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Mobile Livelihoods: A Case Study of Lithuanian International Long-Haul Truck Drivers

Will Gordon

The aim of this article is to explore how Lithuanian international long-haul truck drivers construct their livelihoods through their experience of work, home, and everyday life. I argue that livelihoods among these mobile professionals can be understood through the theoretical framework of mobile livelihoods, a framework created by Karen Olwig and Ninna Sørensen (Olwig, Sørensen 2001) and through the emic frameworks of 'kasdienybė' ('way of life') and 'namai' ('home').¹ Empirical findings come from six months of field research traveling with Lithuanian truckers throughout Europe and interviews and observations conducted in a logistics firm in Kaunas, Lithuania.

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Introduction

We live in a globalized world in which goods, ideas, labor, and capital are flowing across national boundaries at a rate that is unprecedented in history. Many scholars agree that this modern era of globalization is characterized by increased and widespread mobility and the rate at which this process is accelerating (see Massey 1994; Hannerz 1996; Appadurai 1996). Many contemporary scholars in Anthropology have argued for a mobile understanding of culture (see Clifford 1997; Massey 1994), critiquing the traditional notion that culture is grounded in place. James Clifford (Clifford 1997) asserts that to assume that cultures are rooted in geographic location creates a false dichotomy between the local and the global, labeling the former as static and the latter as in motion. Both roots and

¹Note to the reader: all quotes translated into English are the author's translation unless otherwise specified.

routes are interrelated because stories of fixed origins and stories of mobility exist alongside each other (Clifford 1997). Clifford argues that the ethnographer's representation of a culture should be informed more by an understanding of the places of mobility, the *routes* that travel through a community, rather than the *roots* by which culture is traditionally defined. One approach to studying this idea of roots and routes and how the two relate to people and culture is through studying the lives of mobile professionals – those whose daily experience is in motion.

This article explores how Lithuanian international long-haul truck drivers construct their livelihoods through their experience of work, home, and everyday life. Lithuanian international long-haul truck drivers are working professionals whose specific social contexts require the understanding of certain emic frameworks complimented by theoretical approaches to grasp how work, home and everyday life exist in mobility. I argue that their livelihoods can be understood through the theoretical framework of mobile livelihoods, a framework created by Karen Olwig and Ninna Sørensen (Olwig, Sørensen 2001) and through the emic frameworks of 'kasdienybė' ('way of life') and 'namai' ('home').

Lithuanian truckers' work and everyday life are highly integrated with one another. The emic term *kasdienybė* embraces this duality of work and everyday life. The truck cabin serves as both a workspace and a living space. Work strategies, interactions with bosses and negotiating relationships with other truckers are also key components to the mobile livelihoods of Lithuanian truck drivers. For Lithuanian truck drivers, 'home' refers both to the experience and construction of home in the truck cabin and in everyday life experiences; home also refers to both an idea of home as family, a place where one belongs, and the physical place that one returns to at the end of each journey.

Research Methods

My field research with and focusing on Lithuanian truck drivers spanned a 6-month period from September 2010–March 2011. Research methods and types of research conducted can be divided into several types: trucker 'streaming interviews', or extended travel with truck drivers, logistics 'go-alongs' and semi-structured interviews, and participant observation.

Two extended trips were taken with truck drivers. The first was with a trucker traveling for 6 days (September 1st–6th) from Druskininkai, Lithuania, to Hamburg, Germany and back to Kaunas. The second was a 10-day trip (November 10th–19th) with a trucker traveling from Klaipėda, Lithuania, to Modena, Italy and back to Kaunas. In both cases, I traveled and lived with the trucker as

he carried out his work life. We slept and made all meals in the truck. Traveling with a trucker provides an ideal setting to 'interview' a truck driver. Whenever the truck driver was not busy with work-related tasks, we were talking. In this sense, the fieldwork is like a continuous interview, a constant conversation that begins when you get into the truck and ends when you hop out of the truck for the final time. Such in-depth information-gathering would be quite difficult in the normal interview setting both because the trucker is rarely home and would rather spend time with family than giving an interview, and because so much of his work life is indescribable.

Between February 1 and March 15, 6 days were spent at a large logistics firm in Kaunas ('Company B'). Work during this research period consisted of participant observation, but also included interviews with the Company Executive Director, Human Resources Directors, Transport directors/employees, as well as employed truck drivers. Interviews with truckers at this firm were conducted both in formal (office) settings as well as informal settings, in the truck yard and in the truckers' own cabins.

Research Subject: Lithuanian International Long-Haul Truck Drivers

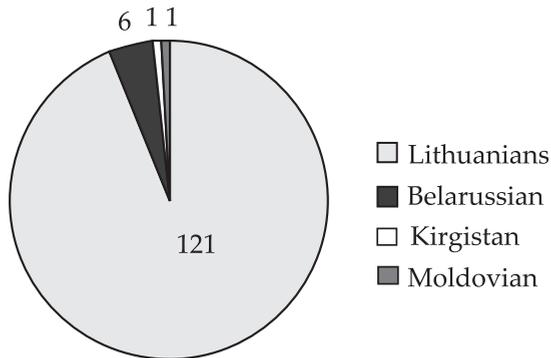
With the gaining of independence and the opening of Lithuanian borders to the West in 1991, joining the European Union in 2004, the transport of goods between Eastern and Western Europe through Lithuania has increased rapidly and logistics and transport industries in the country growing at a striking speed. In this business climate, the truck driving profession became increasingly appealing as the demand for drivers soared and salaries rose as logistics firms moved quickly to meet demand (Figure 1). International Long-Haul truck drivers are drivers who fit two criteria: a) these drivers travel for a minimum of 5–6 days at a time, living in their truck and on the road, and returning to their place of residence in Lithuania once or twice per month; b) some of the truckers included in this study travel for even longer, for example truckers who travel to Western Europe via bus for 6–8 weeks at a time, living in their truck for this whole period, then returning home for a period of 1–2 weeks.

