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26 pages:
Food & Agriculture

BALTIC WORLDS

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East in the eyes of West:
Film & Reality

Brutal restoration
of the Old Town in Tbilisi

Fatherhood in Russia

Abandoned children

Migrant mothers in the EU

Dislocated families

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Illustration: Ragni Svensson

Russia as *enfant terrible* in the eye of the “others”

THE 13th ANNUAL ALEKSANTERI Conference “Russia and the World”, which took place in the main building of the University of Helsinki, October 23–25, was dedicated first and foremost to Russian foreign policy. There were more than 40 academic panels at the conference, and five plenary sessions: Russia’s Place in the World; Russia and the EU: From Cooperation to Partnership: Moving beyond the Russia-EU Deadlock; Russia and International Relations Theory; Choices and Necessities of Security Policy for the 21st Century; and Russia’s Futures.

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY, Markku Kivinen, the director of Aleksanteri Institute, said that today’s Russia lacks diversification in the economy, democracy and the rule of law, a welfare regime, and predictability of both life and of foreign policy. He suggested that creation of the new Russian identity and rationality is badly needed, and the aim of the conference was to understand the role of “others” in Russia and in relation to Russia. At the plenary session Russia’s Place in the World, Marie Mendras from the Paris School of International Affairs added to the picture that the biggest problem of Russia at present is the “lack of rotation of personnel” (mentioning the political elites and highest bureaucracy first and foremost). Richard Sakwa from the University of Kent also stressed that Russia’s major problem at the moment is its administrative regime, which is contrary to the constitution and state itself. He also suggested that, nowadays, the ideology of globalization is dead, and even in the European Union itself there are centripetal processes at work, so it is not surprising that Russia is also floating between East and West. He predicted the resurrection of an “age of diplomacy” in international affairs regarding Russia and the European Union.

Jeffrey Mankoff from the Center for



The Arctic was one of the “hottest” themes discussed at the conference. The Arctic Ocean is surrounded by Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Russia.

Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) spoke about the new search for identity in Russia, i.e. Eurasian cooperation and collaboration with China and India, and the new institutional expression of this cooperation in the Russian desire to reach out to Eurasia. He highlighted the two sets of values that nowadays are emerging in Russian cultural politics and that are mutually contradictory: the Eurasian and the European. Andrei Kortunov, the Director General of Russian International Affairs Council, mentioned that, as he sees it, Russia is not viewed by the West as a highly developed country, but rather as a country of the Third World. It is not Russia that needs self-reflection; it is the West that should re-consider its attitude towards Russia. If Russia is not included in the “world government” on an equal basis with other developed countries, he sees no possibility of positive development projects for Russia, and consequently no possibility for substantive change.

ONE OF THE “HOTTEST” THEMES, the Arctic, was discussed at the panel Russia and the Arctic. At the present time, Russia is trying again to make sense of its Arctic territories, and of the Northern Sea Way, notwithstanding the fact that it demands huge resources, human and material investments, and diplomatic efforts. The problems and international consequences of Russian polar activity became the topic for lively discussion. More theoretical and methodological issues were talked about at the session on Russia’s public diplomacy as a soft power. The

issue of what to consider “soft power” was examined. More generally, there were discussions of what Mikhail Prozorov called “soft-power capital” — Russian culture, the “Russian world” movement, the “Rossotrudnichestvo” organization — as instruments in cross-cultural dialogue with neighboring and Western countries.

In the final plenary session on Russia’s futures, the member of the Committee for the Future in the Parliament of Finland, Paula Tihoonen, summarized the ideas of the conference: “It is hard to talk about the future of Russia. Some weak signals of positive developments are much more difficult to detect than the negative ones. Nevertheless, it is important not to miss them.” ✕

IRINA KOTKINA

Piotr Sztompka. Change is possible

PIOTR SZTOMPKA, professor of sociology at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, has recently been selected as the recipient of Södertörn University’s



first honorary doctorate. Sztompka on the cover of the very first issue of *Baltic Worlds*, 2008.

In 2007 Sztompka was a visiting scholar at CBEES at Södertörn University, and then ended up on the cover of the very first issue of this magazine, in 2008. The lengthy interview can be read on our website.

One of the things Sztompka discussed there was the role of civil society.

“Before 1989 we had civil society underground, and civil society against the state. Then the underground civil society won, and there was an immediate change. Civil society stood up for, not against, the new political system. But the old civil society was lost in the newness of the situation.”

“However, later came things that I see as a kind of trauma. This was due to the social costs of transition and the disillusionment that followed. Necessary but painful reforms undermined optimism, trust, and a feeling of empowerment. Then, for a long time we had constant changes of government, with the pendulum swinging back and forth between the right and the left. This paralyzed civil society for quite some time.”

SZTOMPKA’S ANALYSIS of civil society may today be supplemented by the facts presented in this issue of *Baltic Worlds* (see page 33 on the latest news on the field of activism in Poland from a recent conference).

Sztompka held a lecture on the occasion of the bestowal of the honorary doctorate. In the lecture, he presented various forms of risk and danger people subject themselves to. To deal with uncertainty and survive together, we need to have trust, a belief in the future, and a sense that we can have an effect on our lives, noted Sztompka.

He seeks to make clear that people lead and shape their future, and continually make progress:

“I am an optimist. I have seen in my own country what is possible. No one could predict the changes that occurred in the ‘80s. It was possible because people made it happen!” ✕

NINNA MÖRNER

Our evolving standards and practices

WE HAVE BEEN STRIVING to improve the quality of the scholarly articles, and see to it that they are searchable and accessible for citation. All scholarly articles published in the last year can also be found in EBSCO as well as DOAJ. On *Baltic Worlds’* website, they are open access.

Starting now we will also label all scholarly articles in the printed version as “peer-reviewed essay” instead of

the previously used label “essay”, which had led to some confusion about whether or not the article was actually peer-reviewed.

All scholarly articles have been submitted to a double-blind peer review by at least two independent specialists. A peer-reviewed article published in *BW* will, for the authors and institutions that use the Norwegian bibliometric register (DHB), generate one publication point.

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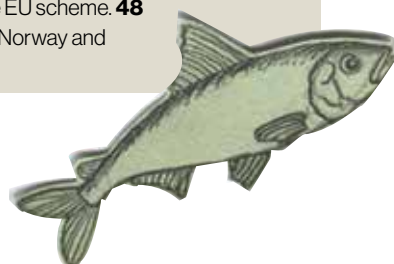
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East & West. Connected, still apart

In this issue of *Baltic Worlds*, we visit the prosperous island of Guernsey, where, since the 1990s, many Latvians have been guest workers. In her study, cultural geographer Aija Lulle describes how the Latvian workers have created their own space on this island in the English Channel, and how they live parallel lives, partly as Latvians outside their homeland, and partly as Latvians in Guernsey. A special rhythm of life is created, since changes at home continue, and have an effect on them, while at the same time they are living and leading their lives on the island.

Many who migrate do so in search of a better future. In order to work abroad for a limited period, many are forced to leave their children in their home country. Children being left behind in this way has become a problem in the EU, as Pål Ruin relates in a report from Lithuania. The children don't thrive, and there is a risk that they will become social outsiders. The youngest children become insecure and feel abandoned. The absence of their parents for many months is too difficult for them to bear.

FATHERHOOD IN RUSSIA today is a vague institution. The role of the father is developing in several directions at once, both in state policy and in the private sphere. Different perspectives on fatherhood are addressed, particularly in Russia, by the political scientists Johnny Rodin and Pelle Åberg. They show that the vacuum left with the disappearance of the father as the family's authoritarian head and primary breadwinner has not been filled in Russia. It is important to focus on fatherhood in order to reverse the declining birth rate and the demographic crisis the country is experiencing, the authors claim.

Literary scholar David Williams analyzes Ulrich Seidl's film *Import/Export* and criticizes Seidl for using and humiliating amateur actors with the aim of telling a story that ultimately only underscores a stereotypical image of the East: as precisely an object of pleasure for the West. East appears here as the woman who is sacrificed, exploited, and objectified – in order to entertain the West.

The image conveyed of the Latvian migrant workers' existence in Guernsey is also an interesting aspect of Williams's analysis. The study, much like Aija Lulle's, conveys a rhythm of existence where life in the East and the West go on simultaneously – within a particular hierarchical order, but each with a different dramaturgy.

IN THIS THICK DOUBLE ISSUE, we also devote a number of pages to the theme "Contemporary Challenges in Food and Agriculture" in the Nordic region and around the Baltic Sea. Guest editor for this section, Paulina Rytönen, presents the theme in more detail on page 35. ✖

THE GEOAESTHETICS OF (EAST) EUROPEAN TRISTESSE ULRICH SEIDL'S IMPORT/EXPORT

by **David Williams**

Maria

In October 2011, acclaimed photographer Brent Stirton spent ten days in four Ukrainian cities shooting pictures of AIDS sufferers, the majority drug addicts and prostitutes. Stirton made his trip under the auspices of the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria,¹ the pictures he took intended for a public health campaign in Ukraine to raise awareness of the crisis. The following year, in 2012, one of the photos, of a prostitute and addict known as “Maria”, was awarded the World Press Photo prize for contemporary issues in the single shot category. The photo thus became part of an annual exhibition of images that traveled to some 45 countries, viewed by more than two million people. The image also appeared in a coffee table book distributed internationally in five languages.²

On winning his prize, Stirton told the media that he was relieved that the international judging panel considered the photograph's subject matter worthy of global attention, of which, at least online, the photo received plenty. The tabloid *New York Daily News* ran the photo and an accompanying report entitled “Photographer's portrait of despair, in the form of an addicted Ukrainian prostitute, wins World Press Photo contest”.³ In the United Kingdom, left-leaning *The Guardian* ran the photo accompanied by a brief opinion piece headed “Portrait of a Ukrainian sex worker, defiant and dignified”,⁴ while the country's most popular tabloid, *The Daily Mail*, ran the photo with the headline “Picture of drug-addled Ukrainian prostitute among the most startling press photographs of 2012”.⁵ For the Western spectator there appears something infinitely reassuring about Maria's picture – *the horror is elsewhere*.

While the frequently xenophobic reader comments on the websites of the *New York Daily News* and the *Daily Mail* provide excellent material for scholarly outrage, examining the short opinion piece in *The Guardian* by Natalia Antunova, and the responses of the paper's committed online readers to it, opens a more productive debate. Antunova begins with the following contention:

At first glance, Maria looks like an athlete resting after a warm-up. It's all in the way her limbs are arranged, and her bandaged right leg initially makes you think of a sports injury of some kind. The photograph's lighting is also reminiscent of one of those old-school shots of celebrated boxers, meant to celebrate both their battered bodies and their unsettling grace in equal measure.⁶

Of this aesthetically charged description, perhaps the only thing to observe is that we all see what want to see. Although Antunova notes “the hideous purple track marks blooming on her [Maria's] left leg”, she finds “something Nietzschean about the photograph”⁷ – whatever this might mean. For Antunova, Maria's eyes warn of the dangers of drug addiction and the “largely unglamorous” sex industry, Maria's gaze is “clear, calm and knowing [...] the eyes of a woman who has hit rock bottom and may not come back up but [...] is not, at this moment, afraid”.⁸ Antunova is impressed by “the defiance and dignity on display”, the expression of a woman who “won't take any shit from you for being who she is”, irrespective of the fact that she is “posing in a pair of flowery underpants that have been washed so many times that the flow-

ers have long since wilted and turned grey”.⁹

Debutante poetics aside, more problematic is Antunova's ensuing transformation of Maria into national allegory, her claim being that Maria's “toughness is familiar to anyone who really knows Ukraine [...] whose national anthem opens with the line ‘Ukraine's will and glory have not yet perished’”.¹⁰ The folksy concluding “Godspeed, Maria” is perhaps less endearing still, yet Antunova does succeed in conveying two arresting observations. The first is a Ukrainian friend's reaction to the photo, who responds with “‘Great, another hooker story coming out of Ukraine [...]’. Once again, I have to remind my English friends – no, we're not all drug-addicted hookers. But thanks for asking!” The second cannot be repeated often enough: that “a picture of a middling happy Ukrainian family”¹¹ would be unlikely to ever win World Press Photo prizes.

FOR THOSE FAMILIAR with *The Guardian*'s vociferous online readership, it will not come as a surprise that Antunova's piece drew 295 comments in less than three days. Antunova's aestheticization of Maria's despair drew the most ire, one commentator scathing that it was “revolting self-indulgent romanticizing of another's suffering”,¹² another slamming the patronizing “aren't the poor really rather super”¹³ tone, and an irate third penning: “The dignity of the downtrodden. The defiance of the oppressed. Do me a favor.”¹⁴

Other respondents were more concerned about what they perceived as the exploitative nature of the photo, with one wondering how much Maria was paid to pose, and whether this made the photographer “now complicit in her degradation”.¹⁵ This prompted another to raise the specter of Kevin Carter, the pho-



Pauli (Paul Hofmann)
in training to be
a security guard.



Olga (Ekaterina Rak) and
the crumbling (post-)
Soviet modernity.

tographer who in 1994 took his own life after winning a Pulitzer Prize for his image of a collapsed and starving Sudanese toddler being eyed-up by a vulture. The inference was simple: Stirton, like Carter, may one day answer to his conscience.¹⁶

Tapping a related vein, one respondent suggested that both photographer and journalist were “making a name and cash off a poor woman’s misery”, and had “shov[ed] her forward like a cowering freakshow animal”.¹⁷ Running with this aspect, another likened the dissemination of Maria’s image to that of “the man suffering from elephantiasis carrying his balls in a wheelbarrow”, charging that *The Guardian*, by swaddling Maria’s image in feminist commentary, was simply seeking to “help ease feelings of guilt in its readers for wanting to show the picture to their friends”.¹⁸ Perhaps made aware that she was taking a beating, Antunova eventually responded in the comments stream using what amounted to an *I’m a local so I know better* defense, taunting her critics about how many Ukrainian women in the sex trade they actually know, and claiming that “a good percentage of the girls I knew as a child ended up going that route”, and that many were indeed “dignified and defiant”.¹⁹

The image of Maria, its international dissemination, Natalia Antunova’s commentary, and the representative responses by online *Guardian* readers bring together so many of the anxieties concerning the representation of postcommunist Eastern Europe. Maria’s image is an integral part of a global databank of postsocialist horror: de-industrialization and unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, human trafficking and prostitution, depopulation and pollution, football hooliganism and racism, organized crime, and political corruption. Maria’s image exists not alone, but rather cohabitates, mixes, and mingles, with those of her countrywomen who occasionally penetrate the wider consciousness: the imprisoned Yulia Tymoshenko with her striking wrap-around braid; bare-breasted Femen activists; the Ukrainian bride a New Zealand radio station promised to a lucky listener; the Natashas and Svetlanas of German, Scandinavian, and Anglo-American *Krimis*; the real-life “sisters” of these Natashas and Svetlanas in the red light districts of provincial and metropolitan Europe. With the hulking Klitschko brothers Ukraine’s only male cultural exports, in the global imagination the country exists as a fairytale land of monsters and damsels in distress.

