

Why Do Some Denizens Reject Naturalisation? The Case of Long-term Immigrants in Poland

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The article analyses reasons and context of the decision not to naturalise, made by long-term immigrants in Poland. The text encompasses description of the legal context of naturalisation in Poland, statistical data about long-term residents from various diasporas and number of citizenship acquisitions. The article focuses on four case studies of migrants from the United Kingdom, Lithuania, Vietnam and India in order to examine and interpret the declared reasons of the lack of naturalisation. In general, three types of reasons are distinguished: psychological (lack of sufficient sense of belonging), bureaucratic (costs, length and complicated character of the procedure) and legal-political (prohibition of dual citizenship in the country of origin, possession of a status of a permanent resident).

Introduction

The objective of the article is to examine narratives of denizens living in Poland, who intentionally resign from applying for citizenship status. What are their main motivations? Do the narratives of EU citizens and third country nationals differ in this respect? The analysis was a part of a wider research¹ of self-employed migrants in Poland, which included over 80 in-depth interviews with individuals from different diasporas. All of them were asked about their citizenship status and 12 of them were identified as long-term immigrants who do not have immediate plans to apply for citizenship although they fulfill the conditions envisaged by the Polish law.

The last decades brought an intensification of international mobility on a global level, connected with advancement of technologies and means of transport as well as possibilities of fast and cheap electronic communication. It led to the development of new migrant communities, which remain connected not only to the country of settlement, but also keep strong ties with the coun-

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try of origin. This change was reflected by the emergence of a new understanding of migration as living in transnational social spaces where different cultures are present and the notion of transmigrants who maintain multiple relations and networks across national borders (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992 and 1995, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999, Vertovec 2009). Instead of defining the process of integration as a 'transfer' of individuals' sense of belonging from one to another country, transnationalism views migrants' identities as a set of parallel collective attachments to more than one culture. Mobile individuals «live in several societies simultaneously» (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992: 11). Transnationalism and its consequences constitute an important context for the analysis of changing attitudes to naturalisation.

Transnationalism also means that immigrants may define their sense of belonging by categories other than imposed by a state. In 1990 Tomas Hammar proposed a term, *denizen*, to describe long-term immigrants who have residence rights but do not possess citizenship of the host country. The notion describes long-term immigrants regardless of whether their status is a result of excessively strict naturalisation requirements in the receiving state, or remaining a foreigner is their voluntary decision. In this article I will focus on the second category: intentional denizens, who voluntarily resign the possibility to apply for naturalisation. Using in-depth interviews with migrants, the article will examine subjective explanations, personal reasons and individual patterns of national belonging. The context for this analysis will be official statistical data about migration and naturalisation in Poland, as well as legal solutions concerning the acquisition of Polish citizenship.

Official data about naturalisation and long-term immigrants in Poland

New law on citizenship came into force in Poland in 2012. The Act on citizenship was passed in April 2009. However, it was reported to the Constitutional Tribunal by the president and was put into effect only three years later, after the Tribunal's judgment. The judgment declared that the Act is consistent with the Constitution and it is a legal reflection of an «open vision of a Polish society» (judgment of 18 January 2012, signature Kp 5/09). Currently the decision on the naturalisation is made by a President (*nadanie obywatelstwa* or granting citizenship, art. 18-29 of the Act) or by a Voivode (*uznanie za obywatela* or recognition as a citizen, art. 30-37 of the Act).

While the Presidential power to naturalise foreigners is unlimited and guaranteed by the Constitution, it is an exceptionally procedure. The regular procedure for most of foreigners is naturalisation according to the procedure

of recognition by a Voivode. Adult foreigners who apply for Polish citizenship should have a regular source of income in Poland and know the language of the host state. The next requirement – period of residence – differs with regard to various groups of foreigners. An applicant is usually required to have been residing in Poland on the basis of permanent residence or a similar status for three years. The required period of residence on the basis of permanent residence card is reduced to two years if an applicant is either married to a Polish citizen for at least three years, or has Polish origins, or is a stateless person or a refugee. Regardless of these rules, an individual may apply for a Polish citizenship if (s)he resided in Poland legally and uninterrupted for at least 10 years (even if permanent residency did not last 2 or 3 years before the naturalisation application). The number of naturalisations in Poland increased after entry into force of these regulations.