To get a sense of the Lithuanian truck driver demographic, we can look at Company B's data as a microcosm of the Lithuanian trucking industry. Company B is one of the ten largest transport firms in Lithuania. Currently there are 129 truck drivers employed, with over 100 freight trucks. Drivers' age ranges from 23 to 64 years. Drivers interviewed for this research ranged in age from 24–54 years. Of the 129 drivers, 128 are men. Of those drivers, ethnicity broke down as follows:



Figure 1. Lithuanian Trucker. A trucker secures his recently loaded cargo with freight straps and tarp curtains. Raimundas, truck driver from Druskininkai. Hamburg, Germany. September 4th, 2010 (Photo by Will Gordon)

Company 'B' employed truckers by nationality



All of the informants from my field research were Lithuanian-born Lithuanian citizens. Another characteristic of the truck driver profession is the high turnover rate. The table below illustrates this trend quite well:

Company 'B' drivers by date of hire

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Drivers	4	3	3	3	5	8	16	11	16	45	15

In looking at this table, you notice that 76 of the 129 drivers currently working at this company were hired in the past two years (2009–2011). Only 16 drivers have worked for Company B for 5+ years. Company B Director, HR, and truckers all agreed that the primary reason for this is fluctuating salaries and unpredictability of the work.

Theoretical Approaches

Mobile Livelihoods: A Theoretical Approach

In their introductory chapter of *Work and Migration*, titled 'Mobile Livelihoods: Making a Living in the World,' Olwig and Sørensen assert that mobile lives should be understood in a way that a) demands further specification and refinement of the concept of transnationalism and b) broadens the scope of research *beyond* issues of transnationalism (Olwig, Sørensen 2001: 2). Olwig and Sørensen argue for *livelihoods* as a possible framework for understanding mobile lives because it connects to both social and economic aspects of one's life, both livelihood to mean making a living, but also as a course of life, lifetime, kind or manner of life. This new framework posits mobility as a 'place' in and of itself. 'Moves do not involve displacement, but rather multi-placement, an expansion of the space for personal and familial livelihood practices in two or more localities.' (Olwig, Sørensen 2001: 6). In this approach, the person 'in-transition' from one place to another is not placeless, but experiencing several places at once. They argue that the primary meaning of 'place' refers to one's place in society, and that the term refers secondarily to physical place (Olwig, Sørensen 2001: 8).

The authors argue that mobility can be viewed as 'an integral aspect of life trajectories of individuals and groups of people, and not as an abnormal interruption to normal stationary life...' (Olwig, Sørensen 2001: 8). To suggest that a 'mobile livelihoods' approach can reshape the concept of 'home' as well as break down the dichotomy of 'mobility as temporary and not ordinary' vs. 'stationary as ordinary' is extremely powerful. Says Liubinienė: 'This (*mobile livelihoods*) concept allows us to discuss mobility as an integral part of individual and group life-trajectories, and not as an 'abnormal' break from normal, sedentary life' (Liubinienė 2009: 4 (my translation)).

Mobility and Place

Trinh T. Minh-Ha says it quite clearly when he asserts that '...figuratively, but also literally speaking, traveling back and forth between home and abroad becomes a mode of dwelling' (Minh-Ha 1994: 14). In *Space, Place, and Gender*, Massey argues against positing the modern, mobile, uprooted world against a

past era when community was once connected with place. Massey argues that we must rethink our assumptions about 'place':

Can't we rethink our sense of place? Is it not possible for a sense of place to be progressive; not self-closing and defensive, but outward-looking? A sense of place which is adequate to this era of time-space compression? (Massey 1994: 148).

Massey reiterates Clifford's point that 'place' does not always mean community, and that 'mobility' does not mean lack of sense of 'place' or 'community'. Massey's discussion of community and sense of 'place' brings us back to the question of how culture and community are related, if one indeed implies or assumes the other. Massey and Clifford also bring up the question of how space and mobility are not opposites, but can exist together – that people experience space on the road. Long-haul truck drivers are people whose daily life is mobile, yet, in a very defined space with certain meanings attached to it. Indeed, the meaning of space to truck drivers is closely related to a sense of feeling at home.

Anisa Zvonkovic et al.'s chapter 'The Ebb and Flow of Family Life: How Families Experience Being Together and Apart' focuses on 'the microstructural aspects of how marital partners experience their time together and apart' (Zvonkovic et al. 2001: 135). Zvonkovic's qualitative research involved interviews with long-term fisherman and long-haul truckers and their families to explore how family is negotiated amongst families where the breadwinner works for long periods away from home. Zvonkovic et al. comes up with a scheme for understanding family life in terms of trucker/fisherman work schedules in four distinct phases: departure, separation, homecoming, and reunion. Zvonkovic asserts that truckers and wives, because of their life experience, have different experiences of time often creating issues in their relationship.

Community in Mobility

Anthony Cohen argues that the two crucial elements of community are that a) they hold something in common that bonds them together, and that b) this commonality distinguishes them from other potential communities (Cohen 1985: 12). Thus community, according to Cohen, has both elements of similarity and difference, with emphasis on the boundaries and the opposition of these two elements defining where and how this boundary is constructed. 'The word thus expresses a *relational* idea: the opposition of one community to others or to the other social entities' (Cohen 1985: 12). Further, Cohen argues that community boundaries are largely symbolic (Cohen 1985: 13); in other words not only are they not physical but they are interpreted differently by different people, and boundaries seen by one group may not even be noticed by another. Even mem-

bers of the same community may see and interpret these boundaries differently. Cohen speaks of community as ‘that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call ‘society’. It is the arena in which people acquire their most fundamental and most substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home’ (Cohen 1985: 15). ‘Community... is where one learns and continues to practice how to ‘be social’. At the risk of substituting one indefinable category for another, we could say it is where one acquires ‘culture’ (Cohen 1985: 15).