FOR THIS REASON, we who are interested in Eastern Europe tend to be both weary and wary of images such as Stirton’s Maria. We’ve seen this kind of “Made in Eastern Europe” horror a hundred times before. Confronted by it, the most fashionably liberal among us will, like Antunova, refer to Maria as a “sex worker” and ascribe her agency, dignity, and defiance. The less progressive will, in turn, be infuriated and call this patronizing disingenuousness, or worse. The politically committed will applaud Stirton’s humanitarian efforts to effect social change through engaged art. Others will maintain that engaged art has never changed the world, but has frequently made its purveyors very wealthy. Maria’s image brings to the fore endlessly rehearsed questions over voyeurism and aestheticization — can art that depicts suffering also be beautiful? It highlights the Aristotelian premise of art-as-catharsis — of art as “a place where spectators can



Old age as carnival.

come to experience pain as both enjoyable and purgative”²⁰ — and the paradox of our enjoying “imitations of things that would horrify us in reality”.²¹ In this respect, Eastern European horror is inevitably haunted by the specter of a Western spectator enjoying not his or her own suffering, but that of an Eastern other.

Import/Export

Like Stirton’s photograph of Maria, Austrian director Ulrich Seidl’s 2007 feature *Import/Export*²² is an exercise in ambivalence par excellence — a “kinda-hegemonic, kinda-subversive”²³ operation. It is simultaneously beautiful and unsettling, painfully realistic yet perfectly staged, highly engaged yet wide open to accusations of voyeurism and exploitation. As Wolfgang Höbel wrote in *Der Spiegel*, Seidl translates “the inner depths of suffering people into grandiose cinematic images”, the film containing “so much dazzling poetry and tenderness that one is almost completely disarmed by the magic of his horror world”.²⁴ The *Frankfurter Allgemeine* gushed about “images of such monumental tristesse” and “moments of such quiet sorrow”; the former breathtaking, the latter almost heartwarming.²⁵ Indeed, the elevation of tristesse to the highest form of beauty was the defining characteristic of many Germanophone reviews.

Set in the present day, *Import/Export* tells two parallel stories. The first is that of Olga (Ekaterina Rak), a young Ukrainian nurse and single mother, who, unable to make ends meet in her profession, and unwilling to work in the webcam porn business, leaves for Vienna where she works first as an au pair and then as a cleaner in the geriatric ward of a Viennese hospital. The second is that of Pauli (Paul Hofmann), a young Austrian, who, unemployed, down on his luck, and in debt, accompanies his stepfather to Slovakia and Ukraine where they install old slot machines. Cutting skillfully between these two stories, in Seidl’s vision East and West distressingly reassemble each other.

The crumbling housing estates and smoke stacks of Eastern Ukraine, notorious postcommunist ruins such as the Lunik IX Roma ghetto in Košice, Slovakia, the harsh neon-lit sterility of the “death factory” where Olga works in Vienna, and the bleakness of Viennese suburbia are all aesthetically equal in their freezing tristesse.

Particularly in its representation of the consequences of deindustrialization and the concomitant growth of precarious low-paid service sector employment, *Import/Export* is very much in accord with scholarship such as that by Charity Scribner, who observes that the “single space of industrial obsolescence [...] welds together aspects of Eastern and Western European culture”.²⁶ As Scribner notes, “state socialism’s ruin signaled that industrial modernity had exhausted its utopian potential”, and that its “final agonies” reminded many leftwing artists and thinkers “of the wearing out of Western welfare states such as Britain and France”.²⁷ Or as Susan Buck-Morss puts it, “‘East’ and ‘West’ [...] may have differed violently in their way of dealing with the problems of modernity, but they shared a faith in the modernizing process developed by the West that for us today has been unalterably shaken”.²⁸ In very different circumstances, Seidl’s two protagonists, Olga and Pauli, live the consequences. As Seidl explained to an Austrian interviewer at time of the film’s release, while external borders between East and West have fallen, new, horizontal borders within given societies, between poverty and prosperity, have emerged in their place.²⁹ Although this is a contention very difficult to disagree with, in the global ecology of images, or geoaesthetics, within which Ukraine and Austria circulate, Seidl’s representations of pan-European tristesse have far graver consequences for the former than for the latter.

IN THE FILM’S elegantly composed opening shot, a man in an *ushanka* stands in the snow trying to kickstart an ancient motorbike with a sidecar, a desolate block



The infamous image of Ekaterina Rak used to promote the film.

of *khrushchevki* in the background. We meet Olga trudging through the ice beside a railway line, the abandoned carriages and belching factory chimneys completing the picture of a failed industrial modernity. At work in a museum-like maternity hospital, Olga appears with other matronly nurses in a uniform we imagine tailored in the 1950s. Lining up to be paid, she receives thirty percent of her salary and the empty promise that the rest will be paid next month. Home for Olga is a depressing apartment she shares with her mother and toddler. With no running water, the bath functions as reservoir. The (post-)Sovietana of yellowed wallpaper and cross-stitch curtains are, however, not cinematic props; the scenes were filmed on location in Eastern Ukraine in an apartment normally inhabited.

In keeping with Seidl's proclivity for screening sex and nudity, in a scene filmed in a real webcam porn enterprise in the Czech city of Plzen, the first German sentence Olga learns is "darf ich dich blasen?" (can I blow you?), the second "leckst du auch Muschi?" (do you eat pussy too?) This, and what soon follows, is best described as Seidl's flirtation with what James Quandt calls "porno chic" — "an international vogue [...] widely apparent in art-house films from Austria to Korea", whereby directors attempt "to secure distributors and audiences in a market disinclined toward foreign films".³⁰ It is, as Richard Falcon more concisely put it, the "exposure through transgression" approach.³¹ In a curtained cubicle, naked on all fours, Olga is positioned with her buttocks to the camera as a customer first barks "auseinander" (spread them apart), and when she doesn't understand, switches to English and commands "put your finger in your asshole, put it deep inside you".

In a later companion scene, Pauli and his stepfather Michael (Michael Thomas) check into a predictably ugly Intourist hotel in Uzhhorod, western Ukraine, where Michael explains to Pauli that their stay is to be one of "brunzen, Bier, pudern" (pissing, beer,

bonking). When his "Ich, good man, Austria" act fails impress a young woman in the hotel bar, he hires a prostitute and when Pauli returns to their room he finds Michael having positioned her on all fours, her buttocks towards him. Sadistically amusing himself, he makes the confused young woman repeat a range of self-debasing profanities in German, including having her lie on her back and pretend she is riding a bike, and then crawl around as he tells her "Du bist mein Hund" (you're my dog). The extended cut reaches its climax, or moreover, anticlimax, with her giving him a blowjob, and him, despite all his macho chestbeating, not being able to manage an erection. It is, admittedly, not quite Lars von Trier territory, but neither do von Trier's depictions of extreme cruelty have geopolitical overtones. They float free in the autonomous zone of "art".

In a robust defense of Seidl, Michael Goddard observes "an ambiguous dynamic between Michael and the prostitute in which the more he attempts to humiliate her the more he comes across as completely ludicrous",³² thus subverting the narrative of dominant Western man and submissive Eastern woman. Goddard, however, minimizes the point that the prostitute in the scene was in fact played by a real prostitute, whose incredibly natural confusion, like Ekaterina Rak in Olga's porno scene, stemmed from the fact that she really didn't understand any German. And although Seidl himself has offered a typically strident self-defense, claiming that "it was arranged in advance what was possible",³³ as Catherine Wheatley notes, "in both film and reality the prostitute was paid to humiliate herself for the entertainment of others: and more specifically, for the enjoyment of Western spectators".³⁴ Wheatley, however, concludes that Seidl's means essentially justify his ends: he tests limits, raises questions, exposes human suffering, unsettles the viewer, even he or she "in search of such transgressive material", asking him or her "to question the boundaries of acceptability".³⁵ Ever reluctant

to censure their arthouse idols, scholars frequently use this kind of "good intentions" defense, transforming problematic directorial ethics into "comment" on problematic material.

In terms of Seidl's means, with the exception of Maria Hofstätter and Georg Friedrich, both of whom also appeared in Seidl's 2001 feature *Hundstage*, the cast of *Import/Export* is largely made up of amateurs, and moreover, people playing themselves. The scenes in the geriatric ward where Olga cleans were shot with real patients in Lainz Hospital in Vienna, the scenes in Pauli's unemployment office with real unemployed, and so forth. At a press conference following the film's premier at Cannes in 2007, a British journalist took Seidl to task over the film's promotional poster, which, like the DVD cover, features the naked back(side) of Ekaterina Rak. The journalist enquired of Seidl whether he would have made Claudia Schiffer's "ass the center of attention"³⁶ had she been his lead. Seidl replied nonchalantly that this explains why he doesn't work with Claudia Schiffer, adding that he had no input into the poster design, which is somewhat unbelievable given that he was also the film's producer.

SEIDL'S PREFERENCE FOR casting amateur actors is perhaps best accounted for by his contention that "actors need to suffer when they're depicting something uncomfortable".³⁷ The subtext here is that at least in Seidl's directorial hands, amateurs are more malleable than professionals. And as he seemed to enjoy pointing out in a number of interviews, "no one was forced to do anything",³⁸ perhaps the most common defense employed by any regular pornographer. On the issue of consent for the dementia patients who appear in the film, Seidl was likewise combative, insisting that family members gave consent where patients were unable to themselves. What needs underlining here, however, is that Seidl has form in this area. His documentaries such as *Mit Verlust ist zu rechnen*, *Tierische Liebe*, and *Der Busenfreund*, all center on individuals who appear to be mentally unwell and perhaps not completely cognizant of what they are doing. Even the long opening scene of Seidl's recent cinematic release, *Paradies: Liebe*, features a group of intellectually handicapped children smashing into each other in bumper cars at an amusement park, a scene that appears have no connection to the film itself.

If Seidl's means are indeed frequently suspect, the question thus becomes whether the ends redeem them. Unlike his more famous countryman, Michael Haneke, Seidl has seldom engaged in bellicose avant-garde rhetoric about "raping the viewer into independence".³⁹ With specific reference to *Import/Export*, of his predilection for hyperrealistic "entropic images"⁴⁰ Seidl maintained that

Getting up close to certain realities is of course going to make a lot of people uncomfortable, even though I'm not showing them anything out of the ordinary. Anyone can go and take a look around a geriatric ward. But because no one actually does, a taboo emerges. And then people blame the filmmaker for showing them such things.⁴¹

Seidl's defense of his work thus hinges on his self-perception as a taboo breaker, someone who makes



Ulrich Seidl.



Promotional poster and DVD cover.



Webcam porn.

the invisible visible, and the underlying assumption that if viewers are shown “certain realities” they will be moved and changed by them. This is, indeed, the underlying claim of most engaged art. Yet there is very little, if any, evidence to suggest that contemporary films showing the sexual degradation of Eastern European women function in this way. As a recent book coauthored by eminent film scholar Dina Iordanova inadvertently confirms, in the form of the human trafficking film, the abjected Eastern European female has had a veritable genre built around her in the post-1989 period.⁴² Iordanova’s claim is that, in this context, engaged cinema serves “a humanist concern by making visible what would ordinarily stay out of sight”.⁴³ Yet as Lisa Coulthard has argued with reference to the manifold representations of rape on screen, “visibility is not equivalent to understanding, inquiry or insight”.⁴⁴ Or as Maggie Nelson points out in her recent book, *The Art of Cruelty*:

‘Knowing the truth’ does not come with redemption as a guarantee, nor does a feeling of redemption guarantee an end to a cycle of wrongdoing. Some would even say it is key to maintaining it, insofar as it can work as a reset button – a purge that cleans the slate, without any guarantee of change at the root.⁴⁵

With death remaining perhaps the last taboo in our society, Seidl’s extreme long cuts of whimpering and distraught geriatric patients may indeed confront viewers with unsettling images of their own futures, terrifyingly alone as mental and physical decline take good hold. Yet in a time when on a daily basis millions consult the online global pornographic archive to watch “Ukrainian amateur student parties”, and much worse besides, debasing Eastern European women on the arthouse screen has no didactic Artaudian function whatsoever. As Slavoj Žižek notes, “In postmodernism, the transgressive excess loses its shock value and is fully integrated into the established artistic market”.⁴⁶ In this respect, the fact is that from its debut in competition at Cannes, *Import/Export* went on to be screened at festivals from Munich to Moscow, Karlovy

Vary to Yerevan, Jerusalem to Wrocław, Sarajevo to Seoul, Copenhagen to Chicago. On the other hand, following the film’s release Ekaterina Rak apparently went back to acting in children’s theatre in the Ukrainian provinces, and Paul Hofmann back to unemployment in Vienna. The fate of the degraded prostitute appears unknown. Thus when Seidl intones that “the West has no cultural interest in the East, no interest in relationships that exceed the economic. The prevailing interest is in the human being as a product, one which can be bought more cheaply in the East”,⁴⁷ an unfortunate irony becomes apparent – the comment seems an apt description of aspects of Seidl’s own approach.

AT RISK OF THIS ESSAY becoming polemically overdetermined, in moving towards a conclusion it is worthwhile considering whether there are indeed aspects of the film that potentially redeem it. The most obvious defense is that *Import/Export* portrays Seidl’s Austrian homeland in either the same or even less flattering terms than it does Ukraine, and that Seidl works hard to create uncanny contrasts and equivalencies. While Olga’s fluffy white hat and puffer jacket, her skintight shiny black shorts and ridiculous high-heeled white boots are all somewhat garish, Pauli’s unnamed Viennese girlfriend has the same bleached blonde hair, wears the same tacky cross around her neck, and dresses in the same “original fakes” sold at street markets across the European continent. At the same time Olga’s body is humiliated on the non-place of the computer screen, Pauli undergoes a ritualized and sadistic security guard training in a non-place beside an Autobahn. Later he is stripped to his underwear, tied up, and doused in beer by a gang of Muslim youths, who circle dance around him in neon-lit underground carpark. The drab seventies décor of the apartment Pauli’s mother shares with Michael is of a better quality than that in Olga and her mother’s apartment, but nonetheless seems to have been stuck in the same time machine.

