living in Norway, and spending most of her time here. If we go back to the end of Chapter 3, then, we will see that obtaining a Norwegian citizenship would tip the balance of Sophie's sense of belonging. One's repertoire



of capital is thus almost a matter of mathematical precision, where one must retain equilibrium or lose a part of oneself.

### If You Can't Break it, Bend it: The Intersection of Structure and Agency

In this thesis, and particularly so in this latter chapter, I have explored how players in the game of national belonging take part in a struggle 'aimed at persevering or transforming the configuration' of forces – the configuration of valuable capital – between players (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 101). In the official game we saw how non-national players may play to change their relative position of force through attaining citizenship; that they may move from being '*utlending*' to being '*norsk*'. In the aristocratic game, we saw how non-national players may also play to become '*norsk*', yet by doing so they are simultaneously proving their '*utlendingness*'. We have further seen that the 'objective relations between positions of force undergirds and guides the strategies whereby occupants of these positions seek, individually or collectively, to safeguard or improve their position and to impose the principle of hierarchization most favorable to their own products'. Because the nation is perceived as a 'self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned', players' 'aspirations have the same limits as the objective conditions of which they are the product' (Bourdieu 1977, 166). Thus, players who are disadvantaged by the game of national belonging 'cannot but recognize the legitimacy of the dominant classification in the very fact that their only chance of neutralizing those of its effects most contrary to their interest lies in submitting to them in order to make use of them' (*ibid.*, 164-165; see also Dyrliid 2017, 21). In this chapter then, we have seen that the tricky part of the game of national belonging is that it has a tendency to reproduce itself; destabilising strategies often reproduce the ideal against which they fight. The only way to resist the game, is to resist the urge to play it.

It is only when the dominated have the material and symbolic means of rejecting the definition of the real that is imposed on them through logical structures reproducing social structures (i.e. the state of the power relations) and to lift the (institutionalized or internalized) censorship which it implies [...] that the arbitrary principles of the prevailing classification can appear as such [...] (Bourdieu 1977, 169).

In a world where nation-states are taken-for-granted, both as practical and ideological institutions, such a task is *close* to impossible. Thus, while the existence of national games is never certain, they are in fact very durable.

While the game creates limits within which players must act, we have also seen that it cannot determine their actions. Subjectivities thus ‘emerge not simply as a mechanical effect of structure [...] but as a form of self-fashioning in which there is room for subversion, ambiguity, and play’, while recognising that ‘such self-fashioning does not imply free creation by an individual’ (Ferguson 1999, 94; see also Butler 1990; Goode and Stroup 2015). While it is difficult, then, individuals may destabilise the game of national belonging to their own advantage (see Foucault 1998, 101). Within the limits, they may play by their own rules (see Diccio-Bloom and Gibson 2010, 268; see also Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Or, put differently, they may bend the existing rules towards their own goals. While the game of national belonging shapes the way in which individuals navigate their position in a national space, it cannot predetermine where belonging is found. As well as critiquing what it means to be ‘*norsk*’, my informants come to reclaim what it means to be ‘*utlending*’. They come to strengthen their ascribed position through flipping the categories which they are forced into by the game, and thus making being ‘*utlending*’ resourceful rather than halting. And who is to say, whether bending a rule might not eventually break it.

### The Limits of the Game

The analogy of a game has been fruitful in understanding processes of national belonging, yet it does have its limits. These limitations were made visible to me through the movement between empirics and theory, and thus became evident in retrospect. I have, throughout the thesis, made notice of the limitations in passing. I will now revisit them to explain them further. While there may be more, I found six separate – yet interlinked – limitations. They are as follows: 1) the game of national belonging is a forced game, 2) it is anything but trivial, 3) the outcome is certain, 4) it is unequal, 5) the referee takes part in the game, and 6) the prize is not agreed upon.