Table 1 – *Number of naturalisations in Poland (compared to the European Union as a whole)*

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Poland	1937	2866	1064	1542	1802	2503	2926	3445	3792	3933
EU (28)	-	-	-	-	-	771800	815700	786400	822100	984800
EU (27)	719090	723611	735928	707100	699000	766500	812400	783100	821000	983900
Poland: naturalizations within the EU	0,27%	0,40%	0,14%	0,22%	0,26%	0,32%	0,36%	0,44%	0,46%	0,40%

Note: European Union counted as 27 countries until 2008, 28 countries in 2009-2013

Source: Eurostat, own elaboration

Although the number of naturalisations in Poland is still relatively low, it is increasing. Table 1 presents the number of naturalisations in Poland in comparison to other Member States. In years 2004-2013 the number of acquisitions of host country's citizenship in the European Union has been growing slowly but constantly. In Poland the number of naturalisations remained moderately stable in the years 2004-2008 (with some notable fluctuations, especially in 2005 after Poland's accession to the EU). However, in the recent years Poland experienced a significant growth of naturalisations because of two reasons: intensification of migration processes and enactment of the new law on citizenship. Moreover, the naturalisations conducted in Poland constitute a growing part of naturalisations within the EU (0,46% in 2012 in comparison to 0,22% in 2007). The official data reflect both a growing significance of settlement migration and a mobilising potential of the new citizenship law. However, for some migrants naturalisation remains an unattrac-

tive option. This phenomenon should be interpreted in the light of statistics describing intra-EU migrants and third country nationals residing in Poland.

Table 2 – *Long-term immigrants in Poland*

Permanent residency	Long-term resident of the EU	Temporary residency	Right of residency of EU citizens	Permanent residency of EU citizens	Right of residency of family member of EU citizens	Permanent residency of family member of EU citizens
48186	8927	49649	55493	6806	535	72

Source: Polish Office for Repatriation and Aliens (01.01.2015)

In general, over 48 thousand individuals have a right to live in Poland as permanent residents (Table 2), a legal status which may lead to further naturalization. The most popular countries of origin of migrants living in Poland are Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. Ukraine and Belarus are neighbouring states with relatively weaker economies and similar cultural environment (similarity of languages, history of communist state), which explains the huge the inflow of labour migrants from these countries. Migrants from Russia are mostly Chechens who apply for refugee status in Poland. Another important country of origin is Vietnam, which has established migration networks with Poland. Many Vietnamese came as students in 1970s and 1980s; that also facilitated economic migration which started in 1990s. With regard to the EU Member States, the most popular sending countries are Germany and Italy (Table 3).

While the official information about permanent residents, long-term residents and the number of naturalisations can be obtained from public offices, the data about denizens who do not want to naturalise is not available. Lack of such statistical data constitutes an important reason and context for the usage of qualitative (ethnographic) research in analysing the phenomenon of denizens who do not want to apply for citizenship.

Four case studies

Below I analyse four narratives of denizens from various countries, who have very diversified migration histories. The case studies are varied, but at the same time they are also most typical and representative of other denizens' life stories: some elements accentuated in these narratives appear also in other interviews conducted within the research project. They encompass migrants

Table 3 – *Most popular countries of origins of long term immigrants in Poland*

Third Country Nationals

Country	Permanent residency	Long-term residency of the EU	Other status without Polish citizenship	Total
Ukraine	18 637	2 761	19581	40979
Russia	4 192	520	6027	10739
Belarus	7 038	488	2398	9924
Vietnam	3 089	1 708	4245	9042
Armenia	1 336	674	1576	3586
USA	837	101	1327	2265
Turkey	611	393	1531	2535

European Union Member States

Country	Residency of the EU citizens	Permanent residency of the EU citizens	Other status without citizenship	Total
Germany	17869	1748	583	20200
Italy	4699	688	218	5605
France	4167	430	194	4791
Bulgaria	3569	356	594	4519
UK	3725	545	206	4476

Source: own elaboration based on data from Polish Office for Repatriation and Aliens (01.01.2015)

from four sending states: two EU Member States (United Kingdom and Lithuania) and two Asian countries (Vietnam and India). The four interviews were conducted in years 2014-2015, in Polish² (quotations below are translated from Polish into English), which is also an interesting indicator of respondents' level of integration in the host country.