In a number of scenes Seidl starkly depicts Austrian contempt for Eastern Europeans. Michael buys his ancient slot machines from a vendor who explains “Für

Russen und Jugos nur das Feinste” (for Russians and Yugos, only the best), a reminder of the manifold obsolescent consumer products the West exports to the East. A vindictive nurse (Maria Hofstätter) taunts Olga about whether she has “found a victim yet” – meaning a patient to marry – taking great pleasure in reminding her that while she might have been a nurse in Ukraine, in Austria she is cleaner. In this vein, Seidl’s most resonant geopolitical diptych consists of contrasting shots of healthy Ukrainian babies in their cots on Olga’s maternity ward, and those of helpless nappy-wearing Austrian geriatrics in their cots, around which Olga ends up cleaning. In a role play telephone exercise at an employment center, a certain Milica Jović, whose German is almost non-existent, calls a cleaning company for a job and when she finally gets the mock conversation right, automatically parrots “Ich bin Sieger, ich bin Sieger, ich bin Sieger” (I’m a winner, I’m a winner, I’m a winner), which is what her Austrian trainer has non-ironically drilled into her. At the same seminar, job seekers are taught how to “wait seriously”, sit up straight, and the golden rule of “lächeln mehr als die andere” (smile more than the others), if they want to find work. Whether it is Olga being taught how to clean the teeth of a stuffed fox, mopping the linoleum floors of the geriatric ward, taking dirty linen to be washed, or tidying up children’s bedrooms, an Austrian obsession with cleanliness and concomitant fear of the abject is constantly articulated.

IN MARKED CONTRAST to Olga’s kindness, the Austrian nurses frequently humiliate their elderly patients. As Michael orders the Ukrainian prostitute to crawl like a dog in Uzhhorod, in Vienna a male nurse (Georg Friedrich) looks on as a dementia patient mistakenly eats a dog biscuit. As Pauli dances drunkenly to downbeat electronica with a girl in the bar of the Uzhhorod hotel, Olga takes a patient (Erich Finsches) with whom she has formed a bond to the basement to dance to Pjotr Leschenko’s sentimental favorite, *Serdse*. In these scenes, Seidl stages Eastern European warmth towards the aged and infirm as a critique of his homeland, where bodies past their expiry dates and no longer economically useful are quarantined to die alone.

While in these respects *Import/Export* certainly makes a good go of subverting the hegemonic East-West dichotomy, the difficulty remains that in global imagology Austria can shrug off a critical representation with far greater ease than Ukraine. Irrespective of the disgrace of Kurt Waldheim or Jörg Haider, the infamy of the Natascha Kampusch case, or however critically Seidl or Elfriede Jelinek might present the underbelly of their homeland, Austria remains the land of Mozart, of Kaffee and Kuchen, alpine pastures and old church spires, and not least Sasha Baron Cohen's *Funkyzeit mit Brüno*. In the global imaginary Austrian women are teachers, nurses, businesswomen, and of course house wives; there are no prostitutes, drug addicts, or cleaners – only those imported from the East.

“Depression porn”

In her seminal essay collection *The Culture of Lies*, Croatian writer Dubravka Ugrešić issues the warning that “human misfortune is easily transformed into intellectual and artistic porn”.⁴⁸ Although Ugrešić was writing in the specific context of the Yugoslav collapse, the warning echoed through the Eastern European post-communist space as a whole. In many respects, with *Import/Export* not only does Seidl ignore Ugrešić's warning, he takes it to be aspirational. Prominently displayed on his personal website there is an endorsement from cult American trash director John Waters, who chose *Import/Export* as his favorite film of 2009, Waters' citation reading: “The most sorrowful movie of the year is also the best. The miserable lives of Ukrainian immigrants in Vienna makes this agonizing but brilliantly directed opus the cinematic equivalent of slitting your wrists. A new genre? Depression porn? Hey, I got off.”⁴⁹

It is clearly Seidl's prerogative if he wishes to embrace this kind of endorsement, but if so, he should also abandon any claim to what he purports to be the film's humanist imperatives.⁵⁰ Yet Seidl clearly revels in ambivalence. In the course of Olga's journey we see her go from nurse, to webcam girl, to au pair, to cleaner, a brave young woman doing her best in imperfect circumstances. Yet in her climatic scene, again practicing a little *épater le bourgeois*, Seidl has Olga dressed as a bunny at a hospital party – bunny ears, bunny tail, and bow tie, the only obvious association being a Playboy bunny. While Seidl may well think this very clever, it only serves to underline that the imprimatur of a Cannes premier, the high art credentials of an auteur director, and celebration on the global festival circuit is no guarantee of ends justifying means. Assembled in a geoaesthetic slideshow, Olga as Playboy bunny, Olga as webcam girl, the image of the abused anonymous prostitute, of Brent Stirton's “Maria”, even that of Tatiana Romanova in *From Russia with Love* begging James Bond to beat her if she eats too much, they all start to blur. Lowbrow or highbrow, for our entertainment or our engagement, these images all exist along the same lucrative continuum, reinforce the same patterns of thought, a montage and mirage of a triste and submissive Eastern European other. Nothing we should “get off on”. ❌

Note: Photo and film stills from www.ulrichseidl.com.

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LATVIANS IN GUERNSEY

AN EMERGING TRANSLOCAL LABOR DIASPORA

by **Aija Lulle**

Large-scale emigration is one of the fundamental concerns of post-socialist Latvia: more than 213,000 people have emigrated during the past decade, and in 2012, Latvia's population was barely 2 million, down from the 2.3 million counted in the 2001 census.¹ So roughly 10% of the population, mainly economically active people, left Latvia over the course of just one decade. Emigration peaked after Latvia joined the European Union in 2004, and again during the economic recession that started in late 2008.² There are several distinct types of motivation for people to leave the country or choose to shuttle between work abroad and a permanent residence in Latvia: desire to escape from poverty, low salaries, unemployment, underemployment, family reasons, the appeal of a "Western" lifestyle, personal liberation, or a sense of adventure and self-realization.

Guernsey, along with Great Britain and Ireland, has been among the first and most popular places for Latvians to look for work abroad since the mid-1990s. At that time, Latvia had recently established its independence from the Soviet Union and had embarked upon its journey towards accession to the EU. The Channel Islands, which have a unique status as direct territorial dependencies of the British Crown – maintaining their own legislative, monetary, and taxation systems, together with their own parliaments and a governor appointed by the British Crown, and with no

membership in the EU nor in the European Economic Area – are themselves worthy of research as a *world within a world*. As migration scholars underline, these specific insular territories are particularly productive and intense sites for current migration research.³

Guernsey, an island of 63.3 square kilometers and around 63,000 inhabitants,⁴ mostly of British and Norman descent, is a naturally bounded place, but it is also a shifting and rapidly changing social space due to its experience of different migration rhythms. It should be stressed that Guernsey is a special case due to its restrictive housing regulations and population management in a limited geographical space. Despite, or even because of, those restrictions, research in the insular context allows us to see more clearly some aspects of migration and its associated social dynamics that we might overlook in other, larger territorial contexts.

IN THIS PAPER I examine the emergence and continued growth of the Latvian community in Guernsey by looking at recruitment practices, at the evolution of



related geographical and social mobilities as reflected in migrant social networks, and at how all these can be conceived in relation to the translocal time-space of Latvia-Guernsey, with its attendant circuits and rhythms of migration, visiting, and traveling. I suggest that instead of using the language of "sending" and "receiving" countries, it is more fruitful to look at the emergence of a labor diaspora in Guernsey, and in Europe at large, made up of mobile, circulating workers who become

a structural feature of host countries' economies, yet at the same time often remain a population that combines "floating" back and forth with an increasing tendency to set down roots through extended periods of stay and the development of personal relations.

In my discussion of the Latvian migration to Guernsey, I employ a variety of key concepts derived mainly from geographical research on migration. I distinguish first between *migration*, a purposeful move to another place for a significant period, generally motivated by economic reasons as in the case of recent Latvian migration, and *mobility*, which includes shorter visits

Hierarchies are highly visible on a small island. But they exist everywhere of course.



Guernsey,
approaching
from the east.

and vacations. Having made this distinction, we will also see how Latvian movements to and from Guernsey actually blur this division with circular migrations, working vacations, etc. Next, I see migration and mobility as *time-space* events which are articulated within the *translocal* space that is formed by Guernsey and Latvia, and in particular a person's place of origin in Latvia. The concept of translocal geographies involves not only the fact of being situated in different locales over time and across space, but also draws attention to everyday local movements and events in a place outside the country of origin. This approach *grounds* the story of migration and mobilities in particular spaces and places, and across time periods that may express a rhythmic regularity, for instance, nine months in Guernsey and three months in a hometown or village in Latvia; in cases of shorter visits, rhythms of mobility back to Latvia are often aligned with school holidays.

Interviews and participant observation

Before I go on to develop these theoretical ideas and present some findings, I will briefly explain my methodological approach. The analytical strategy uses a qualitative approach to understand how research participants make sense of their experiences. My main line of analysis is based on interviews and participant

observation: I lived in guesthouses in places where migrants work; I attended clubs and home parties, participated in everyday tasks, helped out in a bar and in greenhouses, took part in leisure activities, went shopping, and traveled together with my participants on the island and between Latvia and Guernsey. Observation of and participation in the daily activities of Latvian migrants provided me with great insights into the materiality and mundane routines of people's lives. More formally, I conducted 96 in-depth interviews in Guernsey between January 2010 and April 2012. Most of the interviews were tape-recorded with the explicit permission of the research participants, while some were conducted without a tape recorder at the wish of the research participant. Some interviews were repeated at different stages of the fieldwork. In addition, I kept a researcher's diary during the fieldwork, gathered visual material by taking pictures of everyday life in Guernsey, and analyzed other sources, including social portal website discussions, the press, and official documents. I reviewed and compared transcripts and notes several times to find interrelated themes and relevant situations in the working lives of the participants and their relationships with places and people in Latvia, and developed my interpretations inductively, looking for what is significant to the research participants themselves.⁵ I presented myself as a researcher both in actual encounters and in on-

line discussions, and I was positioned by my research participants as an acquaintance and friend, a known guest, yet simultaneously as a researcher and not as a fellow worker. I was seen as both an insider to the transnational realm (as a Latvian abroad) and an outsider on the island (because I was not really employed there). Moreover, I was positioned as *different* by the state officials, employers, and recruiters I interviewed in Guernsey. "You are the kind of Latvian person who I meet at conferences. I meet Latvians from Riga, from finance, they are more like you. Even if you sound like a Latvian, I would not put you together [with other Latvians in Guernsey]." This is how one of the employers appraised me during an interview, simultaneously drawing a line between the emerging labor diaspora in Guernsey and other Latvians like myself, emphasizing his perception and knowledge of the regional and social inequalities in Latvia that shape different mobilities out of the country in the post-socialist era.

Aspiring to the material goal of a better life

In most of the interviews, when asked about their lives and how they had decided to come to Guernsey, my research participants stressed that they had not heard of Guernsey initially, and could not even locate it on the map. "I wanted to go abroad to earn money," was

the most typical answer to my question about why they left Latvia. The island itself initially was not as important as a desire to discover what an individual can achieve through the migration strategy; in other words, how much faster one could begin to achieve a material ambition by stepping out from a place in Latvia and earning several times more abroad than one could earn in Latvia.

As noted in the introduction, after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the geopolitical repositioning of Latvia as a former Soviet republic entailed the aspiration to “return to Europe”, a geographical expression of a value of radical individualism as the route to material success and as the measure of social worth. The most significant drivers of Latvia’s fast GDP growth in the mid-2000s (an average of 10% per year) were consumption and mortgage loans rather than investment in industrial enterprises. In the economic recession that followed, with a 14.8% decline in GDP in 2009, many Latvian workers looked for employment abroad because they had to repay mortgage loans at home. For those ordinary Latvian people, Guernsey was one of the places in which they could pursue their ambition to reach a better life faster. Latvian migration to Guernsey, like most migrations, can be visualized through the prism of, for example, shifting temporary moves away from the home area, in relation to the contrasting economic well-being of different territorial units, while subjective well-being was expressed as a feeling of belonging to places in Latvia. For many Latvians, going abroad signified a recognition of a new geography that presented an opportunity to compress the individual’s journey towards a better life. Moreover, the decision to migrate is often narrated as a moment of transition in a person’s life-course and family cycle. In a related sense, it is also a historic moment embedded in the evolution of a nation’s life – in Latvia’s case, the transition from its Soviet socialist past towards neoliberal Europe.

MY STUDY OF EMIGRATION from Latvia revealed that the difference in the level of real wages was the main driving force and the most frequent motivation of those with secondary or vocational education and low-paid jobs in Latvia who were more likely to come from outside the capital.⁶ I also found that the majority of respondents intended for their emigration to be short-term. Ilze, in her forties, is a mother of two, divorced a year before her departure to England and then Guernsey in 2009. Her main concern was that she needed to provide decent material support for her teenage daughters. She also had monthly mortgage payments for an apartment. Despite holding two jobs in Latvia – in a shop and in a gas station – she could not make ends meet and moved in with her sister and mother in their homestead.

“We did not see any other solution to paying back loans while I was living alone with the children. I decided to leave the children with my sister and mother. I thought I would earn enough money to repay the loans in a year or so. Now I understand that those were unrealistic dreams.”