This definition of community, focusing on commonality and difference, boundaries and symbolic meaning, rather than territory and constantly physically being in the same location, is most informative in our understanding of Lithuanian truckers as a community. Truckers make community in and through their social networks, communications, solidarity on the road, and common narratives about home, even if they are not indeed a community in the traditional sense.

Conceptual Framework of Mobile Livelihoods: Emic Perspectives

The theoretical perspectives presented relate to different aspects of the livelihoods of Lithuanian international long-haul truck drivers. At the center of our framework is the concept of *mobile livelihoods*, because of its presumption that lives must be understood in terms of work, culture, and way of life and the interaction of all three. Accompanying these theoretical approaches are the emic perspectives of ‘kasdienybė’ (way of life) and ‘namai’ (home) that became apparent during empirical research. I will show how these two terms are central to the construction of mobile livelihoods by long-haul truckers. To truckers, kasdienybė is closely related to work and a ‘way of life’, which is close to the definition of mobile livelihoods itself. Meanwhile, ‘namai’ framework is provocative in its apparent juxtaposition of the term ‘mobile livelihood’. Thus we enter into the field with these tools: theoretical approaches for home, space, mobility, and emic ways of constructing reality that is closely related to *mobile livelihoods*.

Empirical Analysis: Lithuanian International Long-Haul Truck Drivers

‘Čia mano kasdienybė’ (‘This is my Way of Life’):

Trucking as a ‘kasdienybė’ or ‘Way of Life’

One of the most striking things I noticed while traveling with long-haul truckers Arūnas and Raimundas was how benign and normal everything was. These guys were doing their jobs and going through the day-to-day motions of what it took to get the job done. To say that everything seemed ‘normal’ certainly exposes my own bias that, venturing out in the field, I expected to see and uncover a secret



Figure 2. Morning Meal. The truck cabin is both workspace and the site of all things domestic for the trucker on the road. Here, Raimundas fixes breakfast at a truckstop in Poland. September 10, 2010 (Photo by Will Gordon)

world of truck drivers that included perhaps mischievous acts of debauchery, adventures including women, alcohol, and a reckless abandon for life. Perhaps I was envisioning some sort of gang of truckers made up of misfits, outlaws, and those who did not fit into society. As I took scrupulous notes about the truckers' work, his space, and his daily life, Arūnas and Raimundas simply went about their daily routines as if they had done it a thousand times – which they had. As I was looking for things of a sensational nature, they were busy with the 'every-day' of being a truck driver.

Truckers themselves underlined the 'routine' nature of their work. One evening Arūnas and I were eating boiled dumplings (*koldūnai*) that we had cooked on the gas stove set up between the seats as we drank our 'Švyturys Red' beers (a well-known beer in Lithuania, the word 'Švyturys' means lighthouse). We were watching an episode of the Discovery Channel about aliens on his laptop computer. We were watching it for the 3rd time. As we finished our second beer and our second bowl of *koldūnai*, Arūnas turns to me and says 'you still glad you came on this trip?' in a sarcastic tone. Arūnas could not understand my reasoning for wanting to travel with him and write about truckers. I tell him of course I'm glad. He then laughs and says to me, 'Will, this is my way of life (*kasdienybė*)'. Referring to his life as his '*kasdienybė*' was the verbalizing of what I had observed of

Arūnas over the past several days. In many ways truck driving is like any other job; there is a certain 'day to day' about it, a mundaneness, a repetition to it that takes away from the romantic idea of being 'out on the road'.

It would be easy to interpret *kasdienybė* directly to mean 'everyday-ness', or everyday life. Yet '*kasdienybė*', the specific trucker rhythm of waking up, checking the truck, making coffee and breakfast (Figure 2), driving, talking with other truckers on the radio, stopping, making lunch, communicating, driving some more, then stopping for dinner, driving, and then stopping to sleep, is much more than work and much more than just routine. It is a specific existence, one that is mobile yet always grounded in a certain place, the truck.

Other truck drivers spoke of truck driving as being more than a job, a 'gyvenimo būdas' (way of life). Dainius said: '...you have to get used to it, that work cycle, for example those who drive to Russia and spend a week or two on the road. Those who head to Europe to work, they spend several months on the road. The work, time spent, and stress goes into your blood.' Describing trucking as a 'gyvenimo būdas', work whose stress eventually 'goes into your blood' suggests that truckers themselves see their work-life as more than just work, as a way of life. As another driver describes his experience of trucking,

no one could return to a normal job after working this type of job. Other people say 'I can't sleep at night', or 'I can't nap during the day.' And for me I have no problem. You sleep when you need sleep, you eat when you want to eat and have coffee when you want. As much as you need. It would be hard to work a normal job after this.

To this driver, driving as a 'gyvenimo būdas', a 'way of life', is distinct from other professions (implication: professions where you work in one location) because of the freedom you have to choose how you structure your work-life.

Another trucker spoke of how it is hard for truckers to retire and making the adjustment to being at home after spending 30 years on the road. You must 'learn how to live', he says. 'When you were working as a trucker, all you had time to do at home was 'have some fun' with your wife, go visit a friend, and that's it. Now you are at home all the time and it is an adjustment to a new and different lifestyle from life on the road.'