Biographical case studies are increasingly important as a method of in-depth exploration of migration trajectories, dynamics of individual identity, patterns of adaptation and subjective perceptions of integration (Gültekin, Inowlocki and Lutz 2003, Breckner 2014). As it is indicated, «stories and histories of concrete biographical actors show that collective belonging no longer structures biographies as something given and taken for granted» (Breckner 2014: 22). At the beginning of each case study a short biographical note about

² Respondents were given a choice: the interviews could be conducted either in Polish or in English.

an interviewee is presented in order to provide a context for their narratives. The examination of the reasons of non-naturalisation is carried out with reference to interviewees' migration histories and embedded in the context of the sending country and the European Union.

First case: Permanent residence and the devaluation of national citizenship

The first analysed case is a respondent from the United Kingdom, holding British citizenship. He came to Poland in 1996, after graduating from a British university with a bachelor degree. He is married to a Polish citizen and has two children. Most of his professional career advanced in Poland; he also worked for some time in the Czech Republic. He is currently self-employed as a teacher of English. In the narratives of EU nationals the European Union and its privileges which facilitate mobility are a recurring topic. European Union and the principle of free movement of persons is perceived by migrants as disincentive in further efforts for acquisition of Polish nationality. However, the main meaning beyond the European Union is not a sense of common culture and community, but the legal instrument created within the organisation – EU citizenship, understood as a set of legal solutions and freedoms facilitating inclusion into the host society. The possibility of obtaining rights through an intermediary status deters from applying for host country citizenship (Brubaker 1990). For migrants from the UK, the threat of leaving the EU by their home country is seen as a potential reason for naturalisation:

Of course, if there is a referendum if England wants to exit the EU, this would be a better reason to [apply for naturalisation]. A simplification in my life.

Removing legal obstacles to migration within the EU facilitates intra-European mobility and diminishes importance of national identities of the “free movers”. The respondent does not demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to either his home country or his host country; he declares to be a “citizen of the world” (although all his mobility progressed within Europe). The type of attachment he considers important is the family. The nationality of his children, who were raised in Poland, is mentioned as a possible reason for his potential naturalisation. However, the respondent does not have immediate plans to apply for Polish citizenship, as he argues the status would not give him any visible advantages:

I actually have three friends who obtained Polish citizenship last year. But at the moment I just don't know if there is [...] how I can profit from this. I do not see any profits. My children were born in Poland, so they are in fact Polish

– my children, yes [have dual citizenship]. So maybe that's why it is worth it. I didn't have time to give it a careful consideration. In the future maybe I will think about it [...] In the future I may do it. I do not have a 'hometown', I do not have a sense of belonging to a country of origin, I do not feel particularly attached to Poland or England, I feel I am a citizen of the world.

As several other migrants, this respondent emphasises administrative difficulties and obstacles which may discourage from naturalization. From the respondent's perspective, they make the potential naturalization process time-consuming and arduous. This narrative also highlights a voluntary character of citizenship acquisition: the interviewee emphasizes that lack of naturalization is his free decision, and not a result of high integration requirements or conditions which would be difficult to meet. He assesses that his language skills and period of residence in Poland qualify him for naturalization. The respondent settled down in Poland before Polish accession to the European Union, so he also underlines the significance of the most stable foreigner's status (permanent residency) as a legal position which guarantees sense of security in the host country:

Applying for Polish citizenship would be a pure formality. I prefer permanent residency status. I would pass the language test [laugh]. Generally it is something I should think over and devote some time to it. I just don't have time. I work 10-12 hours every day so I do not have time for children and for myself.

The narrative exposes that access to an intermediary status (permanent residency) decreases interest in the naturalisation. Moreover, the context of the European Union provides an important disincentive for citizenship acquisition. Intra-EU migrants, even without a permanent residency status, have free access to the host Member State's labour market, and may freely reside in the receiving country if they have a job or other means to provide for themselves and not be a burden for the host country's welfare system. These institutional solutions weaken individual desires to apply for a formal, legal recognition of national belonging, such as citizenship.

Second case: Reduced importance of formal (state) recognition of identity and constructing borderland identities

The second respondent is a woman in her thirties, living in a town in the Eastern Poland, near Polish-Belarussian-Lithuanian border. She holds Lithuanian citizenship. She comes from a binational family: her mother is Lithu-

anian and her father is Polish. She came to Poland as a two year old child and settled down here. She received her education entirely in Poland (beginning with the primary school, finishing with a university degree). Her whole career trajectory progressed in Poland as well. She is currently self-employed and works as an architect.