After her first return home, Ilze left for Guernsey again three months later to continue earning abroad



Sergejs and Lilita preparing a flag for the Latvian Independence Day celebration in Guernsey, November 2010.



to cover expenses in Latvia. A recent study showed that most “crisis migrants”, those who left during the recession that started in late 2008, were not only striving to earn more, but had left out of desperation over their unemployment and the burden of mortgage loans.⁷

Almost half of those who have left Latvia during the past decade, more than 100,000, went to Great Britain. Data from the Bank of Latvia on remittances showed that about half of all migrant remittances came from Great Britain in 2011–2012.⁸ It is assumed that, on average, migrants send half of the British minimum wage back to Latvia, and spend the other half on their own daily expenses. All together, migrant remittances to Latvia are estimated to amount to 2.5% of Latvia’s gross domestic product.⁹ Latvia exemplified the new rhythms of post-1990 East-West mobility. In this new circulatory model, people do not intend to relocate permanently, but rather move back and forth between the UK and their home countries.¹⁰ Migration from the A8 countries, those that joined the EU in 2004, generally had a temporary or circular nature both during the 1990s and after the EU enlargement.¹¹ Although these observations do not allow us to predict future settlement and mobility patterns, my respondents report strong intentions to return to their country of origin at some point.

In class terms, the core of my research participants can be characterized as erstwhile working class who had few structural opportunities left to earn self-respect through work in Latvia’s rapidly changing labor market. This new labor market witnessed a growing inequality of wages as many industries were dismantled, and growing regional inequalities exacerbated unemployment problems outside the capital, Riga. The country’s geopolitical return to Europe opened up previously inaccessible opportunities in the segmented labor market in Guernsey. The Guernsey option made even greater sense for those who were weak and powerless in the labor market – those not in a position to become rich quickly in their own country, for example by securing well-paid work in the newly privatized economy.

The emergence of a “permanent temporary community”

Instead of a common migration control regime enacted through residence permits, migration to Guernsey is controlled by a complex system of housing permits. The real estate market in Guernsey is divided into two sectors: the local market, which in 2012 constituted about 94% of all housing, and the remaining approximately 6%, which functions as an open market where the rent in 2012 was at least 50% greater than in the local market. In general, housing permits are linked to specific economic sectors and a person’s qualifications. For example, a person willing to work in the horticultural sector can qualify for a permit allowing him or her to stay on the island for up to nine months per year; the person must spend three months off the island. Most horticultural workers live in hotels or staff houses. In other sectors, such as restaurants and hotels, a person can receive a housing permit for up to three years, and is often provided with accommodation in staff hotels, so that the migrant workers literally live like working guests. Most employment in shops or in geriatric care qualifies the employee for a permit of up to five years, but at the same time, it demands a higher contribution to the economy through rent payments because migrants with these sector-specific work permits must obtain housing on the open market.

Migrant labor is sought in order to maintain certain economic activities on the island, but migrants are accepted only temporarily and only as contributors to the economic growth of the island. This strategy is pursued with the aim of avoiding overpopulation of the island with “outsiders” who are no longer of an economically productive age or are unemployed.

In the mid-1990s, employers in Guernsey’s horticulture sector were seeking migrant labor from their previous main source, the island of Madeira, where the tourism industry was rapidly growing, so that sufficient workers were no longer available. Employers therefore decided to establish contacts with another source country. At the same time, Latvia



The Latvian shop "Jāniši", Mill Street, Guernsey.

had embarked on its "return" to Europe, undergoing profound restructuring, and had just applied for accession to the EU. One employer summed up the situation as follows:

"Basically, at that time, in 1997 [...] somebody suggested: 'Latvia, good workers!' And then we went to an agency and started working with them. [...] In a way it was a bit of luck, because after Madeira it was the first country we tried. It just worked out."

At the beginning, migration to Guernsey was organized by a private recruitment agency. Opportunities to work and earn money were accompanied by specific rules, such as a restricted period of stay on the island. Another restriction was the practice of issuing housing and work permits to single working persons, and there was little inducement to overstay as there were almost no social allowances. These conditions of "managed" migration implied that, instead of a complete human being, an employer received only a productive worker whose reproductive side (including growing up, schooling, sickness, child rearing, and retirement) was left on the other side of the border, off the island. The worker was aware of these rules, and as the guest worker situation has shown both in Europe historically and in Guernsey, this condition of being suspended between two places and two lives, also known as liminality, is constructed by the shared expectation of employers and employees that the latter will leave after the work is completed. These and other regulations were not seen as unacceptable, however, by most of my Latvian informants. On the contrary, they fit well with the people's construction of their life project: to go to work for a short period of time, earn the amount of cash they wanted, and then come back to Latvia to fulfill their dream.

LATVIANS FORM THE LARGEST national group of Eastern European migrants in Guernsey, but due to a lack of data, it is impossible to provide reliable numbers. The constant shifting of people back and forth does not



Sabine, arriving in Guernsey by ferry for the first time hoping to find some short-term job for the summer, holding her passport ready for inspection if necessary. June 2011.



Women have packed goods in big bags they want to send home using individual entrepreneurs who provide delivery services between Guernsey and Latvia. June 2011.



A typical room in a dormitory where some women live during their short-term contracts in Guernsey. January 2010.

A better life. What does this mean? It depends on who you are and what you expect.

allow us to obtain precise statistical figures, and they are not publicly available by national breakdown. Latvians in Guernsey themselves believe their numbers to be large, and this may be related both to the constant shifting of people creating a multiform “imagined community”,¹² and to their constantly mobile migratory trajectories, which make Latvians cross paths more often with other Latvians than with locals. Some Latvian migrants themselves believe 5,000 to 8,000 to be the average over the decade 1997–2007, with new arrivals replacing those who return to Latvia. The numbers declined in the late 2000s but started climbing again in 2010 with the impact of the severe recession in Latvia. The numbers of housing permits issued are reduced or increased according to the unemployment rate among the permanent population of the island. Depending on the season, there may be 1,500 to 2,000 Latvians present on the island. These numbers crop up in many unrelated interviews and conversations, yet I have not established firm sources for them, nor do I insist that exact numbers are a cornerstone of the Guernsey story. What we can say for certain is that 701 Latvian citizens in Guernsey voted in the referendum against Russian as a second official language in Latvia in February 2012.¹³ I treat the lack of exact figures for the number of Latvians in Guernsey as an indicator of the temporary and volatile nature of migration flows. They are a dialogical construction of both the Latvian migrant community in Guernsey and local politics. In this construction, coming and going involves strict control, but also provides some space for maneuvering in alliances among the state, employers, and migrant employees. As an employer explained, “Some come for nine months, some just for ten weeks or three months when we have busy production times. [...] It is better for them as they can go back home to their families.”

THE FOLLOWING CHRONOLOGICAL stages of migration evolution can be traced in Guernsey. Organized recruitment commenced from 1997 to 2001 when women, for the most part, were recruited to work in the horticultural sector (greenhouses and related seed-packing factories or individual farms). Recruitment was carried out mainly through a private agency in Latvia but was paid for by the Guernsey employers. Gradually, jobs in the hospitality sector (hotels) were also opened to Latvians. Recruitment in this sector was organized mainly by the same agency. Housing and work permits were issued for nine months.

During the pre-EU-accession years of 2001–2004, recruitment for the horticultural sector continued, and various other sectors were also opened up for both men and women. More diverse housing and work permits were also issued for up to three years. More Latvians started working in the hospitality sector as well – in hotels and restaurants – and in shops, homes for the elderly, warehouses, factories, in construction, and in other work. Parallel to the agency’s efforts, recruitment through social networks spread: settled Latvians invited their relatives and friends to visit them or to work in Guernsey.

The biggest change in time-space rhythms dictated by the regime of work visas emerged after Latvia joined the EU in 2004. Although Guernsey is not part of the EU, it does subscribe to the regulations on the free movement of labor within the European Union



View towards the sea from St. Peter Port.



St. Peter Port, urban landscape.

and the European Economic Area. Migrant workers have typically worked in horticulture, warehouses, cleaning services, homes for the elderly, factories, hotels, restaurants and cafeterias, various shops and services, and construction. A few are employed in the education sector, banks, financial companies, and even governmental institutions, and several have established their own businesses.

SOME OF THOSE who had started working in Guernsey in previous years continued to travel back and forth between Latvia and Guernsey. Gunārs, in his forties, originally came from the Liepāja region and went to Guernsey in 2005 due to low wages paid under the table, a rather typical situation in many private enterprises in Latvia.¹⁴ His hours and wages were not fixed, and his income was unstable. Gunārs emphasized that it was “very difficult for me as a man, that feeling that you will not be able to pay [for various expenses]”. He described his unstable income as something that disturbed his sense of self, his masculinity, and his ability to maintain relationships. Gunārs found a job in Guernsey in his profession and worked as a plumber. In the first year, he saved money to launch a new life with his partner in Latvia, but when the relationship went sour he returned to Guernsey. However, he does not want to stay there permanently, nor does he want to move to a third country to work. Gunārs still intends to return to Latvia, as he told me during one of the follow-up interviews in 2012:

“I have achieved what I planned and I have plans for the future. Two more years and I go back to Latvia for good. If everything continues as it is now.”

It is difficult to predict whether he will really return, or whether the idea will prove to have been a myth. At present, however, his desire to return to Latvia is strong.

Many migrant workers have changed employment sectors several times and climbed the career ladder in Guernsey. Recruitment was very heterogeneous:

while agency recruitment still continued in the horticultural sector, social networks and individual contacts have clearly become the dominant ways to search for a job due to the increase in information circulating in online social networks. For example, the social Internet portal draugiem.lv¹⁵ (a local competitor to Facebook) is often used by potential migrants to inquire about job opportunities abroad. For those who are familiar with Guernsey, returning is the result of multiple attachment points in addition to those involving work, such as friends and acquaintances who reside there, nature, and a preference for a small, bounded place; while first-time migrants go to the island mostly because there is work. As Jānis, who went to Guernsey in late 2009 and started as a night porter in a hotel explained, “I asked my friends all over the place and wrote letters on draugiem.lv. I asked people to tell me frankly where it would be possible to go without previous contacts or a contract and find a job. I was told that Guernsey is such a place.” Patterns of travel back to Latvia also changed over time: “The first few years, I was always going back to Latvia on vacation; I did not even consider any other place. I was going back home! [...] But now, since my husband is also here, we have had vacations in Spain, in Tenerife, and we usually go to Latvia two times a year for a week or two,” as Ilona, in her fifties, explained.

TO SUM UP, the space-time rhythms of migrating, circulating, being on the island, having to leave, and visiting friends and relatives back home – references to which were a constant refrain in the interview narratives I sketched – create a form of collective “permanent temporariness”, while at the same time a more settled labor diaspora of Latvians is emerging on the island. The condition of permanent temporariness reflects a constellation of factors related to legal status, employment opportunities (which are limited to certain types of work with predefined housing and work contract regulations), and the perceived need to keep in touch with “home”. These “rhythmic mobilities” of Latvian migration and mobility to and from Guernsey are explored in more detail in the next section.



Castle Cornet, illuminated in the evening.

Multiple rhythms and the making of migration time

Hard work, long hours, and frequent switching of jobs within and between employment sectors are all justified by many informants as a part of their overarching purpose: “I am here to work”, and therefore, they believe they are on Guernsey for a limited time. However, in “pendulum migration”, the time spent in Guernsey is usually longer than the time spent in “normal life”: typically, migrants spend nine months in Guernsey and three months in Latvia. As a woman who works in a warehouse said with certainty, “I am here only for work, I live in Latvia!” Yet after reflecting on her “inner” time and “belonging” in relation to linear time, she reformulated the answer: “But [...] actually, it is true that I spend most of my time here”. Yet the everyday rhythms of a person’s lifetime are not usually reflected in this way. The self is perceived through the physical presence in a place, memories, and future intentions, and together these constitute the life-world. For my informants, the variable divisions between time spent in Guernsey and time spent in Latvia make it almost impossible to answer the question “Where do you live?” in a straightforward way.

The length of stay in Guernsey varies considerably: some migrants come for fixed periods (nine months or up to five years, depending on the housing and work permits received), while some come for only one to three months. Many shuttle continuously back and forth between countries, which one research participant, employed in a restaurant business in Guernsey, explained in this way:

“I am at home every third month. I don’t immerse myself here [in Guernsey]; I don’t want to get attached to a tiny single room here. I have my kitchen and bathroom in Riga. I come [to Guernsey] for 2 or 3 months, buy tickets in advance for May, September, etc. I am never here for too long.”

Also, visiting friends and relatives becomes a rather

common event embedded in migration cultural practices across the borders. Eva, in her forties, says:

“I go to visit my mother three or four times a year. I miss my mother; she is very old. I buy tickets well in advance. I also take care of other things I need to do, such as health checkups. But one week at a time is enough. [...] I might add some extra time if friends are getting married or something like that is happening.”

If the migrants do not return to Latvia, relatives and friends come to visit them in Guernsey, so the island has become a multi-directional, transnational meeting place. Moreover, even when migrants “stay put”, Latvia and Guernsey are brought together through material things. There are heavy flows of goods back and forth, and several companies have been established to convey goods bought in Guernsey to Latvia, mainly presents to family and friends, while presents, personal belongings, and food made in Latvia flow back to Guernsey on a much smaller scale. Latvians’ beloved black bread and even homemade meatballs arrive in Guernsey in about two days via the migrant workers’ transportation routes, which have already become institutionalized practices. Also, communication between Latvia and Guernsey is intensive in everyday life: even if migrants are not mobile for some period of time, they are constantly in touch with Latvia via Skype, e-mail, text messages, and telephone.

Most migrants have several part-time jobs and are locally mobile on the island. For example, my informant Maija works full-time in a managerial position in a department store, but early in the morning, late at night, and on weekends she cleans houses and also works in a restaurant. In many cases, different forms of social mobility – having several jobs, moving from work in horticulture to hospitality and services, or changes in family status – intersect with geographical mobility on the island, and have the effect of changing the rhythms of visits to friends and relatives in Latvia.

In addition to this social-geographical intersection,

it should be noted that social security and “better jobs”, e.g. jobs in the financial sector or with government agencies, are more easily available if a person has a “stable” attachment to the island. In most cases, this implies being married or cohabiting with a local person. Thus intimate and personal relationships, as soon as they are officially announced to the authorities, become a powerful vehicle of social mobility and enhanced stability on the island.

Temporary translocal rhythms of movement are governed from above by specific regulations in Guernsey, such as work contracts and housing permits on the island, but some employers routinely invite people back after they have spent the compulsory period off the island that makes them eligible for a new housing permit, often described by my informants as “an empty time” or “waiting time” in Latvia. In other cases, Guernsey is constructed as “our place” through gradually learned knowledge of the island. Ilva for example, in her forties, explained why she and her family returned after an interlude in Latvia and in Bradford, England, even though there was no work waiting for them on the island: “When everything went down [referring to the onset of the recession], we thought, let’s go to Guernsey again, at least we know the place and with luck we’ll find some work there!” Also, although workers often expect to stay on the island temporarily or come back regularly until the target (usually a financial one) is reached, for many the target often becomes more and more distant or changes in various ways: the house requires more expensive repairs, so more years abroad are needed to make the regular mortgage payments, or a son or daughter, having reached a certain age, needs support to go on to university or further education.