'Viskas yra vietoje' ('Everything in its Place'): Trucking Interior and Physical Space

'No need to look around – everything is in its place', Raimundas says to me, just moments after we had hit the road, leaving the truck yard in Grūtas, Lithuania. Raimundas had just made us coffees for the road and I was unprepared for the jerkiness of the journey – spilling my coffee everywhere. Raimundas reaches up

to a compartment above our heads, pulling out a roll of paper towels. 'Everything for the sake of comfort,' he says to me.

To truckers, the organization of the space of the truck is extremely important both from a practical standpoint but also for feeling good in the space where they spend most of their work life. The truck cabin is both his office as well as his living space. During work hours, the driver's seat is like an office chair. The driver sits in this chair while doing all work. 9 hours per day, hands are on the wheel and he is driving. Paperwork is filled out while sitting in this chair, with the dashboard, side space, steering wheel, and bed as desk space for doing paperwork. Various office supplies and other tools are laid out on the dashboard. Tucked behind the seat is his bed, under which are stowed pots and pans, food, and other kitchen needs. Between the seats, or under the bottom bunk bed, is a refrigerator. The trucker travels with a gas burner used to make coffee and tea, and to cook hot food. Both of my primary informants cooked all meals in the cab – with the exception of eating once on the Lithuanian border and once in Poland.

By day, the truck is a workspace. By night, all signs of the workday are tucked away and the truck becomes a sleeping/rest space. Some tools that were previously used for work even become things used for leisure. For example during work hours the trucker's GPS system and computer are used for navigation and other work-related tasks, while during the rest period they become a television for entertainment. Arūnas would watch Russian films or episodes of the 'Discovery Channel' in the evenings. Gas burner and coffee cups, along with food and utensils, turn the cabin into a kitchen; at night the bed is made with a blanket and a pillow, with all signs of the workday tucked into various compartments.

Thus we see that the cabin is both a workspace and a domestic space for the trucker. A description of one trucker's cabin from my field notes paints a picture of the kinds of items a trucker carries along with him and how this creates a space that is both domestic and professional:

In truck: two air fresheners on dashboard. A half-fridge between the two seats. Sunglasses (on middle dash). Lighter. Calculator. Pen. Wooden mirror. Yellow post-its stack w/ some numbers jotted on the top page. Empty 'Vytautas' waterbottle (lower dash below controls). Omega-3 complex vitamins. Comb. Shoehorn (blue, plastic, book of CD's. 'Žmonės' (Lithuania's 'People Magazine') magazine on dish. Small wooden angel with brass wings. Spoon. 'Amway' lip balm. 'LOC' cleaner fluid and other sprayers in drivers' side pocket. Roll of paper towels above bed. 2nd white shoehorn in drivers' side pocket. Passenger side has spare air freshener. Sponge-roll of plastic bags, black rag. Roll of double-sided car tape. 2 bunk beds. Bottom bunk has blanket with tiger print on it. Driver cup holder has Statoil to-go coffee cup in it. Space is smaller than anticipated, bunks 80 cm wide, about 1 meter of headroom between top and bottom bunks... (Raimundas).

Among this list of visible items in the truck, there are work tools: calculator, pen, yellow post-its, sunglasses; there are kitchen items: spoon, cleaning fluids, trash bags, paper towels; there are personal items: comb, omega-3 vitamins, shoehorn; and there are leisure and/or 'comfort' items there for reasons other than work and chores, for example 'Žmonės' (Lithuania's 'People' magazine) is an item that Raimundas brought from home, a connection with Lithuania. Throughout the week-long journey, he read this journal front to back four times. The tiger-print blanket on the bed is another item that is a way of personalizing the cabin. Finally, the angel with brass wings, which was a gift from his family and can be interpreted as a sort of good luck charm for his journey.

On the inside of the truck, truckers would furnish the truck with knick-knacks of all sort, for example a lizard on the dashboard or a bear hanging from the ceiling. Two truckers traveling together had identical Chinese hanging decorations. Another trucker carried with him a tiger, as a good luck charm, a gift given to him by a colleague the previous year when it was the year of the tiger according to the Chinese Zodiac. Numerous truckers had dashboards *filled* with stuffed animals (sometimes 2–3, one trucker had 30 or so on the dash). Tautvydas explained his reason for adding decoration like this: 'If you live there, it is better when your cabin looks nice, or when you invite another driver, etc., to come to your truck... And for you it is more interesting. It's like your home, invite people!'

Whether a trucker's cabin is highly decorated or minimally equipped, whether it is pristinely clean, or a bit disorganized, a common thread among all truckers was an acute awareness of space, of where things go in the truck and the importance of each item in the truck serving a specific function or purpose. This function could be mechanical, for example a shoehorn or toothpicks, or it could serve the more symbolic or spiritual purpose of keeping the trucker safe in the case of the angel with brass wings, or bringing him comfort, in the case of stuffed animals which many truckers carried along with them on their journeys. I interpreted this process of constructing space in the truck as a way of 'nesting' or making the space one's own, much in the same way that one would do when moving into a new apartment. We see in these examples how, in Trinh T. Minh-Ha's words, 'figuratively but also literally speaking, traveling... becomes a mode of dwelling' (Minh-Ha 1994: 14).