The first of the limitations was made clear in the official game, and especially so with the case of Sophie. While the game seems benign in that it enables non-national players to change the relative force of their position, the flipside is that should you choose to refrain from playing you must still play yet from a disadvantaged position. If you do not agree to play to become ‘*norsk*’ you are forced to play as an ‘*utlending*’ anyway. Instead of having to comply with the rules of citizenship legislation, Sophie must comply with the rules that follow her residence permit. These are rules that continuously assert her non-belonging. In this game we

also see the power of the state to define; while she ticks the boxes, she will remain in a disadvantaged position as long as she does not submit to the rules of the state.

Sophie's case also leads us to the second limitation. As Bailey (1969, 1) states, games are trivial in character. However, as the official game reveals, national belonging is not a matter of 'trivial pursuits.' On the contrary, it has, and may come to have, life changing consequences. If players like Sophie give, by choice or accident, the 'wrong information', the state can, if it so decides, deport them. To paraphrase Bailey (*ibid.*), then, unlike a game, dejected losers are not comforted, and puffed-up victors are not deflated in the game of national belonging. On the contrary, losers may be sent away and victors – at least those who are born so – continue to enjoy the fact that national belonging is more than just a game.

While the third limitation is also present in the official game, it is best illustrated by the aristocratic game. DiCicco-Bloom and Gibson (2010, 268) note that one of the reasons why the analogy has its limits is because many social outcomes 'follow from initial inequalities more than from skill and the rules of play'. Due to the workings of an egalitarian and aristocratic logic, the game of belonging functions as a bobby-trap; it presents non-national players with a route to victory yet hides the fact that this is also a route of defeat. Becoming '*norsk*' is remaining '*utlending*' – albeit, sometimes, a more 'tolerated' one at that. The game of national belonging is thus less of a competition with a prize than a fight with an objective (see Bailey 1969).

This leads us to the fourth limitation, namely that the game is unequal. We may note how, while the official game makes it – at least in theory – possible for all types of non-citizen players to 'win', it makes it easier for Nordic players. The official game is thus unequal in terms of non-national players' starting positions. The aristocratic game, on the other hand, is more profoundly unequal. In this game non-national players are lured into a game they cannot win. In addition, both games are unequal in the fact that they distinguish between players who must prove themselves and those who simply are who they are, where the latter position comes to hold a superior value.

While the referee in the official game – the state – does not take part in the struggle, the referees of the aristocratic game do. Bailey (*ibid.*, 32) notes that, for it to be a game, the referee must be 'clearly and ambiguously *not* one of the players.' This is thus the fifth limitation. While national players do not necessarily *play* – as in having to prove their similarity – the game of national belonging, they must ensure its existence. Values, such as the value of national belonging, have to be 'constantly tended and re-invigorated', or else, they fade (*ibid.*, 21). As we have seen, the referees get drawn into the contest when other players try to 'eliminate the

very game which they are claiming to referee' (*ibid.*, 32). This was the case with the comment section on Zamir's Instagram post.

The final limitation has been revealed in the current chapter. We have here seen that the 'rules of social life are rarely as clear as those of a game' (DiCicco-Bloom and Gibson 2010, 248), and that social interactions are not always 'motivated by thoughts of reward' (Bailey 1969, 36) – at least not those presented as valuable by the game itself. We have thus seen that, while the game of national belonging presents itself as a normative trajectory, players do not always agree that the prize is worth winning. As Bailey (*ibid.*, 21) notes, 'the restraint upon manoeuvre which distinguishes a competition from a fight entails that the contestants have some values in common: they agree not only about prizes but also about legitimate tactics.' As we have seen, the game cannot hinder individuals from finding belonging in national non-belonging, nor can it – as we saw with Zamir – always stand upon against the creative will of non-national players. So, what happens when the prize is not agreed upon? What happens when national belonging is not given the value by its competitors that the game prescribes it? What happens when players are forced to play a game that they do not want to win? What if, in Bourdieuan terms, the players do not agree that the game is worth playing? The game would cease to exist. The problem is, however, that no matter how much individuals reject the game itself, they cannot get past the fact that it is – in some respects – a forced game.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have focused more explicitly on my informants' strategies of belonging. We have seen that their sense of belonging is also understood as a process of fitting in and of being equal. In addition to capitalising on similarity – something that both the official and aristocratic games require for individuals to be '*norsk*' – we saw how Jens, Zamir, and Maria highlight difference as a way of 'fitting together'. Belonging in national non-belonging was drawn upon against individuals who were considered equal or similar in the national game. While Jens speaks of a sense of belonging in relation to 'Norwegians', Zamir and Maria come to produce a new and more exclusive notion of an '*ekte utlending*' that also excludes individuals who are perceived as too similar to that of the Norwegian ideal. Or, put differently, this categorical identity comes to exclude those who are not considered '*utlending* enough'. However, as we saw with Zamir, difference is not only used to create a sense of belonging in national non-belonging. It is also skilfully used to claim national belonging in a game where all attempts at being similar are translated into one's difference.