Since the beginning of her stay, the respondent resides a city in a borderland region of Podlaskie Voivodeship, near the Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Belarusian border. The region which she inhabits is also known for its multicultural character and strong presence of several ethnic and national minorities (Lithuanian, Belarussian, Tartar). This facilitates the development of multicultural borderland identity, containing elements of various national identities. Respondent's everyday experience of transnationalism is strengthened by intense ties with the sending country, which she visits numerous times each year. It is even easier since the distance between her city of residence and place of origin is smaller than the distance between her city and the capital of Poland.

I do not feel as if I left some place, because I have two countries, in one I spend holidays and in the second one I reside. For me it is natural [...] I was born in Lithuania and I had been living there until I was two. I came here with my mum to [be with] my dad. And ever since that time I live in Poland. Of course, I go to Lithuania for holidays, for festivities. My whole family from my mother's side lives there.

Single citizenship does not exclude multiple sense of belonging, which is quite apparent in the narrative. Transnational identity is strengthened by frequent visits in the home country (associated with significant events and celebrations) and emphasis upon family ties connecting the respondent with Lithuania. Interesting aspect if the narrative is a lack of reference to a difficult situation of Polish minority in Lithuania. This problem has been for a long time a controversial element in Polish-Lithuanian relations, it has also appeared in a narrative of another Lithuanian migrant. Concealing this motive in the analysed interview may be a strategy of protection of respondent's dual national identity. On the other hand, Lithuanian's perception of a Polish identity as dominating or threatening (which is embedded in a wider cultural and historical context) may be a factor which discourages from applying for a Polish citizenship.

The respondent also emphasizes the factor of legal consequences of possessing certain citizenship in terms of facilitating international mobility. Such motive also appeared in other narratives. While mobility within European Union Member States is not associated with any legal barriers, particular Member States differ when it comes to freedom of mobility to non-EU coun-

tries (e.g. obligation to acquire visa). For example, citizens of Poland still have to obtain visas to travel to the United States, which is mentioned as one of reasons why it is more advantageous to remain a citizen of the country of origin without naturalisation:

Because I do not need it at all, I do not feel any limitations because of the lack of [Polish] citizenship. And earlier [before the EU] there was a difference, but even if so, I felt it is better off with Lithuanian citizenship. Because as my father who is Polish had to apply for visas when we went of holidays to Lithuania or anywhere in the Soviet Union, I could just as a Soviet Union citizen go everywhere I wanted, so it is not a problem. And in fact generally. Nowadays, taking into account possibility to go to the United States, I can just buy a ticket and I am in the States, while all my Polish friends have to go to the embassy, so I do not have problems with this. Maybe only spelling of Lithuanian names, it is incomprehensible, it creates some formal problems.

The narrative demonstrates that even migrants who declare Polish identity, have Polish ancestors and were socialised to the Polish culture since childhood may perceive citizenship acquisition as redundant. Privatisation of national identity means that even migrants with Polish origins may not wish to have their sense of belonging acknowledged by the state in the naturalisation procedure. Official recognition of individual's identity by the state is not valued as a crucial element of one's ethnic affiliation. On the other hand, remaining a citizen of the sending state does not exclude emergence of a new identity or at least contradictions and ambivalences in the individual sense of belonging.

Third case: To live in a transnational space as a point of reference for identity construction

Third respondent is a woman born in Vietnam, who came to Poland as a child in 1989 accompanying her parents. Several years earlier, her father went to Poland in order to study: his wife and daughter followed in the framework of family reunification. The interviewee attended Polish schools, graduated with a Master's degree from a Polish university and set up her own firm in Poland in the food sector (unrelated to ethnic cuisine). She lives in one of the biggest Polish cities with a numerous Vietnamese population. Her husband is Polish. She is bilingual.

When the respondent was a child, her family's stay in Poland was planned as temporary. Her narrative describes inclusion to the host society

as a gradual process, which involves the whole family rather than just her individually. The underlying assumption of interviewee's parents that the stay in Poland is temporary might have led to the conviction that children do not have to naturalise:

For the time being lasted until let's say the middle of the 1990s, maybe the end of 1990s, when everything kind of became stable. It is obvious that children – in this case, me – are in such a phase, educational phase, that – what? Return to Vietnam in the sixth grade of primary school – well, it doesn't make sense. In the meantime, my sister was born. My parents understood that here they can develop financially with their own business. So [...] let's continue with this, right? So at the moment our situation is that this is our permanent place of residence, we feel attached to it. However, my parents do not exclude the possibility to go to Vietnam when they are old, or at least to live in both countries: six months here, six months there. So the question permanent or not permanent just lose its sense, right? We just have two places of residence, two places of living and that's it.