'Mes važiuosim kaip pulkas' ('We'll Drive Like a Pack!'):
Community and Social Networks

Among Lithuanian truck drivers, it was common to refer to a group of truckers traveling along the highway in a group as a 'pulkas', which means a 'pack', like a pack of animals (Figure 3). Often my informants would be driving in the



Figure 3. The Pack. The view from the truck as we wait at the border crossing between Hungary and Slovenia. Trucks are stopped because of a national holiday in Slovenia that restricted travel. Crossing near town of Bakovci, Hungary. November 13, 2010 (Photo by Will Gordon)

same direction with a fellow Lithuanian trucker and would strike up a ‘temporary partnership’ with that trucker over the C.B. radio. For example, on day 2 with Arūnas we were traveling to the Czech Republic to pick up a load of new automobiles. We were engaged in a conversation with a Lithuanian trucker who by chance was driving to the same car factory to pick up a new load of cars, and drive them to a port on the Mediterranean Sea. Arūnas learned that this other trucker had done this route before, and knew all of the details of how it would go. They became instant friends. They worked alongside each other loading the cars at the factory, the other trucker talking Arūnas through the paperwork process. They traveled in tandem, spending a night in the same truck stop, to Ljubljana, Slovenia, where the trucker again walked Arūnas through the whole process of paperwork and unloading. The process is very specific and can vary from place to place, which is why even with 8 years of experience a new site means new protocol. Throughout this 24-hour period of traveling together, Arūnas and his fellow trucker shared ‘battle stories’ about problems with their boss, problems on the road, and other work-related problems. Their ‘synchronization’ for this period of time seemed seamless, as if they had known each other for years, when all they shared was a common origin and a common work. Then as seamless as they had united, they separated as soon as unloading at the port was over. ‘Good luck’, they said to each other.

Another trucker, Tautvydas, reinforced the idea that truckers help other truckers because they relate to their situation and have similar livelihoods. Tautvydas gave an example of a time while traveling through Italy when a Polish trucker headed back home with whom he'd struck up a friendship offered him some food rations because his trip would be ending soon and he would not eat all of the food. I asked Tautvydas if when he feels like he's 'alone' when he's driving by himself, and he said no. 'When you are driving you automatically strike up conversations with other truckers, you agree to stop and take your break together, you cook together because it means less work for you, you use less food, and you talk about things, time goes by faster.' Tautvydas and other truckers said they sometimes travel in two's or three's; I also observed this at the Company B yard. As I was interviewing Mindaugas, he was organizing over the C.B. radio departure to Moscow, Russia, with several other truckers. He turns to me and says 'we'll drive as a pack', he tells me, with a weary smile.

Traveling with Raimundas to Hamburg, we once stopped at a truck stop in Germany where Raimundas and one of his co-workers had planned to meet and have a cup of coffee. The co-worker was a driver for the same company, on his way back from Germany to Lithuania having traveled more or less the same route. These guys' normal route involves shipping IKEA furniture to Hamburg, and then picking up orders from Hamburg to bring to Lithuania. Raimundas explained to me that they regularly meet each other, practically every week as they cross paths on the road. Stasys was a short, portly guy with a mustache. As he climbed into the drivers' seat, Raimundas moved to the bed, sprawling out. Coffee was prepared for Stasys in advance. He began telling us how it took him 3 days to get a full load in Hamburg before heading back to Lithuania. Having loaded the truck with mostly tea, Stasys was asked to make a final pickup of coffee. He got into a disagreement with logistics back in Lithuania because he refused to take the coffee – he said that it would be a problem later when he arrived in Lithuania to deliver the tea, and the tea smelled like coffee. The break was a chance for the two to share stories about their trip, and to complain about work. They talked about their wives, and just as they were mentioning wives, the other trucker's wife called on the phone. The colleague said 'who's calling me?', Raimundas said 'your wife, who else,' poking fun at him.

The use of the C.B. radio by Lithuanian truck drivers is the means through which truckers communicate both socially and to solve problems on the road. In fact, most of the trucker's socializing while on route takes place over the C.B. radio. It is a short-wave radio that has a reach of about 5 km. Each station is informally designated for a different language; Lithuania is station 12, Latvian 13, Russian 15. Both Arūnas and Raimundas had the CB radio on all the time, tuned to station 12. Designation of this station as just for Lithuanian speakers defined the people with whom the trucker would socialize while they were sitting in their

cab. I noticed five primary types of uses of the C.B. radio – 1) sharing information about the situation on the road, 2) telling ‘war stories’ from the road, 3) discussing work-related things such as salary and quality of job, 3) talking about family and personal life, and 5) building social networks that sometimes lead to short-term or medium-term ‘alliances’ on the road (an example mentioned in the previous section).

The CB’s most common use is to relay information about traffic and the presence of police on the roads. On our trip back from Italy with Arūnas this communication was crucial because his load was too long. He took a 10th car, when 9 cars already had created the length limit for our truck. For this reason we were traveling at night, resting during the day, not wanting to be stopped by customs or police (even if everything is ok with your truck, these stops waste valuable time for the truck driver). With the sun rising as we drove through Poland, several Lithuanian drivers going in the same direction began discussing if they should stop or not. Some of the drivers were over their time allowed for driving, some had trucks that were overweight. ‘Should we drive?’, ‘I’m stopping’, ‘I’m going.’ As discussion continued and drivers still had not stopped, a group momentum began to build where truckers were deciding that if others were driving, then they would drive, too. Arūnas would chime in every couple of minutes with ‘forget it, I’m driving through’. This group mentality lasted for about 30 minutes, until finally one truck was stopped by a customs official. ‘Friends helping friends,’ one driver said over the radio as the first of two trucks from the same firm, got stopped as the other drove on.

According to both my experience on the road as well as conversations with management of the truck company, truckers often communicate over the C.B. about salaries and working conditions in different companies. On our trip to Italy, Arūnas was already working his third trip without pay. He was working with the hope that his boss would eventually pay him, but also because he must work in order for his wife to receive a child support payment from the government. Being in such a predicament, Arūnas often brought up the topic of salary.

‘Do you get paid per kilometer or per trip?’ Arūnas asks a fellow trucker over the C.B.

‘Per kilometer’, other driver says.

‘So how much per kilometer, mine is 35 cents per kilometer’, says Arūnas.