Another strategy which I found present among my informants was the tendency to challenge the national ideal and its normative value. In Maria and Zamir's dialogue they come to critique the idea of a 'pure identity', as well as the superior value of the Norwegian categorical identity. At the same time, they come to assert the value of their own position; the strength in being *more than just* 'norsk' on the basis that it grants them a wider repertoire of cultural capital. In order to critique the national ideal, however, they must reproduce its essential and singular character. Through asserting the value of being 'utlending' on the grounds of understanding a wider range of people, they also come to reproduce the all-encompassing category of 'utlending'. Furthermore, while the game of national belonging makes being 'norsk' a matter of normative progression, and thus makes the attainment of 'utlending' capital an automatic outcome of failing to, or resisting from, accumulating national capital, obtaining 'utlending' capital is for some of my informants also understood as a struggle. A sense of belonging is thus not always about being and becoming 'norsk' enough; it is just as much about ensuring that one is 'utlending' enough. Many of my informants thus speak of a need to balance their capital.

The strategies of belonging presented in this thesis show particularly well the intersection between structure and agency. The examples have shown how players must play within the limits of the game, yet that there is room for creativity within these limits. The difficulty lies, however, in challenging the game without reproducing its terms. We have seen that even skilful attempts at destabilising the game are met with a national repair-work that reasserts the status quo. Furthermore, I revisited the limits of the game analogy, highlighting six points where it breaks down. The game of national belonging is thus not a game in the sense that it is forced, not trivial, unequal, with a certain outcome, the referee takes part in one of the games, and the prize is not agreed upon.

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## Chapter 6 – Conclusion

*The number of utlendinger is rising. Our foundational perception seems to be that since we have been so kind as to let you in, you have to become like us as quickly as possible and rid yourself of any characteristics that we find insulting. But at the same time, you have to understand that you'll never be like us, because you are after all completely different. This perception is riddled with elements of conflict: we are natives, you are utlendinger – never forget. We live here, you were allowed to come here, remember that. We are better than you – try to become like us – pray and work. But don't think you can become like us, because you are not a nordmann (Ofstad 1991, 240, in Gullestad 2002a, 79, own translation).*

In this thesis, I have argued that ideas of belonging are created through egalitarian processes that seek to downplay and highlight similarities, as well as differences, that exist between people – of making people *seem* equal. Belonging is as such about ‘fitting in’. Being based on an egalitarian process, defining what it means to belong – in which ways one is equal to another – is simultaneously to define what it means to *not* belong. Processes of belonging are in this way about drawing boundaries between the inside and the outside, a matter of either/or. At the same time, however, the grounds upon which these boundaries are drawn are never a constant, and some may always be considered more similar than others. Belonging is therefore also simultaneously a matter of more, or less. It is thus important to take into consideration both the boundary that separates those who belong from those who do not, as well as the content upon which the boundary is built to see that some may belong more than others. I take hierarchies of belonging to emanate from processes that are normative and egalitarian; processes that produce an ideal against which one's sense of belonging must compete. For some individuals, it is less of a competition than a quest of maintenance – of maintaining the value of the ideal, and of legitimising their natural hold of it. For some it is a short-term battle of being considered good enough by the state. And for others, it is a continuous battle of being good enough, of proving one's worth against an ideal that seems plausible, yet which is founded upon a logic that predetermines such individuals' failure. For these individuals it may also be about challenging the value of the ideal itself, or a case of working to change the content so as to create a new ideal of which one can be a part.

