**Performing Ontological Security: Latvian Migrants in the UK and Post-Brexit Meaning Making**

**Introduction**

* The breach of everyday identity discourse 🡪 increase of ontological anxiety (Giddens)
* Triggers two major socio-cognitive operations: anchoring and objectification (SRT)
* How did Latvian migrants in the UK socially represent the Brexit vote?

**Methodology**

* Democratic interpretive chaos or ‘whatever’ conditions, which is open to speculation, misinterpretation
* Online comments (2016–2017) on two largest Facebook pages of Latvian migrants 🡪 Latvians in the UK (8904 followers) and Latvieši Anglijā (11106 followers)
* Analytical categories and concepts were developed using the NVivo software

**Who is who in the Facebook discussions?**

* Approximately 70 users from different parts of the UK have posted more than 10 comments under the Brexit-related posts
* Many have been living in the UK more than five years

**Anchoring: appeasement strategies**

* Risk reduction [S]
* Ungrounded optimism 🡪 the dominant mood oscillates from *I don’t care* to *don’t worry, nothing will change*
* A strong belief that the UK economy is dependent on migrants
* Suspension of uncertainty 🡪 in the two year period nothing will change, Brexit can be cancelled, we’ll have time to revise plans 🡪 immediate reaction that disappears from the 2017 comments
* ‘We won’t be kicked out’ (‘izmest ārā’, ‘mest laukā’), ‘we won’t be deported’ (‘izsūtīt’, ‘deportēt’ historically and politically more loaded concept than in English)
* Legitimization through social comparison 🡪 Who deserves to be kicked out?
* A hostile race discourse: Hindus, Muslims, black people 🡪 they have better status and they are more privileged than we [S]
* Benefit haunters – they deserve to be deported from the UK 🡪 blaming migrants rather than the UK’s uncontrolled benefit system

*I’d be even happy, if those who live on benefits here, don’t work, and have a reckless life, are kicked out. /Ritvars/*

* Discussing the legal status
* Opting for British citizenship, discussing different practicalities, (dis)advantages of obtaining citizenship

*I don’t see a reason not to apply for [the British citizenship], if you have such a desire. I will do that as soon as I’m able to do that. I’ll do it for my kids, in order to give them opportunity to choose when everything will calm down and the post-Brexit reality will come into being. /Mairita/*

[S]

* A hostile attitude 🡪 direct and mediated experience
* A negative pre-Brexit experience is more likely to be accepted as legitimate than post-Brexit one, but it’s changing in 2017
* Attitude towards Poles as a prototype of the British anti-migration minset 🡪 again social comparison
* Normalization frame 🡪 all incidents are exception rather than practice
* Less convenient consequences
* Decreasing value of pound
* Increasing living costs
* No 'cherry picking' for Britain in Brexit talks (Merkel)

**Objectification: Criticism of media**

* Considerable distrust in media, particularly in Latvian media
* Reliance on face-to-face experience: private experience, word-of-mouth communication

**Conclusions**

* Discourse dynamics: from ‘no one will be kicked out’ (2016) to ‘not all will be entitled to stay’ 🡪 ‘Brexit means Brexit’ frame (2017)
* Attempts to deproblematize the Brexit vote 🡪 satisfaction with living conditions (anchoring) and remediation of the dominant Brexit discourses (objectification) 🡪 lack of political awareness