‘45’, the driver responds. He says to Arūnas that he knows he’s doing well compared to other drivers, so he doesn’t complain. He knows it could be worse, he says. ‘I want, I want to be home for a bit, but he (his boss) wants me to leave again on Sunday’.

The C.B. was also used to answer logistical questions regarding loading and unloading. One example of this occurred in Ljubljana, Slovenia, at the sea port

where Arūnas was unloading his new Hyundai cars. As we were waiting for paperwork to be returned to us so that we could unload the cars, I listened to the C.B. radio. Several hundred meters away, a trucker was entering the terminal, and began asking other Lithuanian truck drivers for help. Rather than asking the person at the entrance questions about where to park, where to take paperwork, how much it cost, this driver preferred to use the C.B. to speak with other Lithuanians parked in the lot. Using the C.B., this trucker was guided through the process of entrance, parking, filling out paperwork, paying for parking, entering the second lot, navigating through the warehouses to the right spot to park, how to fill out documents and where to turn them in. This was done with the help of *several* drivers all at the same time. We did not see the driver for fifteen minutes later when he pulled the corner into the lot. C.B. conversations most often began with 'sveikas kolega' or 'Sveiki tautiečiai' or 'Sveiks bradke'. Truckers referred to each other as 'brother' (broliuk, bradke) within moments of beginning a conversation on the radio. The use of these kinship terms symbolizes a certain closeness, a certain solidarity that one could equate to fraternity or brotherhood.

The C.B. radio is thus an interesting tool and sphere of communication for both professional and informal communications. The fact that channel 12 is for Lithuanian conversation only immediately frames the forum for communication and connection between *Lithuanians*. These conversations express solidarity among Lithuanian drivers, a certain sense of shared livelihood being acknowledged and acted out by the truckers. It begs the question: are Lithuanian truck drivers in community? Anthony Cohen argues that communities have certain traits that distinguish its members as *similar* to each other and *different* from others. Cohen also asserts that 'belonging' is a key factor in communities, a belonging that is 'greater than family', but more 'immediate' than society (Cohen 1985: 15). Though this may not be enough to define Lithuanian truck drivers as a community per se, evidence clearly shows that through C.B. interaction drivers express this sense of similarity and difference, and a sense of belonging in social networks of truck drivers. Through these networks they show elements of community, and being 'in community' with each other. Lee and Newby (Lee, Newby 1983) argue that social networks are what define communities rather than geographical closeness. Indeed, the largely solitary livelihood of the truck driver is one that is immersed in social networks, communications that are often anonymous and short-lived yet clearly a key component to their mobile livelihoods. Just as the interior space of the truck cabin is a place of belonging and familiarity to the truck driver, communication is also a constant element of their livelihoods

which provides a feeling of collective experience, belonging, and brotherhood on the road and in their mobile work-lives.

‘Gyvenam būdoje, myžam ant rato’ (‘We Live in the Dog House, and Piss on our Wheels’): Creating ‘Namai’ within Mobility

The first time I heard the phrase ‘we live in the dog house, and piss on our wheels’, we were waiting in a long line of trucks and cars because of bridge construction in Poland. Raimundas and I watched a trucker up ahead get out of the cabin. He walked around to the right side of the truck, and after surveying his surroundings, began to pee under the wheel of the truck. Raimundas chuckled, and said this phrase.

This saying about truckers epitomizes the trucker’s existence on the road, and the nature in which they live. Their *livelihood*, both work and ‘living’, completely revolves around the truck. The image conjured by this saying is that of a dog who is chained to his dog house, that never wanders far away from his house, and pees on the side of his house. His world is the dog house and its immediate surroundings. The comparison of the trucker to a dog and his truck to a dog house can only go so far, because unlike the dog, the trucker is mobile and so is his home. The saying, instead, can be interpreted as a symbolic one, one that shows how central to the trucker’s livelihood the truck is.

In earlier sections, I have shown how truck drivers create a sense of place in their truck cabin amidst the generally transitory existence that they lead on the road. Now I wish to assert that this ‘place’ is much more than simply a place of comfort, but it is a place that truck drivers consider their home. In speaking with Raimundas about his relationship to his family and home, he had this to say: ‘I am with my family very little,’ he says, ‘I live in this truck.’ Another example provided by Arūnas is his common final words as we pull up to a truck stop for the night: ‘we’ll live here.’ This is an interesting choice of words; instead of saying ‘we’ll sleep here’, he says ‘we’ll *live* here’, a subtle difference that posits the truck and the truck stop as not just a place to sleep, but a lived space. In describing his truck to me, Mindaugas (Company B) stated it very clearly when he said ‘This is the bedroom, the kitchen, this is it!’

Just as one would invite guests into their home, truckers treat the truck as a home when other truckers come to visit. ‘Make yourself at home,’ Raimundas would say to me repeatedly while sitting in the truck, working or drinking coffee. In describing his truck as his ‘greiti namai’, Tautvydas also spoke of the importance of keeping his truck interior in order so that he could receive guests. Certain routines or activities also created a feeling of home for the truckers in the truck. For Arūnas, it was watching television and drinking a beer in the evenings. Raimundas enjoyed reading his ‘Žmonės’ magazine in the evening, and also had

a ritual of setting the water on the burner and filling his coffee cup with coffee before going to bed. 'I like to wake up and have coffee ready for me in the morning,' he told me.

We see in these examples a certain process and experience of 'home-making' both in the actions of the truckers, and the way they speak about the truck as the place that they live. Domestic activities such as watching movies, preparing the coffee, and putting on your favourite slippers in the evening (*all truckers have slippers) are examples of creating home in and through everyday action. Keeping the truck in order for when guests come to visit returns us to the most traditional definition of home, as a place of residence. Indeed, we see that for the international truck driver, one who is constantly on the move, always working, and never home, is paradoxically always in the process of home-making, and is home throughout his workday and on the road.