Seeking to illustrate the production and functioning of hierarchies of belonging, I set the scene by illustrating my own, albeit disciplinary, feeling of ‘not good enough’ which was spurred on by the normative ideals of the ‘exotic’ and of the limited sense of participant observation that exists in much anthropological writing. I thus criticise the normative sentiment which comes to implicate its own kind of equality as sameness, where anything but that which

lives up to the ideal is cast off as a ‘lesser-than’ anthropology. Instead, I argue that the productive character of the discipline is to be found in the scholars’ ability to meet the field; to move between theory, methods, and empirics in a manner that resembles a, albeit far from gracious, dance of roundelay<sup>110</sup>. While this process often entails taking one steps forward and three steps back, it is from this latter movement that we truly find our way forward. I have further experienced the importance of being open to challenging our own preconceived ideas – both in terms of the answers we seek and the methods we use to discover them.

Hierarchies are not only an issue of the anthropological discipline; they are also present in notions of Norwegian national belonging. While the above quotation is originally written about the Nazi-ideology, I find the game of national belonging to function on strikingly similar logics<sup>111</sup>. In the official game, national belonging is a matter of statal-belonging, of being equal in terms of rights. In this game we see how statal-belonging is intrinsically connected to an idea of national belonging, where being a citizen is understood as belonging to both sides of the coin. You either are, or you are not, ‘*norsk*’ on the basis of being a citizen or a non-citizen respectively. However, through naturalisation processes I show that being a citizen implies something more than being able to vote at parliamentary elections. I argue that the meaning of national belonging lies latent in the principle of *jus sanguinis* and thus also in an idea of equality as sameness. While those who are born citizens are equal in terms of rights, they are also presumed to be equal in terms of a defined set of cultural capital. So, while the official game enables individuals to transcend the boundary of belonging, it requires – among other things – that they become more ‘*norsk*’ in their ways. Because they cannot be equal in terms of sameness before they are equal in terms of rights, they must prove that they are *similar* enough – a similarity that the authorities themselves define through their linguistic and cultural knowledge requirements. Yet, as we have seen, some non-citizens are understood to be more similar than others from the get-go.

Although the official game prescribes different routes for different categories of non-citizens, it still seems as though national belonging is a matter of either/or on this level. However, I have shown that there is an even more covert hierarchy of belonging between citizens themselves that distinguishes between naturalised and born citizens. Through dual citizenship, I have shown that the idea of a singular and born-into statal-national belonging

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<sup>110</sup> See Wadel (1991) and Spradley (1980) on the analogy of a dance.

<sup>111</sup> It is also strikingly similar to ‘*Janteloven*’ – ten commandments that repeat the notion that *you* should not think that *you* are worth anything in comparison with *us* – which first appeared in Aksel Sandemose (1933) *En flyktning krysser sitt spor*.



remains the ‘true’ form of belonging. Because revoking the Norwegian citizenship is made easier in cases of dual citizenship, single citizenship holds – at least in a legal sense – superior status. Yet, it is not only in cases of dual citizenship where the Norwegian citizenship may be revoked; it may also be withdrawn from those who naturalised based on ‘false pretences.’ If we then note that the born citizen does not need to prove themselves in the same way, and as such cannot be ‘caught’ by the authorities for giving false information, we may see that there indeed exists a hierarchy of belonging between individuals who are born into citizenship, and those who attain it. It is also interesting to note how certain ‘identities’, such as the Somali and the Afghani, are particularly caught out by the ominous and atemporal possibility of having their presented selves questioned.