Apart from a sense of transnational belonging, the respondent also mentions in her narrative bureaucratic reasons of lack of interest in the naturalisation (problems with and adequate recognition of Vietnamese names by Polish public offices) and legal reasons (attractiveness of the permanent residency status, possibility to travel without visas to Asian countries). Nevertheless, the issue of transnational identity constructed through everyday practices appears to be the most important point of reference in the identity construction, lessening the significance of formal state affiliations.

Fourth case: The symbolic meaning of citizenship as an expression of belonging

Fourth respondent comes from India, he is a Sikh. He came to Poland in 1989 because of a relationship with a Pole and since that time he has been residing in a major Polish city. He is married to a Polish citizen and has two children. He graduated from an Indian university and his career trajectory progressed partly in India and partly in Poland. He currently owns a big company in a travel branch and co-owns an Indian restaurant, he is also a recognised leader of the Indian diaspora: he actively participated in establishing associations of Indian migrants in Poland.

Similarly as in other interviews, the reasons of non-naturalisation are complex and cannot be reduced to one single factor. The narrative encompasses different layers and contexts for the decision about lack of interest in the ac-

quisition of citizenship – most importantly (in this case) legal and psychological. The legal reason is prohibition of dual citizenship in the sending country, India. This motive appeared as a powerful deterrent in several other narratives collected within the research project, especially among migrants from Ukraine settled down in Poland. While EU states in most cases do not forbid dual citizenship, it is different in the case non-EU countries. Third country nationals living in Poland often declare that they would wish to naturalise if the option of multiple nationality was available. Even for individuals who wish to obtain a passport of the host state, the obligation to resign their first national affiliation may constitute a serious discouragement.

It is simple, if I give up my Indian passport [I could obtain a Polish one], I cannot have two citizenships. Indian side does not agree for that. For me it is important to have my identity.

However, in the analysed case the prohibition of dual citizenship is not the only reason for the lack of naturalisation. The crucial aspect of respondent's narrative seems to be psychological reasons of non-naturalisation, associated with the perception of citizenship as an expression of the deepest sense of belonging. In this interpretation, being a citizen reflects a permanent emotional attachment to the country. Its meaning is most of all symbolic and not pragmatic (connected with privileges). Nationality is perceived more as a bond of kinship than as a formal status defined by a state. Lack of sufficient identification with the host society and its culture leads to the decision about remaining a citizen of the sending country. The interviewee, who is an influential and prominent diaspora member, also declares that he persuades his co-ethnics not to naturalise.

Even if there appears a provision from the Indian side, because Poland agrees [to dual citizenship], I still don't see a reason. Because if I have a Visa, I can [travel] within the European Union, because I have a residence card, I have a visa to England, Canada, United States, so there is no need to change [citizenship status]. And at this moment I have, of course, all due respect for Poland, I live here, I do business here, but I still need to preserve my identity. Even if I change the passport, this paper, I will not become Polish. I was born, I am and I will be Indian, yes. I will not be Polish, so why lose my identity. Of course one has to respect [the place] where one lives, because we earn money here, one has to obey the law. Personally I persuade to all Indians that they should not change [citizenship]. But it is for nothing. I don't see such necessity. In any case, there will always be information 'born in India' and so on. One does not become Polish or American.

In this case, the place of birth appears as a more important factor of identity construction than a place of residence. Citizenship acquisition is perceived as an ostensible and superficial status transformation, which does not have a power to change the immigrant's life in terms of rights, privileges or sense of attachment.