The anticipated and imagined rhythms of possible return are also subject to alteration due to the changes in life-course and family care rhythms: when children have to be sent to school, or the retirement age has been reached, Latvia can become the place where movement is suspended and turned into a *pause*.¹⁶ Zelma explained her mobility project in the following way: “I have been here for eight years already and I am 62 years old. I will stick with my work here at least two more years to get a minimum old-age pension from Guernsey, and only then can think about returning to Latvia.”

TIME MANAGEMENT is seldom the same year after year: in order to transform the “empty time” in one’s life and overcome the binary opposition of family in Latvia and work in Guernsey, people also strategically manipulate various systems of time-space discipline.¹⁷ For example, schoolchildren and students in Latvia have three months break during the summer, which coincides with the time tourists are allowed to stay on the island without a permit. So migrants bring their children and relatives to the island and choose a different period for their own vacation to extend the time spent together, thereby making the migrant’s space less fragmented in both locations. Those established more permanently in Guernsey often use Latvia as a long summer vacation time-space. Furthermore, the strategies employed to expand or compress migration time and reach a “normal” life back in Latvia also change. Wages earned abroad become an integral part of a household budget, and work options in Latvia are

no longer considered even if there are vacancies and it is possible to earn sufficient income. In other cases, children whose studies were paid for in Latvia accompany their parents and become migrant workers themselves on the island.

In various local and translocal spatial mobilities and representations of spaces, people also “make” time. For example, many create a specific “time of migration” by perceiving their transnational interlude as “time off” from “real life” in Latvia. The latter is less financially rewarding, but ultimately the place where their habitus fits their environment of everyday rooted normality. To be able to cross borders was a dream which simultaneously created the path of return – imagined or real. Yet the migrants return as different selves – richer, and in a better social position both in their own and in others’ eyes. In that sense, the “return” to Europe was a strategic and provisional mobility – actually, a vehicle for the opposite: a “return” to European Latvia. The period of work abroad promises rewards in a compressed time calculation, hastening the achievement of broader life-goals that could not be realized within Latvia, but would ultimately be enjoyed there. However, an idea of actual return is constantly evaluated in relation to the new capitalist rhythms of Latvia, where instability and crisis prevent return and instead motivate people to continue their translocal travel and affective attachments beyond the scale of the state, or to settle outside Latvia more permanently.

Conclusion

Through a translocal description of one particular migration circuit, I have shown in this paper how the temporality and continuation of migration is produced and how a labor diaspora of Latvians in Guernsey has emerged through the intersections of various migratory rhythms. A small island is not limitless, and multiple regulatory spaces control the scale and nature of the flow and settlement of migrants on the island of Guernsey. The temporality of migrants’ space in Guernsey is a result of regulations that have both local and transnational ramifications. The presence of a highly mobile Latvian community in Guernsey can be perceived as a process of permanent temporariness: Guernsey’s housing and work permit laws stipulate the constant rotation of migrants, but place-specific attachments and subjectivities also encourage some people to move continuously back and forth. Individuals may only be in Guernsey for a short time, yet Latvians as a migrant community have already become established and are permanently present there.

Translocal spatial practices, by their very definition, exceed national territories, and most of my research participants themselves avoid entanglements with state institutions. Meanwhile, the issue of broader political rights is not on the agenda of Latvian migrants in Guernsey because they perceive themselves as being on the island only temporarily, “just to work”.

Through showing some examples of how time-space and life-course rhythms shape various mobilities in places, I have suggested that current international migration and identity formations can be better grasped not just by looking at the national scale but must also focus on translocal and local-local interactions: work, family and friends, and place-based

experiences. Moreover, the translocal lens does not undermine the importance of space politics that is exercised on national or global scales; on the contrary, a grounded approach to studying concrete experiences in specific places allows spatial practices to be seen in more detail. As both the Latvian case and the general migration literature suggest, by choosing to work abroad instead of exerting pressure on nation-state institutions to improve employment opportunities, wages and living conditions, the migration culture not only emerges as a significant part of post-socialist society, but it also enforces the *status quo*: individual households rely on foreign wages translocally, and the state benefits from remittances that sustain the national balance of payments.¹⁸ However, this is potentially a dangerous and fragile dependency, especially in a small country like Latvia.

Understanding the large scale of emigration as a matter of national concern, in 2012 the political institutions in Latvia adopted a Return Migration plan with the aim of attracting back some of those who have left.¹⁹ This may seem an economically rational idea, and it certainly fits in with a wider international migration discourse of “mobilizing” the diaspora to return in order to kick-start development in countries that have been denuded by what is seen as excessive migration. And in Latvia’s case, there is the additional specter of demographic collapse due to the combination of mass emigration and sub-replacement fertility. But my case-study evidence presented in this paper also stresses the importance of a more realist, relational approach based on a critical study of emigration realities shaped by the unique translocal rhythms that have developed over time to link the two places in question. These attachments and mobilities are governed partly by the regulatory regimes of the insular host society of Guernsey and partly by the personalized aspirations of the migrants for social mobility, their emotional links to Latvia as “home”, and their family and care responsibilities in multiple localities. ✖

Note: All essays are scholarly articles and have been peer-reviewed by specialists under the supervision of Baltic Worlds’ editorial advisory board.

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CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

A GROWING PROBLEM IN THE EU

by **Påhl Ruin** illustration **Karin Sunvisson**

It is difficult to know the exact numbers involved, but estimates suggest that approximately 500,000 children are left behind in EU countries, that is, 500,000 have at least one parent abroad. Most of them are in Poland and Romania – a result of the size of these countries. But as a percentage of the population, the problem is greater in Lithuania and Latvia. There might also be a considerable number of cases in Estonia and Bulgaria, but the numbers are not known.

This text will focus on Lithuania, one of the hardest struck countries. Estimates of the number of children with one – or both – parents living in the UK, Ireland, Norway, or some other Western European country have varied between 10,000 and 20,000. Nobody knows the exact number. Some years ago, the Children's Rights Ombudsman of Lithuania claimed that five percent of all children are in this situation. No one knows whether this figure is different today.

It all started in 2004 when the poorest countries around the Baltic Sea – Poland and the Baltic states – joined the EU. The borders opened up and we saw a huge flow of workers moving westward. In the first stage, it was primarily young single people without families who emigrated, but there were also some breadwinners searching for better pay abroad. Many found jobs in the construction business, the care sector, and the cleaning industry, working for a couple of years before – at least in many cases – moving back home again.

Some were forced to move away from their homeland because of a lack of work, others freely chose to leave. In addition, among the emigrants were of course students choosing to study abroad and highly educated people wanting to explore new career possibilities and earn more money.

At the end of 2008, the nature of emigration changed to some extent. The financial crisis had hit the Baltic countries – though less so Poland – more severely than most other European countries. Unemployment skyrocketed and a growing number of emigrants were now compelled to leave the country.

This also meant that the number of emigrant parents being separated from their children started to grow. These countries had already been confronted

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with this problem, in some cases even before EU accession. In 2007, Lithuania thus changed the law declaring that parents had to report to the authorities when children were left in the care of grandparents or other caretakers.

“We had to introduce this law. The situation had gotten out of control with parents just leaving without reporting it to the schools or any other public institution”, says Rūta Pabedinskienė, Chief Specialist at the Family and Children Division of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor. “Already back in 2004 the first teachers reported cases where children who used to be fine suddenly showed a lack of concentration and started to misbehave. It turned out that they no longer had their parents around.”

Today children with one or both parents abroad can be found all over Lithuania, in big cities as well as in the country – with slightly higher numbers along the Baltic Sea coast. Pabedinskienė admits that the situation for many children is still severe. But she sees a couple of indications of improvement:

“One sign is that parents nowadays more often take their children with them when emigrating. Another positive sign is that, as the years pass by, both families themselves as well as society have found better

structures to deal with the situation. We all have more knowledge of the problem today, and we try to act accordingly. A third positive sign is that children with parents abroad are less stigmatized as ‘problem’ children nowadays, since so many are, or have been, in that same situation.”

When it comes to international research on migration, the focus has been on the receiving countries, on how their labor market has been affected as well as on the social consequences. Concerning migration source countries, some research has focused on remittances to family members left behind, but less on the social consequences for them, especially for the children.

So how are the children doing? All people working on this question underline two things. First, many are doing fine; it is wrong to categorize them all as problem children just because one or both parents live abroad. Second, it is difficult to find out when these children aren't doing well, since parents and caretakers are reluctant to admit it.

But one conclusion can definitely be drawn: a disproportionate number of these children develop problems. The children can be bad-tempered, sad, worried, and absent-minded, and many have difficulties with their schoolwork. For some, the situation has become even worse. The head of a juvenile prison confirms to me that the number of teenagers with one or two parents abroad is overrepresented in the prison. Youth with absent parents are also common in institutions for children whose parents have lost custody of them, says the head of a national center for such institutions, Rytis Siautkulis:

“The parents do not always realize the difficulties for a grandmother or an aunt in raising the kids and establishing limits for their behavior.”

When trying to help these children, one has to focus on the whole family in question, not only the children. For the sociology professor Irena Juozeliūnienė at Vilnius University, who has been doing research on children in this situation since 2005, this is the first conclusion that she wants to emphasize.

“Three generations of the family can be included in this complicated situation, since grandparents often are the ones taking care of the children. I have interviewed many families where parents are in conflict with their own parents on how the children should be raised.”

Grandparents tend to use authoritarian parental methods from Soviet times, which are vastly different from the methods used in the 21st century. Additionally, children tend to listen less to their grandparents, whatever methods of parenting they use. “You are not my mother!” is a common answer that Irena Juozeliūnienė has heard from children being brought up by their grandparents.

“There are of course examples where grandmothers turn out to be excellent guardians, but I have seen several cases in my research when children feel that they don’t want to bring up intimate issues with their grandparents, only with their parents. And when the parents aren’t around, it creates a problem.”

“Another sensitive issue is the varying interest among grandparents in taking on this rather heavy burden. I have interviewed several who have been forced to leave their houses in the countryside to come and live with their grandchildren in town. It might work at the beginning, but after a while they get tired – especially when the parenting is difficult – and want to move back to their own homes. Guardians who feel that way are of course not the best guardians.”

“I had one case in Druskininkai, in southern Lithuania, when a girl instead ended up being the caretaker of her own grandfather who got cancer. He died, and when it was time for the funeral, her parents didn’t show up. Some stories are extremely sad.”

Teenagers who don’t get along with their caretakers, or just need somewhere else to go after school, have very few options. They don’t want to go to child-care centers – the country has 172 such centers – because the kids who go there are much younger. Since 2005, around ten youth centers have opened, partly financed by Norwegian and EU funds. These are places where teenagers can go and meet friends, engage in activities together or just talk to grown-ups who are there to listen to them. The teenagers who spend time there are ordinary kids who just want to have something interesting to do in the afternoons, or kids from socially at-risk families – or kids with parents abroad.

I visited the country’s very first youth center. It is located in Kaunas, the second biggest city, close to the town hall, but hidden in a backyard. Approaching the basement premises, I hear the drums from the rock band. Once below ground I meet kids playing table tennis or just sitting around talking. The social worker Kristina Mačiulytė tells me that they also cook and clean together as a way of giving the youngsters routines of daily life that they don’t always get at home.

“For some of the kids here, we are the only grown-ups they talk to.”

Youths aged 15–30 come here every afternoon, they don’t need to register: the door is open for them. How many of them have their parents abroad? Maybe three or four, but Kristina and her colleague – the youth worker Indrė Maršantaitė – don’t know for sure.

“It’s sensitive; the kids do not necessarily tell us.

“THREE GENERATIONS OF THE FAMILY CAN BE INCLUDED IN THIS COMPLICATED SITUATION, SINCE GRANDPARENTS OFTEN ARE THE ONES TAKING CARE OF THE CHILDREN.”

One girl who has been here for months told me as recently as yesterday that her father lives abroad. We never knew about it.”

20-year-old Antanas – we will call him that – comes by the table where we sit. At first he doesn’t want to talk, but then he changes his mind. He has never had any contact with his father, and when he was 16 his mother and both sisters moved to Amsterdam.

“I didn’t want to join them, so I lived alone. It was great, I could do what I wanted and I could have friends over. I talked to Mom 2 to 3 times per week, but I had very little contact with my relatives here in Kaunas. I was fine by myself.”

Well, he wasn’t totally fine, Indrė tells me when he has left the room. On one occasion, one of his “friends” staying over in his apartment stole his computer. That resulted in him gathering other friends to beat him up.

“He was fairly aggressive in those times. He took part in street fights and he smoked marijuana.”

It was important for Antanas to have the youth center to go to during these years, he admitted to me. “But it is depressing to think about all the children who do not get the support that he got”, says Indrė. “Just imagine: we are the only youth center in Kaunas, a city of 350,000 people. Of course, we need many, many more centers.”

Indrė and Kristina tell me about another youngster for whom the center has been even more important. We will call her Edita. She was 14 years old at the time, and like Antanas without a father at home. When her mother moved to Germany, she was left alone with her 8-year-old brother. Her grandmother, who lived in the neighborhood, came by 3–4 times per week to cook for the children. But Edita did not get along with the grandmother.

“She didn’t feel well during those years. She started smoking and drinking, going to bars as if she was 18. She didn’t do her schoolwork and she longed for her mother. Talking with her on Skype wasn’t enough. I have money, she said, but I don’t have my mother.”

Every day she came to the youth center, sometimes taking her brother along. She talked a lot with Kristina and Indrė.

“She knew that we were always here to listen to

her. And we could show her how to cook and how to clean. Today she is fine; the mother has moved back. I think we played a role in helping her cope during the difficult years”.

It is not easy to find a parent to interview on this delicate issue of leaving children behind. But eventually I got in contact with Dalia Bell, today happily married to a Briton but with difficult memories of the years when the family was split in three. She left alone for England 2004, leaving her 16-year-old son with her ex-husband’s parents and her 12-year-old daughter with her sister.