In the aristocratic game there is also a hierarchy of belonging, and to some degree it mirrors the official game. On the one hand, it builds on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, and on the other it is not based on the principles of equal rights. In this game the notion of equality centres around an imagined sameness instead. A national is not necessarily a person that can claim a legitimate sense of statal-belonging, but a person who can authenticate their national capital based on their ancestral ties to other Norwegian nationals. With these blood ties, as in the official game, comes an assumed and implied perception of common cultural capital. While being Norwegian is based on the ownership of national capital, being a ‘true’ national is a consequence of how said capital is perceived to have been accumulated. Only those for whom national capital is an innate essence, a matter of hereditary style, may be considered aristocratic and thus ‘*norsk-norsk*’. National capital gains its nationalness from its owner; it is not something that can be achieved. Nevertheless, parallel to the first board, the second game also functions on a normative egalitarian logic that positions the ‘*norsk-norsk*’ as an ideal to which one should strive to be like. Individuals not part of the aristocracy may thus work to become more ‘*norsk*’ in their way through the accumulation of cultural capital. Nevertheless, the aristocratic logic ensures that all attempts at becoming equal are futile. Proving one’s worth is in this game also proving one’s non-belonging. So, while the official game is about being similar enough, the aristocratic game is about the impossibility of being just that. Both games thus require similarity yet only one rejects the possibility of sameness.

While each game has its own rules with different strategies, they do not determine players’ tactics. In the official game, we saw how Adem remains a juridical ‘*utlending*’ with limited statal-belonging longer than the time required by the state in order to become ‘*norsk*’. While being a Norwegian citizen is important to him for his sense of belonging, he is not willing to give up another part of him in return. This has until now been a tactical choice that he grounds

on the superior practical value of a having a German passport over having a Norwegian one. Because he previously would have had to rescind his previous citizenship, Adem's quest to become '*norsk*' was deliberately delayed to his own advantage. Now that the rules of the game have changed, he can 'finally be both'. While Sophie follows a similar tactic to that of Adem, she bases it on a different logic – she seems to be playing according to the old rules. For her, the attainment of a Norwegian citizenship is problematic both if she rescinds her previous citizenship in return *and* if she obtains the Norwegian citizenship alongside the American one. Unlike for Adem, having two legal belongings does not mean that she is both; rather, due to her already very Norwegian cultural capital, such an addition would translate into the relegation of the other sides of her self. So, while the official game follows a normative and egalitarian trajectory, players do not always follow the prescribed route, nor do they necessarily agree to the value of it.

Because the aristocratic game follows a different logic and is built on cultural capital that is more ambiguous and of a larger quantity than that of the official game, player strategies and tactics also differ. In this game, it is not the authorities that are the judges but the aristocracy; the '*norsk-norsk*' are the only ones that can claim a legitimate sense of national belonging and so they are simultaneously its gatekeepers. This position of 'natural' belonging is itself not natural, but the outcome of such players' struggles to make it seem so. Unlike the official game where winning is defined by a structuring institution and which remains a 'personal' affair, we see how the aristocratic game is founded on different players competing against each other. For the players who are not part of the aristocracy, the game prescribes strategies of national belonging that are in fact strategies of national non-belonging. So, when Fariah showcases how she is more 'Norwegian' than 'Norwegians', she is actually proving her foreignness. Players may thus play to become more '*norsk*' yet remain '*utlending*' as a consequence of it. Nevertheless, not even the most powerful game is able to foresee and circumscribe the creativeness of its players. Jens and Zamir are particularly crafty in this regard and seem well aware of their own repertoire of destabilising tactics.