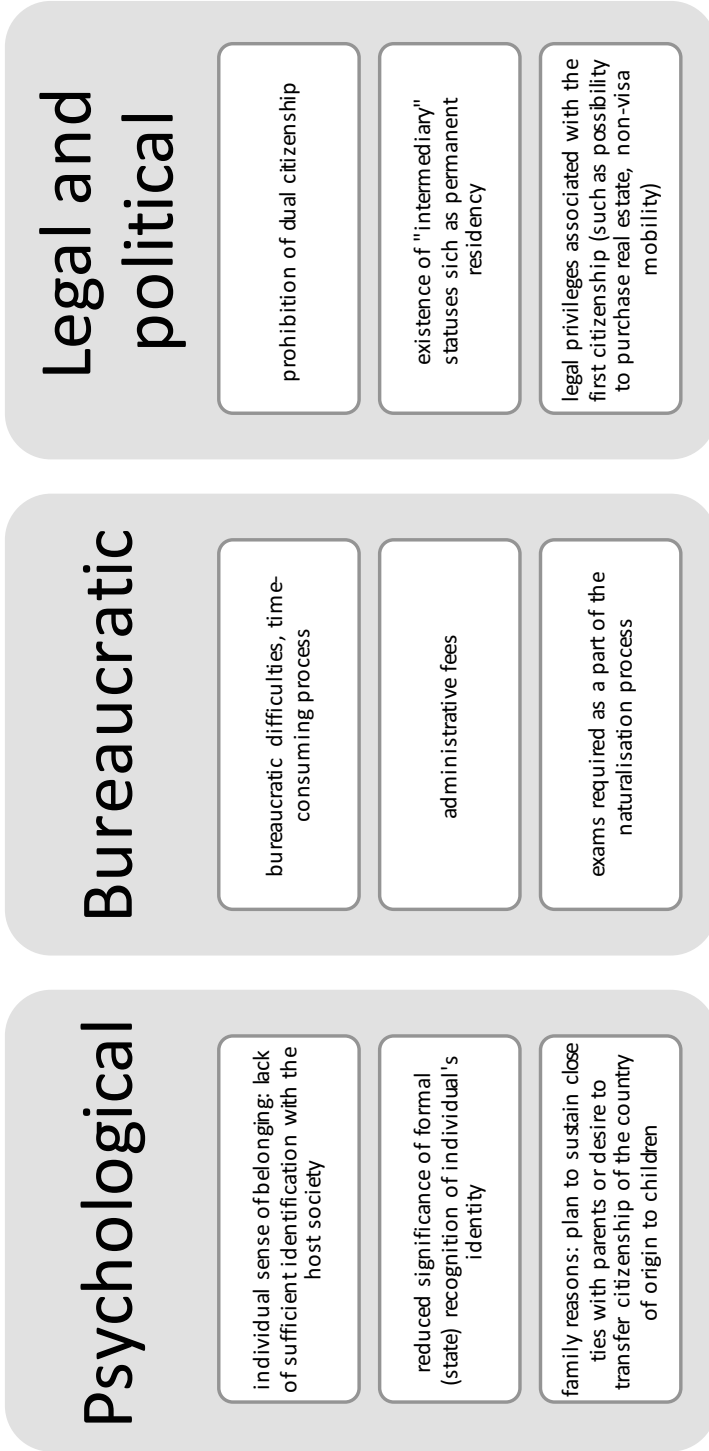
Conclusion

The analysis of narratives exposes that the non-naturalisation is not necessarily connected with rejection of the host country's way of life. Even individuals who are very well integrated with the host society in terms of language, cultural competences, position on the labour market, may not be interested in acquiring new citizenship. Immigrants' countries of origin also have influence on their attitudes to naturalization. The narratives of intra-European migrants expose that European Union citizenship and possibility of free movement within the EU lessened the significance of naturalization. For third country nationals, however, stabilising legal situation in a host country is advantageous, although naturalisation seems to be less important than the acquisition of a permanent resident status. Examination of in-depth interviews demonstrates that naturalisation or the lack of it may have a different meaning for particular individuals. Denizens also vary with regard to their attitude to naturalisation in the future – some of them definitely reject it, while the other theoretically allow such possibility even though they do not have immediate plans.

Non-naturalisation is an outcome of complex psychological, social and institutional determinants. The typology of reasons leading to the lack of interest in the host country's citizenship is presented in the chart above. The background of rejecting naturalization may be psychological (categorizing citizenship as a reflection of the deepest sense of national belonging, lack of sufficient identification with the host society), bureaucratic (desire to avoid time-consuming procedures and administrative fees), legal and political (existence of statuses which to some extent substitute national citizenship – for example EU citizenship; reluctance to renounce citizenship of the country of origin if no dual citizenship is accepted).

These reasons are usually intertwined and influence each other: for example, existence of intermediary statuses such as permanent residency may lead to perception of citizenship status as solely symbolic, and thus administrative difficulties connected with acquisition of such status constitute a sufficient reason of rejecting naturalization. If citizenship of the country of residence was considered as a more valuable status, bureaucratic difficulties or administrative fees would

Figure 1 – *Reasons of non-naturalisation, a typology*



not be perceived as a significant disincentive. Moreover, for some denizens, the process of privatization of national identity can be observed. Even if their sense of collective belonging changes in the course of time, they do not seek acknowledgment of this fact by the host state in the process of naturalization.

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