“My children agreed that I should move abroad since they understood how difficult our economic situation was. For the first six months, I hardly spoke with them because I didn’t have Internet and I didn’t have enough money to call them. The situation was of course difficult; they missed me a lot. My son had problems in school, he even stopped going. Neither of them valued the help they got from their grandparents and aunt, they turned only to their friends.”

“These first years I could afford to fly back home only twice a year, and they could only come live with me in the UK during summer holidays. In 2006, my daughter moved here and my son followed a year after. Before I left we had been like friends, we had talked about everything. But things were different now, they didn’t listen to me anymore and they didn’t want to talk to me. It was like a closed door between us.”

Today Dalia Bell has a good relationship with both children, who are now adults. But it was a long journey.

“We lost a lot of important time, they grew up, and I missed it. I regret that I didn’t take them to England at a much earlier stage. My advice to other parents? Make sure that your children understand what is happening: talk to them. And leave them only with those you trust, those who really are prepared to care for them. But most important in my view: bring them along as soon as possible, otherwise you might lose them for life.”

For the European Union, the issue of children left behind has become high priority, since it has to do with the negative aspects of what EU is fighting for: transnational labor mobility. The possibility of working across national borders is one of the drivers of growth for the European Union, underlined in the Europe 2020 strategy. In a report from 2012, the EU commission states that “the issue of the impact of migration on children needs more attention”. The authors of the report stress that more money from the European Social Fund should be used for childcare centers and youth centers in areas of Europe where most such children live.

What more can be done to help these children? The EU report – called Children Left Behind (2012) – emphasizes the importance of schools being able to identify the children left behind and providing after-school activities for them. When necessary, they should also offer counseling. And in areas with limited Internet connectivity, the schools must ensure that pupils can stay in contact with parents abroad.

Kristina Mačiulytė and Indrė Maršantaitė at the Youth Center are often in contact with schools – and



realize how few resources they have to help the children who don't have their parents around.

"Many months can pass without schools even knowing that children are alone at home. And sometimes they never get that information. Every school we have talked to has said the same thing: it is very frustrating, we don't know when parents emigrate and leave their kids with relatives."

When it comes to the number of children left behind, they think it is much higher than the 2000 or so cases that are reported to the authorities every year. I tell them about the assurances from Rūta Pabedinskienė at the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, assurances that the situation for children left behind has improved over the last couple of years. They are not convinced.

"Let's hope that she is right. But nobody knows for sure. In our work, we see no tendency of kids back home with problems receiving more support than in years past."

The Youth Center has also contacted social institutions in cases when the youngsters have more serious problems. And they have been in contact with the police when youth suspected of crimes have come to the center.

"The sad fact is that we lack institutions where the children can get professional help when they are not feeling well. The shortage of psychologists is severe".

In Vilnius I meet three young psychologists in the premises that they have just started renting – the walls are still white and the rooms are mostly unfurnished. We sit around one single table in a big room, discussing their new project: a center concentrating on families where one or both parents live abroad.

"We are advertising and we are contacting schools all over greater Vilnius. But it is difficult to make families come to us – it is a sensitive issue. By experience we know that many need psychological help, but few

"MY ADVICE TO OTHER PARENTS? [...] MOST IMPORTANT IN MY VIEW: BRING YOUR CHILDREN ALONG AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, OTHERWISE YOU MIGHT LOSE THEM FOR LIFE."

seek it", says Inga Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė. "Our idea is to work with all members of the family, not only the children".

"Our message is: moving abroad and leaving children with relatives or friends doesn't have to be dramatic, it is part of our society today, it will continue to happen. But when doing so, people have to prepare themselves and their kids for this change."

In their work, the young psychologists have run into cases where such preparations were nowhere to be found.

"I had one 9-year-old who was left alone for 2–3 months. Eventually the mother realized that she had to move back home. I just hope that such cases are rare," says Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė.

What are the most common psychological problems that they have seen in these troubled children?

Many of them lack a trusting and close relationship with a parent or any other adult, which means that no one is around to give them guidance and emotional support.

"This risks leading to an inability to foster close ties with other people later in life, they might develop a fear of starting a family of their own," argues psychologist Lina Gervinskaitė-Paulaitienė.

The psychologists also see a problem when children are overwhelmed by gifts and money sent home by their parents. The children are led to believe that the best way to show love is to give presents. But the most serious cases might be the small children who don't really understand what is happening.

"A 5-year-old child doesn't understand the difference between a parent moving out for a period of time and a parent disappearing for good. The child might think that the parent is lost forever, which can lead to serious emotional problems," says Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė.

When Juozeliūnienė at Vilnius University met slightly older children, she was struck by how much they are simply waiting. They wait for nothing other than their parents to return, or at least give them a call:

"When these children recount something that has happened, they don't speak of 'last Thursday', they say it happened 'two days before the latest call from Mom'. They live for these telephone calls or talks via Skype."

Another psychological problem for children left behind is sometimes a feeling of rootlessness. They still live where they were brought up, but since their parents live elsewhere they feel that they themselves also are on their way.

"This can cause problems for some children who are just waiting for the green light to leave the country," says Juozeliūnienė. "They tend to isolate themselves, avoiding friends, unwilling to engage in any deep personal relationships."

Almost ten years have passed since the first children who were left behind came into the limelight. A lot more needs to be done to help them and their families, argues Juozeliūnienė, who stresses that there is no scientific evidence indicating that the affected children are better off today than in 2004.

"You can't say: stop migration! It is just happening, whether we like it or not, and it has both positive and negative consequences. It is up to all of us to try to lessen the negative consequences. We can't hope that state institutions will fix it, we also have to help each other more, share experiences, do volunteer work."

And before society has fully figured out how to best help the affected children, a new phenomenon has occurred: Elderly left behind.

"We are definitely seeing this trend", says Gervinskaitė-Paulaitienė. "With the growing number of whole families leaving the country, old grandma and grandpa are left alone, often with inadequate elderly care and lack of money". ❌



Indrė Maršantaitė and Kristina Mačivilytė work at the first youth center in Lithuania.

FATHER- HOOD

ACROSS SPACE AND TIME

RUSSIA IN PERSPECTIVE

by **Johnny Rodin and Pelle Åberg** illustration **Moa Thelander**

In this article, we review previous research on fatherhood in different national contexts and in different historical eras with a particular focus on Russia. We review research conducted on fatherhood in Western Europe and the US from roughly the early 20th century until today in order to put the Soviet and Russian context in perspective. We identify some major theoretical approaches and empirical findings in the previous research. This allows us to illustrate differences and similarities between Russia, and to some extent Eastern Europe during Soviet times, on the one hand, and Western Europe and the US on the other.

But why pay attention to fatherhood in the first place, and why focus on fatherhood in Russia? Well, Russia today is facing a demographic crisis because of its declining population, which in recent years has also led the Russian state to become actively engaged in family and population policy. In Russian state policy, issues of fatherhood are almost entirely absent while the importance of good motherhood is stressed. At the same time, research has shown that fatherhood as a social institution and as a practice has important implications for society, in particular because fathers' behavior and attitudes influence not only their own physical and mental health, but also that of their children and the children's mothers.¹ Alice Rossi has shown that greater commitment on the part of fathers in child raising and family affairs creates more and stronger relations between the fathers and the surrounding society, which in turn decreases their substance abuse (drinking and smoking) and their proclivity towards domestic violence.² Moreover, demographers have established that involved fathers make women adopt a more positive attitude towards

future births, which can lead to higher birth rates and thus affect demographic trends.³ Fatherhood thus influences the public sphere. As we will see, processes in the public sphere also influence fatherhood in the private sphere.

Nevertheless, fatherhood was more or less ignored by researchers until the 1970s.⁴ At that time, interest started to stir, yet studies on fatherhood remained rare until the 1990s. However, after President Bill Clinton highlighted the issue of fatherhood in 1995, research in this field started to grow quickly in the US.⁵ Later it spread to Western Europe and to the Nordic countries, and today there is a substantial amount of work on fatherhood in those contexts.

By contrast, in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space, the study of fatherhood is still in its infancy, although there is a rapidly growing Russian literature on fatherhood,⁶ as well as research on adjacent themes such as parenthood and masculinity (see e.g. the many works of Anna Temkina and Yelena Zdravomyslova). However, international research on Russian fatherhood and other closely related themes is almost non-existent.⁷ Systematic comparative studies on fatherhood in Russia appear to be completely absent.⁸ This article is a first step towards filling that gap, identifying avenues for future research, and pinpointing tools with which previous research from other contexts can aid the study of fatherhood in Russia.

Fatherhood in Western Europe and the US

In this section, we highlight research in the West on fatherhood. We first examine how fatherhood has been defined in this context and how fatherhood is believed

to have changed over time, and then discuss an important point made in previous research, namely that fatherhood is positioned between the private and the public spheres.

Defining fatherhood

How fatherhood should be understood has been debated by researchers in various fields, including feminist and critical studies, and in the context of broader research on men and masculinities, where the discussions concern such issues as how the role of fatherhood is part of a man's identity and how it relates to other time- and context-bound norms of masculinity.⁹

In recent decades, fatherhood has commonly been studied from the perspective of historical institutionalism or social constructivism.¹⁰ From these perspectives, fatherhood is not seen as given or fixed, but rather as a politicized social construction that is exposed to normative pressures from political, religious, and social authorities and institutions, and from more personal and private relations. Fatherhood cannot be understood as something that exists outside society. Rather, fatherhood is constructed through society and a socio-cultural and historical context. There is no single established truth about what fatherhood is.¹¹ What is considered to be "good" or "appropriate" fatherhood, and how individuals live up to those ideals, is bound to history and socio-political context. From this perspective, "fatherhood" designates a social construction which incorporates the ideologies (norms, values, and discourses) and practices associated with being a father.

However, in order not to conflate ideologies and behavior, which might obscure the analysis, it is useful to

make a distinction between *fatherhood* and *fathering*. Fatherhood is a social institution which implies the norms, values, public meanings, and discourses connected to being a father; that is, it concerns the rights, duties, and responsibilities attached to the status of being a father. This involves legislation and informal institutions regulating rights to custody, child support, alimony, etc. *Fathering*, on the other hand, refers to the “performance” of fatherhood, to fathers’ actual behavior and practices. This involves interacting with children and partners, such as participating in maternity care events (e.g. ultrasound), childcare (changing diapers), childrearing (teaching manners), and applying for paternity leave.¹² Certainly, fatherhood and *fathering* are intertwined. The culture of fatherhood indeed influences the ways a father reflects on his role as a father and the way he acts towards his children, i.e. his *fathering*.¹³ However, norms, values, and attitudes do not always coincide with behavior. Surveys show that *fathering*, i.e. men’s actual participation in raising and caring for children, has changed much less than attitudes and norms, with some exceptions among the educated middle class and in some particular countries, such as the Nordic ones.¹⁴ Actual *fathering* does not necessarily conform to prevalent ideologies or public discourse on fatherhood.¹⁵

Fatherhood in different historical periods

Previous research has identified three overarching models or phases of fatherhood and *fathering* in modern times in Western Europe and the US. These models, although very general in character, provide a broad and historical perspective on how fatherhood has been defined in the past. Here they also serve as points of reference for comparisons with the Soviet and Russian contexts.

From the middle of the 1800s until World War II, the most common model of fatherhood was the “breadwinner” model. During this period, industrialization moved men from work performed in the vicinity of their homes to work connected more with production and administration. Often this meant that the father worked at a greater distance from home than before, which in turn led to him being more absent from home, family, and childrearing. The father was thus pushed out of the private sphere due to societal transformations, or structural changes if you will, because his role as a breadwinner connected him primarily to the public sphere.¹⁶ According to this model, the father’s primary task in relation to his children and wife was to ensure that the family’s material needs were met. The man thus provided the majority of the family’s income.

From the 1940s to the 1960s, the “sex role” model dominated in the West. In this model, the father was still the main breadwinner, but played a more active, governing, and controlling role. He participated in raising the children, making sure, by providing a masculine role model, that all family members lived by the norms and adhered to the roles (especially gender roles) expected given the family’s social context. Fatherhood was, in other words, a bridge between the private and the public spheres, or between the individual and society. In research on fatherhood in the US, this model has been described as a reaction to the

“ACTUAL FATHERING DOES NOT NECESSARILY CONFORM TO PREVALENT IDEOLOGIES OR PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON FATHERHOOD.”

previous order in which the father was marginalized in the private sphere, so that the home and the children were the women’s domain. During the middle of the 20th century, fathers thus became more involved in the children’s upbringing. According to Kimmel, their involvement was needed largely to ensure that their sons would grow up to be “manly”, thus these changes are connected to concerns with masculinity.¹⁷

In the 1960s, a new model took root: the father as “nurturer”. In this model, the father is more active than before. He participates in childraising and childcare. In comparison with the other models, the father is more focused on the private sphere of the family and has the goal of meeting the children’s physical and emotional needs.¹⁸ A type of fatherhood added by recent research, and closely related to this third model, is what has been called the “new fatherhood”. When considering the praxis of *fathering* as opposed to fatherhood, we find the corresponding terms “new *fathering*”, “involved *fathering*”, and “responsible *fathering*”. This type of fatherhood is based on equality in the relationship between man and woman in the family, and mother and father share an active responsibility for raising and caring for the children. The father is prepared to balance work and family life, and to allow his partner to do the same.¹⁹

Again, research shows that there is a difference between fatherhood and actual *fathering*. Fathers’ involvement in childrearing still differs from that of mothers. Fathers are indeed more present, but the proportion of play in relation to caring in the overall time spent with the children is much greater than for mothers, who still are the main caretakers. It should also be mentioned that the rise in active *fathering* is accompanied by an increasing number of families where the father is completely absent.²⁰ It is also important to note that there are a number of different factors affecting the presence and involvement of fathers in families and in children’s lives. There are fathers who for various reasons choose not to be part of their children’s upbringing, but there are also external factors that can influence *fathering*. One example is the structural processes mentioned above that took place in conjunction with industrialization. Another aspect deemed important in much previous research is the role of the children’s mother. She is often seen as a gatekeeper who, if she wishes, can push the father out of the childrearing tasks, although potentially