For individuals who are not part of the aristocracy – regardless of their citizenship status – the game of national belonging is a continuous struggle to 'fit in.' The struggle is not only about being '*norsk*', however, it is also about being '*utlending*' enough. For my informants, then, belonging is not always a case of 'normative progression'; it is being able to belong to more than one social group. In the last chapter, I have shown a variety of strategies employed by informants in their quest to belong. I have shown how highlighting difference is a way of 'fitting in' both in terms of being '*utlending*' and of being '*norsk*'. On the one hand, we have

seen how Maria and Zamir draw on pre-existing ideas of ‘cultural closeness’ to create an exclusive notion of belonging which is grounded on national non-belonging – the production of the *ekte utlending*. They thus proclaim that some ‘*utlending*’ players are not truly ‘*utlending*’ because they are too akin to that of the Norwegian ideal. On the other hand, we saw how Zamir capitalises on his difference to claim his Norwegian national belonging. Because the aristocratic game – the only game he needs to play due to his citizenship status – is a catch-22 game where proving one’s national capital is proving one’s ‘*utlendingness*’, Zamir instead draws on, in an ironic fashion, his *utlending* capital to reclaim his position as ‘*norsk*’.

As well as discrediting the position of the aristocracy as we saw in the case of Jens and Adrian, players may also use tactics that challenge the game itself. I have shown how some of my informants come to challenge the national ideal both in terms of its singularity and its supposed normative value. Through irony, Zamir destabilises the negative value associated with being ‘*utlending*’ and reasserts the positive aspects of it. In terms of the latter, we saw how some of my informants come to adopt the notion of ‘cultural translators’ to make a perceived common difference into a valuable community of difference. Nevertheless, because this struggle to ‘fit in’ is not a normative trajectory from A to B, belonging is also an act of balancing for many of my informants. Based on a similar logic to that of Sophie and her decision to remain a juridical ‘*utlending*’, Gabriela withstands the use of a *bunad* to retain her Polishness. Belonging is as such about balancing one’s repertoire of cultural capital so that one side is not heavier than the other.

In the writing of this thesis, I found the analogy of a game particularly fruitful. However, while it has been good to think with, there are limitations to its use – limitations that my empirical material made me aware of *post factum*. Firstly, a game does not have a predetermined result; while being open for prediction, it is an uncertain outcome of the actions of players. Yet, as we have seen, the outcome of the game of national belonging is more a consequence of initial inequalities than the skill of players. The official game predetermines differential routes to success for different players, while simultaneously retaining the power to annul one’s achievement at any point in time. On the other hand, the aristocratic game predetermines certain player’s failures. The game of national belonging is thus less about competing for a prize, than about maintaining, reproducing, challenging, and reframing the prize itself. In addition, the prize is not always agreed upon. It is about tactically working to ‘fit in’ – something that is dependent on the player and their repertoire of capital. In terms of the official level, we saw that it differs from a game because games are trivial, while matters of legal status are not. The aristocratic game cannot be considered a game because in this game,

some players also act as referees. While there are limitations to the analogy, I nevertheless retain that it has been a fruitful idea to think with; it is, after all, from the contradictions between my empirics and my frame of analysis that I have discovered my findings.

I have shown that, while national (non-)belonging is a matter of either/or, it is also a matter of more, or less. This underlines the importance of exploring both the boundaries themselves that are drawn between the outside and the inside, and also the content upon which they are built. I have further shown the need for exploring issues of national belonging in a manner that criss-crosses ‘ethnic enclaves’, and where individuals who are considered part of different groups actually come to deploy similar tactics on the basis of similar repertoires of capital. On that note, I must mention that the study could have been strengthened further with the inclusion of individuals who are considered part of the majority. I have also highlighted how similarities exist beyond the local setting of which each individual is part; that similar processes of inclusion and exclusion take part across Norway. On this basis, I see the need for research that is wider both in terms of groups and of geography if we are to explore the categories ‘*norsk*’ and ‘*utlending*’ in a more fruitful manner. One way of doing this, is to take the negotiation of selves in cyberspace more seriously. Only the future can reveal whether future generations may escape the game, and thus be able to claim a legitimate sense of being ‘*norsk-norsk*’. Or, whether the latter position remains an unachievable ideal, or even an ideal at all.

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