'Važiujamo namo' ('Let's Go Home'): 'Namai' as 'Back Home'

'Hello my countrymen, how's the road until home?' Raimundas says over the C.B. radio as we pass several drivers who are just beginning their journey to the West. 'All clear, I didn't see anything,' one driver replies. 'Thanks very much. Safe travels,' Raimundas answers back. We are still more than 400 kilometers from the Lithuania-Poland border, but to Raimundas we are almost home. A common narrative for both Raimundas and Arūnas was missing home and their families. Arūnas once remarked that the three best moments in his work are 'beer after work, going to sleep, and going home.' Arūnas also expressed his longing for home: 'From the moment I am on the road, I am thinking about home. The best part of the trip is when you begin your journey home.'

In the time-cycle of the trucker's travel, the moment when the truck is finally fully loaded and the driver knows that he is headed home is an important transition mentally where he seems to begin to think more about home (Figure 4). This I observed with both Arūnas and Raimundas, and was talked about by many truckers. As we enjoyed our beers one evening during the return trip from Italy to Lithuania, watching the Discovery Channel on the computer, Arūnas leaned back in his seat and said 'home, home, home... the greatest pleasure is when you are driving home'.

While on the road, truck drivers must manage both their work obligations but also their obligations as a father and husband to their family back home. This presents an obvious challenge for truck drivers because of the distance they are from home, and the fact that they are on a different schedule than their family back home. On day # 6 of travels with Arūnas, his phone rang. It was his 7 year old son calling. Arūnas' face lit up with a smile, excited to hear his son's voice. Son asks him 'what did you bring me?', dad laughs, says 'I'm not coming home yet.' Son asks 'when are you coming home?', dad says 'I don't know,



Figure 4. Tadas. Tadas, of Kaunas, shows off his clean truck, just before he starts on his trip. Company B Truck Yard. March 8, 2011 (Photo by Will Gordon)

maybe tomorrow we'll load everything and be heading home.' 'What will you bring me?', son asks. Dad laughs again. 'What do you want me to bring you,' he replies.

At this moment, the phone is handed to his wife. The tone of the conversation immediately changes from playful to more task-oriented. Arūnas expresses frustration with his work. 'This work is job is really pissing me off' (*note: a strong profanity was used in this sentence – blet – which is not translatable into English), he says. He complains about the disorganization of both his boss and the client in Italy, how he has no correct addresses and know nothing in advance of where to pick up cars, etc. He uses curse words in the same manner as if he were speaking with other drivers. He asks if she got the phone bill, and says 'don't get upset, my boss will pay for everything. It pisses me off all of these phone calls!' Next, his 4 year old son gets on the phone. The son repeats the same question 'what did you bring me?', a question he heard his older brother ask moments earlier. Arūnas laughs, and says he'll be home soon. He hangs up the phone and there is a silence for a period of time after the phone call.

This conversation between Arūnas, his wife, and kids, was long compared to most conversations I observed between truckers and their wives. Most often, conversations were task – oriented, topics like paying bills or fixing the car or asking how the children's health is. I also observed truckers communicating with their families most at the beginning and end of the truck trip, with a specific pat-

tern of calling just before the Lithuania-Polish border, and calling once the truck is fully loaded and the truck is headed back 'home' to Lithuania, simply to call and say 'I'm coming home'.

Arūnas' conversation with his wife brings up some of the same issues that Zvonkovic found in her research on truck drivers and how they negotiate relationships with their family. Because experience of time is different for the trucker and for his family, it presents challenges for making connection and creating mutual understanding. Much of the time talking on the phone between spouses is practical, dealing with family or financial issues. We also see how Arūnas' kids are very aware that he is gone, on the road, and are waiting for dad's big *return*. In these return narratives we also can see how perhaps one's connection to home, one's desire to return home gets stronger with distance and time away from home. In a sense, truckers are experiencing mini-migrations, departures and returns, on a regular basis. This process of departure and return seems to have an affect on the truckers of increasing their desire to return home.

When speaking about the downside of the truck driver lifestyle, drivers with wives and kids almost always cited missing their family and wishing they could spend more time with family. Dainius:

My job is ok, but I would really like to take more time at home. That would be better. Sometimes I am home on the weekend for just 36 hours, and from the moment you get home you already are preparing to leave again. This time at home was simply more similar to a normal weekend from a normal job.

Several truckers mentioned taking their kids to school on Monday mornings as an important ritual they do before 'going to work' and leaving for the week.

When speaking with truckers about their future prospects, drivers who expressed a desire to find a job closer to home did so citing that it would mean more time with their family. Mindaugas explained that he liked his previous job working in a factory better because you are at home more. With driving, you miss home, you have to get used to it. 'This work is not acceptable for me.' I interviewed another driver who was quitting his job as a long-haul truck driver that same day to return to his job driving for Kautra, an intercity bus company. He cited wanting to be home in the evenings with his wife as the main reason for returning to his job as a truck driver, and the reason for why he did not enjoy the work as a long-haul trucker.

Arūnas spoke extensively about the complex relationship with family, his kids, and being home. To Arūnas, his children are the most important people in his life. While at home with family, Arūnas spends time working on cars and restoring old motorcycles. His two boys actively involved helping their dad in the garage. Arūnas welded a motorcycle seat on a bicycle for his oldest son, and created a similar stationary seat for the younger one so that they could also have their own 'bikes' like their dad.