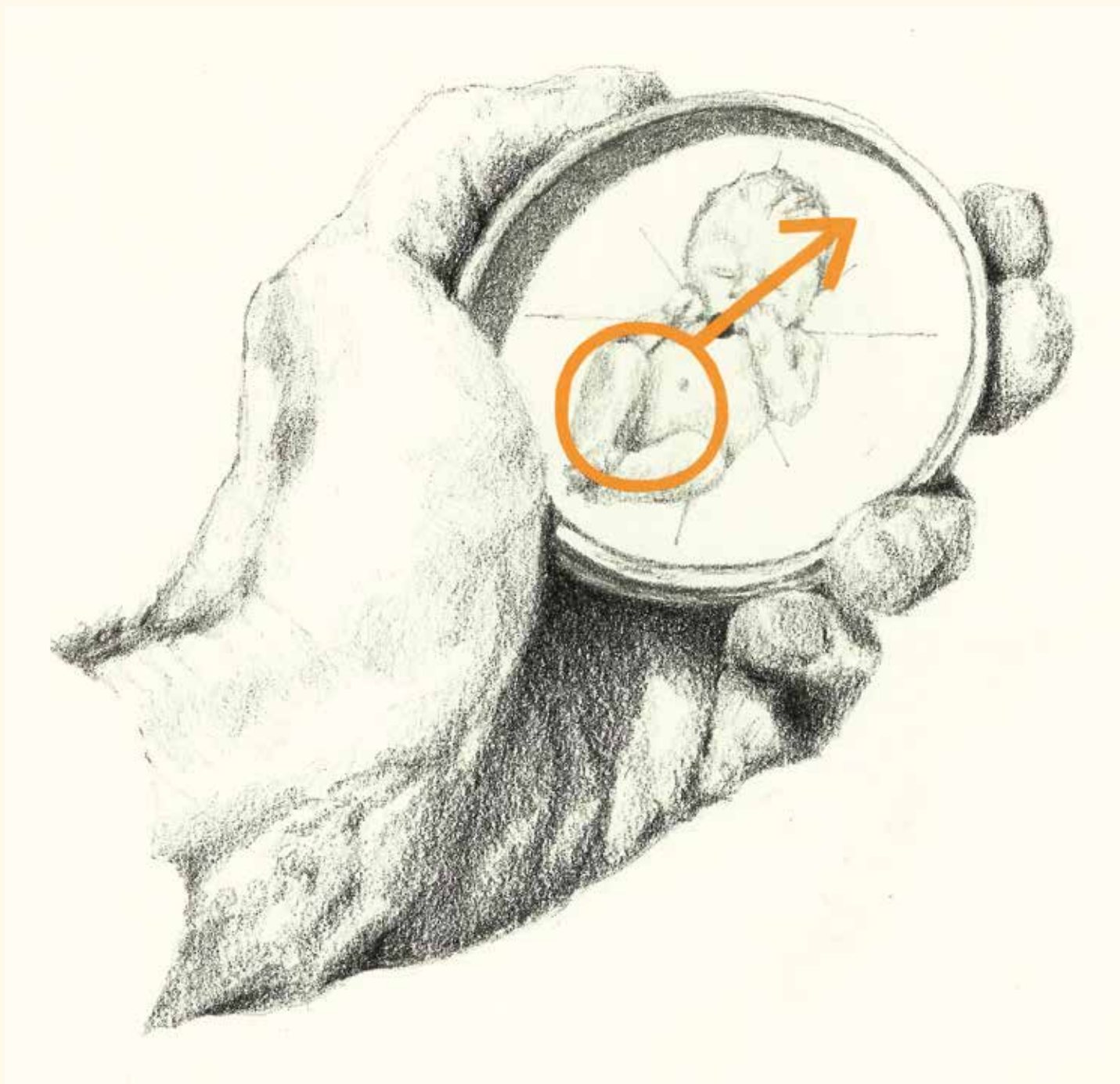
enforcing the breadwinner role.²¹ The latter considerations imply that the father is in a rather powerless position, which may be true in some instances and not in others.

Between the public and the private

In this section, we discuss the forces that previous research has identified as shaping fatherhood and *fathering*. Fatherhood cannot be defined and understood in isolation from norms concerning motherhood, norms of masculinity, family structures, welfare regimes, and larger socioeconomic processes. It should therefore be analyzed in a wider context, taking into consideration a gender contract, i.e. the “gender division of labor, at work, and by implication, at home”.²² Temkina and Rotkirch make a distinction between “official” gender contracts, which involve public policies, ideology, and legislation, and “everyday” gender contracts, consisting of individuals’ norms and routine behavior.²³ In other words, a gender contract has a public dimension, involving, for example, the welfare system, and a private dimension, including such things as family relations. Let us look at how the connections between the public and the private are viewed in current research on fatherhood.

In its narrowest meaning, the private dimension of fatherhood involves relations between a male parent and his biological offspring and/or stepchildren. Fatherhood also has implications for the father’s relation to the mother, influencing, for example, the role that the father has in the family, whether and how the father provides support during pregnancy, whether he takes part in the delivery of the child, and the extent to which he participates in childrearing tasks. These relations are influenced by the norms and ideas of the close social habitat in the private sphere. This concerns both the relation to the mother (and marital satisfaction) and the mother’s attitudes towards the father’s involvement in childrearing. Research shows that a cooperative marriage and encouragement from the mother to participate in childrearing increases the father’s involvement, and vice versa. Marriage (or a stable relationship and cohabitation) and parenthood are in this way more closely connected for men than for women. This weaker link between father and child makes the relationship more sensitive to contextual factors in the public sphere, as discussed below.²⁴ Moreover, the father’s relation to his own father (or other father figures) and relatives, as well as to friends and colleagues, also plays a role.²⁵

Fatherhood in the public sphere is heavily influenced by the welfare system and general socioeconomic structures and processes. One of the most important societal changes in the industrialized world is the decrease in birth rates and the increase in women’s labor market participation since World War II. This transformation naturally had a direct impact on women’s roles as caretakers. Childbearing and childrearing no longer constituted the majority of a woman’s life, although the mother remained the main caregiver. This new state of affairs necessitated ways for women to combine work and family, which created a new function for the welfare state. Welfare regimes thus became a strong ideological source of influence. The historical development of the welfare



state and variance between different welfare regimes are thus intimately related to the historical models of fatherhood in that they reflect and uphold values and norms of gender, as well as define the legal and economic terms of parenthood.

However, earlier research on welfare systems, such as Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare regimes (liberal, corporatist-statist, and social-democratic)²⁶, to a large extent neglected the gender dimension of the relation between work and welfare. He defined work as paid work on the labor market, while unpaid work (such as childrearing) performed by women in the private sphere was not included in the analysis. In short, through their paid work men were entitled to pensions and other welfare services and were thus intrinsically regarded as workers and citizens. Women were inherently regarded as wives and mothers, and their unpaid work at home was not attached to the social rights men enjoyed. As Barbara Hobson and David

Morgan have pointed out, Esping-Andersen in effect also disregarded men's experiences as partners and fathers.²⁷ Fully incorporating gender in the analysis of welfare systems thus entails including the roles of both women and men in the private sphere.

In response to these deficiencies in Esping-Andersen's typology, later research focused on the implications of the welfare system for the reconciliation of work and care. In research by Jane Lewis, one of the major contributors to this field²⁸, we find a typology that attempts to bring a gender perspective to the analysis of welfare systems by including unpaid work in the domestic sphere.²⁹ Both Esping-Andersen's and Lewis's work shows that there are important variations among Western welfare regimes. Hence the West cannot be seen as a homogeneous block in this regard. It is reasonable to expect that the same should be true of the different countries of Eastern Europe.

Nonetheless, the historical phases of Western fa-

therhood discussed above and other similar models are important points of reference for comparisons with the Soviet and Russian experiences. It is interesting to note, however, that little empirical work has been done on the influence of the welfare system, including policies such as parental leave or part-time work, on parenthood in Eastern Europe at large. An explicit analysis of these issues in the Eastern European context is beyond the scope of this article. However, we can show how important it would be to apply Lewis's and other similar typologies to Russia and other countries in the region.

Lewis identified three different welfare models which set very different conditions for parenthood, both for mothers and fathers. In the strong male-breadwinner model, female labor market participation may be discouraged through tax policies, the scarcity of part-time employment opportunities, and the lack of childcare, under the assumption that

women are responsible for the care of children and the family. This model thus implies the kind of understanding of gender relations discussed above as part of the criticism against Esping-Andersen's work: women are defined as wives and mothers, men as workers and citizens. This limits men's role as fathers to that of the breadwinner. Great Britain is often mentioned as a country that comes close to this model.

Lewis's second model, the modified male-breadwinner model, predicts that women are more active in the labor market. At the same time, families are to be compensated for the costs of childbearing and childrearing. Women are hence seen both as paid workers and as mothers. Social services regarding childcare and maternity leave are quite generous, which makes it feasible for women to work. Yet family structures remain patriarchal and women dependent on their husbands. France is put forward as an example of this model.

In the weak male-breadwinner model, Lewis's third model, policies are designed in order for it to be advantageous for the woman to work. Tax legislation is very important in this respect. In Sweden, which is often mentioned as an example of this model, the government introduced separate taxation in 1971, which is a reform in line with the development of this kind of welfare model. This model generally directs social entitlements to the woman as a worker and not as a wife. The weak male-breadwinner model is also characterized by comprehensive childcare, a generous parental insurance system, and parental leave for fathers. By facilitating women's participation in the labor market and by encouraging more active fatherhood, it leaves room for a more equal division of labor in childrearing in the private sphere. The model signals that women should not only be seen as mothers, but as workers too. Conversely, men are to be conceived as fathers as well as workers.

Although many researchers seem to agree that welfare systems have a profound influence on gender relations – which are at the same time reflected in welfare systems – one should not forget that parenthood is also influenced by civil, family, labor, and property law.³⁰ Legislation in these spheres regulates the rights and obligations of fathers, such as the right to paternity leave, the right to custody, and the obligation to provide for the children in case of divorce (that is, laws stipulate the mechanisms and magnitude of child support and alimony). It should be noted that there is not necessarily a neat fit between these kinds of legislation and welfare models. For example, liberal welfare systems that envision fathers as strong male breadwinners, such as the UK and the US, do not impose strong economic obligations to provide for children.³¹

Broader socioeconomic and sociocultural factors also influence fatherhood and fathering. Research demonstrates, for example, that unemployment and poverty impede active fathering.³² Furthermore, issues of class, education, and socioeconomic status are also correlated to fathering. Middle-class men appear to be most likely to adopt more progressive gender norms that influence their perceptions of fatherhood as well as their behavior.³³ It has been shown that middle-class men use more progressive fatherhood ideals as a marker of class, distinguishing them from the perceived crude, sexist working-class man or from men of non-European descent.³⁴ Finally, long-term demographic trends also inform many of the processes

“THE RIGHT TO PRIVATE PROPERTY, WHICH IN MOST CONTEXTS HAS GIVEN THE MAN A CERTAIN POWER OVER THE WOMAN, WAS ABOLISHED.”

mentioned above in very fundamental ways. For example, as lifespans increase and fertility decreases (that is, fewer children born per woman), the childbearing period in women's lives becomes relatively shorter. Women are thus not as limited to childbearing and childrearing in the home as they used to be, which can be a factor for change.³⁵

In sum, Western research shows that fatherhood and fathering are connected to the gender contract overall. In other words, the roles of men as worker, partner, and father are closely intertwined with the roles of women as worker, partner, and mother. This gender contract is influenced in turn by parallel yet interdependent social processes in the private and the public spheres. These processes may influence the social institution of fatherhood or the social practice of fathering, or both. A good example is LaRossa's research which suggests that changing fatherhood norms could be explained by changes in mothers' behavior (greater labor market participation), which in turn depends on demographic trends (lower birth rates), the welfare system, and other societal changes (e.g. emancipation).³⁶ However, one should consider that traditional norms of masculinity, as a part of the gender contract, also play an important role here. As Whitehead argues:

What complicates, then, any clear understanding of the relationship of men and masculinity to notions of family and fatherhood is the fact that while ideals of both fatherhood and motherhood changed dramatically during the twentieth century . . . traditional gender stereotypes remain resilient in many cultures. Thus, we have to recognize that while there is some evidence of a shift in attitudes to family and domestic roles by some men, dominant discourses of masculinity do not sit easy with these practices.³⁷

The inconsistencies between norms and behavior among fathers are thus not necessarily surprising and strange, but rather to be expected.

Soviet and Russian fatherhood

The research reviewed above on the Western European and American contexts may serve as a background

for a discussion of previous research on Soviet and Russian fatherhood. In this section we compare that latter research to the Western European experience, with reference to historic fatherhood models in particular: the “breadwinner” model, the “sex role” model, and the new “fatherhood” model.

Although our focus is on Russia, we may note that this country is quite typical of the Eastern European region in several respects, which makes research on Russia relevant for the whole region. First, according to John Hajnal, Russia and Eastern Europe share the same basic marriage pattern and family model. The Eastern European family model, which traditionally included multigenerational peasant families, also included a weaker father role than the traditional one seen in the West. In Eastern Europe, the power relations in the household have been a hierarchy based on age in which the older generation has dominated the younger. In Western Europe, on the other hand, the household was dominated by one man, the head of the family, “pater familias”.³⁸ A man was seen as unfit for marriage until he could support a family.³⁹ This also resonates with the breadwinner model discussed previously. However, this does not mean that the traditional family model in Eastern Europe was not patriarchal, but rather that it was not necessarily the father, as the head of a nuclear family, who ran the household. Frequently it was a male from an older generation. A second feature that Russia shares with the rest of Eastern Europe is the communist legacy of gender policy, which has seriously influenced fatherhood in the region.

Although there are a number of similarities, it should also be acknowledged that there were important differences between the Soviet Union and other countries in Eastern Europe, including differences in welfare policies and other factors bearing on the development of fatherhood. This was true in the Soviet period, and since the early 1990s countries have naturally chosen different paths. Many Eastern and Central European countries today are members of the EU, which also has an influence on state policies, legislation, and so on with respect to matters of the family and parenthood. Although we speak here primarily of Russia, we will also widen the perspective where appropriate to highlight these differences. Even “Russia” is a problematic context due to the vastness of the country. It is highly likely that family structures and ideas and norms of fatherhood would be found to be quite different in an in-depth, empirical comparison between, let us say, the northwestern and the Asian parts of the Russian Federation. It is also reasonable to assume that there will be variation between urban and rural areas. However, the focus of this article is more general. We note these important limitations but focus for now on the broader patterns of the development of fatherhood.