Conclusions

The aim of this article has been to determine how Lithuanian international long-haul truck drivers' livelihoods are constructed in terms of work, home, and everyday life. I have argued that their livelihoods are constructed through *mobile livelihoods* and through the emic frameworks of *kasdienybė* and *namai*. I have argued that Lithuanian truckers' work and everyday life are highly integrated with one another, perhaps more so than most professional groups. The emic term *kasdienybė* embraces this duality of work and everyday life. Lithuanian truck drivers 'home' refers both to the experience and construction of home in the cabin of the truck and in everyday life, and home also refers to both the idea and physical place that one returns to at the end of each trip, as well as family. Theoretical concepts such as 'dwelling in mobility' (Minh-Ha 1994), home as time with family (Zvonkovic et al. 2001), and home as a return narrative (Akstinaičiūtė 2006), are all a part of the trucker's construction of *namai*.

Empirical research among truck drivers shows similarities in behavioral patterns, ways of communicating, symbolic systems, social networks, and common narratives on home, work, livelihoods, and everyday life, that serve as indicators of a social reality that goes beyond the definition of a professional group, and allows us to talk about 'trucking culture'. Lithuanian international long-haul truck drivers are working professionals whose specific social contexts require the understanding of certain emic frameworks complimented by theoretical approaches to understanding mobile livelihoods and home in mobility. Forming such a framework for understanding the lives of Lithuanian long-haul truck drivers both creates space for further questions for research within the field but also could serve as a helpful framework for understanding the lives of mobile professionals in other business sectors and other socio-cultural contexts.

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Mobilus gyvenimas ir pragyvenimas:

Lietuvos tarptautinių tolimųjų reisų vilkikų vairuotojų atvejo analizė

Will Gordon

Santrauka

Tolimųjų reisų vairuotojai žiniasklaidoje ir populiariojoje kultūroje dažnai nušviečiami negatyviai arba sensacingai, nevengiama pasakojimų apie autoavarijas, kontrabandą, nepadorų elgesį ar teisėtvarkos pažeidimus. Autorius bando nagrinėti tokį įvaizdį analizuodamas kokybinio tyrimo, atlikto tarp Lietuvos tarptautinių tolimųjų reisų vairuotojų, duomenis.

Straipsnio tikslas – pažvelgti į tolimųjų reisų vairuotojų kultūrą per darbo, namų ir kasdienybės prizmę mobilumo ir mobiliojo gyvenimo/pragyvenimo (*mobile livelihood*) kontekste. Jame keliamas pagrindinis klausimas – ką reiškia namai, darbas bei kokia yra „gyvenančiųjų ant ratų“ kasdienybė.

Empirinė medžiaga šiam straipsniui gauta atliekant etnografinį tyrimą tarp tolimųjų reisų vairuotojų, kurie vidutiniškai praleidžia 5–6 ar daugiau dienų per

savaite keliaudami ir „namuose“ (Lietuvoje) praleisdami 2–4 dienas per mėnesį. Pagrindiniais informantais pasirinkti du vairuotojai, su kuriais buvo praleistos iš viso trys su puse savaitės kartu keliaujant. Tyrimai buvo atliekami vairuotojo kabinoje, vilkikų sustojimo vietose, logistikos biuruose, vilkikų garažuose, pakelės ir pasienio užėigose. Informantai buvo ne tik vairuotojai, bet ir transporto kompanijų darbuotojai, vadovai ir šeimų nariai. Buvo naudoti šie tyrimo metodai: stebėjimai, dalyvaujamas stebėjimas, pokalbiai ir interviu, kurie vyko tiek formalioje aplinkoje (pvz., konferencijų salėje), tiek privačioje aplinkoje (pvz., vilkiko vairuotojo kabinoje), taip pat susirašinėjimas elektroniniu paštu. Be to, buvo remtasi autoriaus dalyvavimo tarptautinių tolimųjų reisų vilkikų kelionėse sukaupta patirtimi.

Straipsnio pirmoje dalyje pateikiami teoriniai požiūriai siekiant sukurti teorinį pagrindą mobilaus gyvenimo/pragyvenimo interpretavimui taikant įvairius teorinius požiūrius į mobilumą, vietą, namus, bendruomenę ir etninius skirtumus. Antroje dalyje apibūdinamas etnografinių tyrimų laukas, trečioje – pateikiami empiriniai tyrimai, kurie grindžiami *eminiu* tolimųjų reisų vairuotojų patirčių ir gyvenimo/pragyvenimo būdo apibūdinimu išskiriant dvi ašis: a) „darbas“ ir „kasdienybė“, b) „namai“ mobiliame gyvenime/pragyvenime.

Remiantis empiriniais duomenimis bei mobilumo teoriniu konceptualizavimu, straipsnyje įrodinėjama, kad tolimųjų reisų vairuotojų gyvenimas konstruojamas per mobilų gyvenimo/pragyvenimo būdą, o *emiškai* – per „kasdienybės“ ir „namų“ konfigūracijas. Tolimųjų reisų vairuotojų „kasdienybė“ apima tiek darbo, tiek kasdienio gyvenimo aspektus. Teorinės sąvokos, tokios kaip *gynant mobiliai (dwelling in mobility)* (Min-Cha 1994), *namai – kaip praleistas laikas su šeima* (Zvonkovic, Manoogian, McGraw 2001) ir *namai – kaip grįžimo naratyvas* (Akstinavičiūtė 2006), yra dalis vežėjų konstruojamos „namų“ sąvokos. Tačiau norint perprasti Lietuvos tarptautinių tolimųjų reisų vilkikų vairuotojus, būtina išsiaiškinti ir į specifinį jų socialinį kontekstą, ir pasitelkti savitos jų *eminės* raiškos konfigūraciją. Tikėtina, kad šio tyrimo gairės galėtų būti naudingos tiriant kitokius kitų šalių tolimųjų reisų vairuotojų gyvenimo atvejus.

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