The Soviet gender contract

The room for plurality in private life under state-socialist rule was naturally more limited than in Western Europe or in Russia today. People's life cycles were quite standardized. The private sphere, including family, parenthood, and childrearing, was in this sense not so private, but to a large extent controlled by the state. The Soviet gender contract, or gender order, has

therefore been referred to as “etat-cratic”.⁴⁰ The state made the private political and public. The relation between the public and private spheres was in this sense more straightforward than in the West.

Russian researchers have identified three main periods in the Soviet gender contract that had great implications for the family and parenthood as social institutions and as practices. There is also research on Soviet fatherhood that partly coincides with these periods. Since, as mentioned above, fatherhood is intimately linked to the development of the gender contract we will discuss below the development of fatherhood in connection with the changing gender contract.

The first period in the Soviet gender contract, from the 1917 revolution until the beginning of the 1930s, involved Bolshevik-style emancipation. The bourgeois family structure that enslaved women in the kitchens was to be combated. At the same time, women, especially peasant women in the countryside, were perceived as politically backwards and in need of ideological support. This was a view that legitimized and facilitated state intervention in the private sphere, which some claim was the main incentive, as opposed to genuine feminist concerns.⁴¹ Soviet emancipation policy, which aimed to undermine the traditional family, led to a significantly higher degree of participation by women in working life. In fact, the “working mother” was a pillar of the Soviet gender contract.⁴² Work would both liberate women from oppression in the private sphere and integrate them in society. To this end, the domestic functions of childcare and child-rearing had to be transferred to the public sphere. The state was now the main parent. As a result, public childcare institutions increased dramatically.⁴³ Thus the Soviet state and the woman/mother entered into an alliance, while the man/father was pushed out into the public sphere as the defender of the fatherland and worker. This development persisted during the second period, which will be described below.

The bourgeois family was also attacked in other ways. Marriage based on religious foundations through the church was abolished, and simple procedures for divorce were introduced. Abortion was legalized.⁴⁴ And, importantly, the right to private property, which in most contexts has given the man a certain power over the woman, was abolished. The man was no longer the natural main breadwinner. Moreover, legal provisions regarding the determination of fatherhood in extramarital relations were extremely vague, which both worsened the father’s chances of being officially recognized and gave him the opportunity to escape responsibility if he so desired. In case of divorce, the father’s responsibility was limited to paying alimony.⁴⁵ Hence, the father’s role during early Soviet times was severely weakened.

The second period, from the 1930s to the mid-1950s, was a time of intense modernization and industrialization in the Soviet Union. Work migration and urbanization were highly relevant processes during this period, especially among men. It became difficult to form and preserve families. Lone mothers in the countryside were very common. Other historic events also contributed to the increased separation of fathers from their families, including the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church (which had been the guarantor of the man’s almost absolute power in the

patriarchal family of Tsarist Russia),⁴⁶ political purges, deportations, and World War II.

The demand for labor also consolidated the role of women as workers. At the same time, the need to secure population growth turned childbirth into a duty towards society. Abortion was therefore prohibited. To strive for a private life and individuality was considered egoistic and bourgeois. In many ways, the private sphere ceased to exist. This tendency was further strengthened by housing policies that involved various forms of collective living.⁴⁷

Thus, the Soviet gender contract in some ways established a gender order that severely undermined the conditions for a traditional breadwinner model of fatherhood that dominated in the West at that time. Applying Lewis’s welfare typology, we can conclude that the welfare system of the Soviet Union during this period resembled the weak male breadwinner model in several respects. Women were encouraged to work and social benefits were directed to the woman as a worker rather than as a wife. There was comprehensive childcare and a generous social insurance system.



PHOTO: ANDREI MAKHONIN / FOTOIMEDIA

This photo of a father visiting a parade with his child was published in *The Moscow Times* in 2011, in connection with an interview with a father who felt mistreated at his place of work after taking parental leave.

Interestingly, this model did not emerge in the West until much later, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, the consequences for fatherhood were quite different from those in the West. Whereas in Western countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden, such developments in the social or public sphere paved the way for more active fatherhood, both as a social institution (for example the introduction of paternity leave) and as practice (fathers actually participating in childrearing tasks), they had the opposite effect in the Soviet context. Fatherhood as a social institution became irrelevant. In the families, fathers were marginalized and sometimes completely absent.

This trend continued later during the Soviet era. Until the late 1960s, fathers were deprived of a number of legal rights connected to parenthood, and the financial responsibility for the children was assigned to the state more than to the father. The state basically took over the role as the family's main provider. The mother became the children's primary nurturer and caretaker with responsibility for childrearing, the condition of the home, and the material and moral prosperity of the family. The father was marginalized still further in the family sphere.⁴⁸

Some of these changes bridge over to the third period in the evolution of the Soviet gender contract. This was between the mid-1950s and the end of the 1980s, and was still characterized by the *etat-crat* approach, but with some distance reemerging between the public and private spheres. Family affairs, childbirth, birth control, and childrearing were now considered private responsibilities to a greater degree. Housing policies again influenced the social sphere as single-family apartments were built *en masse* in the 1960s.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Soviet Union, like many other state-socialist countries in Eastern Europe, started to experience demographic problems with shrinking populations due to low birth rates, poor health, and high mortality. To combat these problems, the state began to promote early marriage and large families, and to discourage divorce. In this context, the Soviet gender contract assumed more traditional forms. In official ideology, the woman was increasingly seen as the main caretaker of family and children. She was still expected to be working, however, which created a double burden. This problem was debated at the time among sociologists and demographers, which shows that there was a growing degree of political and social diversification, although harsh censorship remained in force. Some traces of a neotraditional discourse were detectable, as well as more a progressive critique of women's double burden. Men were still considered more or less detached from the fertility side of the demographic problem and were associated with high mortality, especially among middle-aged men.⁴⁹

A number of legal and social reforms were carried out from the end of the 1960s until the mid-1980s.

Among these was an obligation for fathers to provide child support after a divorce and the right to parental leave for women. The father's role in the family, in the private sphere, continued to be very limited during this period, however,

“FATHERHOOD WAS A FORMAL DUTY AND MORE OF A POTENTIAL DISTRACTION FROM THE FATHER'S REAL DUTIES TOWARDS SOCIETY AS A WORKER.”

despite some reforms in the opposite direction. In practice, the mother took sole responsibility for all parts of the children's upbringing, often together with her mother, the *babushka* (grandmother), much like in the traditional Eastern European multigenerational family model.

Men's role in the public sphere of state-socialist countries was clearer. Here the man was able to secure a position and a career in his role as the builder and defender of the country. A man's self-realization was thus expected to have a public character. Fatherhood was a formal duty and more of a potential distraction from the father's real duties towards society as a worker.⁵⁰ Masculine identity was hence based on work rather than patriarchal power in the home.⁵¹

The main thrust of the Soviet *etat-crat* gender policies thus entailed a dismantling of traditional masculinity in the private sphere in particular.⁵² The Soviet system abolished two of men's most important power assets: private property and being the breadwinner. The Soviet economic system made it unfeasible to be the sole breadwinner, and since a man's primary role was tied to his career and work, being cut off from domestic responsibilities also meant that the father was unable to act as a sex role model or a nurturer.⁵³ These roles had been taken over by the mother and the state. While motherhood was politicized, and to some extent glorified, what the father's role was, if there even was a role, was a question left unanswered.⁵⁴

In the communist realm, and especially in the Soviet Union, this development made fatherhood different from its Western counterpart. In the West, fatherhood remained an important institution. Fathers played a key role in the private sphere since their dominant position in the public sphere as workers and citizens also gave them power in family life as breadwinners and sex role models.

In the Soviet Union, the traditional patriarchal system was replaced by a hegemonic state, which took over the father's role as the provider and the head of the family. The man, husband and father, was pushed out of the private sphere, being redundant at home.⁵⁵ In the West, the mother was generally confined to the domestic sphere until relatively late, and the father had a role to play in both the private and public spheres. As a result, Soviet fatherhood has come to be associated with the concept of “the absent father”.⁵⁶

Interestingly, that concept, in somewhat different forms, has frequently been used in the West since the 1970s in connection with fathers' often passive parental role after divorce. Today, in many contexts and in particular in the US, it is seen as one of the most serious social problems.⁵⁷ In the Soviet context this problem received some attention in academic circles, but only limited attention at the political level.

Fatherhood under construction

The political and economic reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s had great implications for the family and parenthood. The breakdown of communism and the introduction of a more market-oriented economy and democratization entailed a gradual reprivatization of family life, which brought on a wider range of attitudes, norms, and behavior regarding family life and parental roles.⁵⁸ Tatiana Gurko has argued that there was a certain normlessness concerning fatherhood in Russia during the 1990s. This, she claims, was due to the state's lack of ideological mechanisms to establish a uniform image of ideal fatherhood.⁵⁹ As a result, men have increasingly been able to carve out new roles for themselves in the private realm as fathers and husbands. Some mothers appear to be prepared in turn to change Soviet patterns of family life, although resistance among women against more active fatherhood can also be detected.⁶⁰ There are fathers who still are quite absent or passive in their domestic roles, a smaller group who are assuming a more nurturing role, and a third rather large group of men who are trying to create a more traditional, dominant position in the family. These are tributaries of a larger process of changing family and gender relations in the post-Soviet era.⁶¹

As early as the end of the Soviet era, it is possible to discern a quite conservative or traditional discourse concerning gender roles and the family that comes close to the breadwinner model of fatherhood, and in some respects also the sex role model. This tendency was further strengthened after the fall of the Soviet Union. The retreat of the state and the resulting inability of the state to support the family, in combination with the reinstatement of private property, increased the demands on men to be the providers of the family. Furthermore, the new gender discourse conveyed the notion that, under socialism, women and men had lived in opposition to their true, biological nature. According to this discourse, the primary role of men in the private sphere is to be family providers, i.e. breadwinners. This also seems to have a high degree of support among the population.⁶² Another important role is that of bearing responsibility for discipline and punishment, as well as playing with the children. Women, meanwhile, are expected to take on their “natural” role as the caregivers of the family and the children, responsible for feeding and clothing them, and for other physical needs.⁶³ Women's participation in the labor market was no longer a pillar of the gender system. This neo-traditional discourse has dominated post-Soviet Russia,⁶⁴ and some researchers have called it a “patriarchal renaissance”.⁶⁵ Such a discourse can most likely be linked to the increased influence of the Russian Orthodox Church since the fall of the Soviet Union. The church has actively op-



posed abortion and homosexuality, while promoting traditional family life. At the same time, however, the response of the political elite to Russia's rapidly shrinking population reveals that the definition of fatherhood remains vague. The remedies that have been introduced are frequently directed towards the mother. This resembles the Soviet authorities' response to similar problems in the 1960s. As then, it is striking that the father and fatherhood are so weakly linked to the low fertility rates of the Russian Federation.⁶⁶ It thus appears as if the Russian fatherhood discourse continues to involve an unclear and sometimes weak role for the father. A search in the main guideline documents⁶⁷ on demographic policy shows that the words for "father" (*otets*), "dad" (*papa*) and "fatherhood" (*otsovstvo*) are not present at all. This pattern is also reflected in the constitution of the Russian Federation. Article 7:2 mentions fatherhood as a protected social institution, but in the section on the rights and freedoms of the citizen fatherhood is not mentioned while motherhood and childhood are (see Article 38:1). Moreover, men's ties to their children are in many cases weak due to the high numbers of non-marital births and high divorce rates, which frequently imply separation from the children too.⁶⁸ Thus it appears as if at least the legislative conditions for absent fatherhood are still largely present in post-Soviet Russia.

There are, however, some tendencies indicating that ideals of the "new father" or "nurturing father" are also emerging. Among Russian fathers in the well-educated middle class in the larger cities, a more active fatherhood and some degree of equality in the family are increasingly common. Childrearing continues to be a primarily female task, but fathers are more likely to be present at delivery, for example, and are less inclined towards domestic violence.⁶⁹ One concrete example of the emerging Russian nurturing father is the prevalence of "daddy schools" in northwestern Russia (mainly in Saint Petersburg, but also in Novgorod and Petrozavodsk). These groups are places for fathers-to-be to meet, learn about and discuss issues related to becoming a father with a clear agenda oriented towards taking up a role as an active, involved, and nurturing father.

According to Olga Bezrukova, the majority of the participants in the daddy schools are men with a more democratic and gender-equal outlook on the family than is generally found. A clear majority has completed higher education and almost all fathers that take part are employed. Although such categories are more arbitrary in Russia than in the West, these men can be referred to as middle-class.⁷⁰ In this regard, Russia follows the Western pattern in which middle-class fathers appear to be the first to adapt new fatherhood ideals, although actual behavior does not always follow suit.

Concluding remarks

The review of the literature on Russian fatherhood confirms that fatherhood as a social institution is bound to the context of political and socioeconomic processes. These processes have important implications for the gender contract, that is, for the distribution of power between the sexes in the private and

public spheres, and in particular for people's roles as mothers and fathers.

Soviet emancipation, which was based on the notion of the working mother, changed the previous gender contract. Mothers' increased labor participation did not lead to a more active and engaged fatherhood, however, as it later would in the West. Rather, the gender policies of the Soviet Union transformed fatherhood from the main source of authority in the family, linked to other patriarchal structures – the Russian Orthodox Church and the Tsar (the father of the nation) – into a marginalized social institution.

Although some traits of the "breadwinner" model, which was dominant in the West until World War II, were also present in the Soviet Union from the 1930s through the 1950s, the Soviet state and its policies gradually took over most of the role of the provider for the family. Thus the Soviet state left fathers in Russia without a clear role in the private sphere. This is different from experiences in the West. Even if the role of Western fathers was more focused in the public than in the private sphere, they still had a larger role to fill in the family, at least as a provider. In the Soviet context, socio-economic circumstances also undermined the role of the father as breadwinner. Fatherhood was thus not a basis of recognition and legitimacy, neither in the private nor in the public sphere.

When the etat-cratic gender system eroded as the Soviet Union fell apart, fatherhood in post-Soviet Russia became an arena for competing discourses. In some contexts, fatherhood remains marginalized in state discourse. However, neo-traditional images of the ideal father as a reliable provider or breadwinner have also emerged in the wider neo-traditional discourse that is an important part of Russia's current political climate. At the same time, there are some traces of a competing discourse among Russia's growing urban middle class that speaks of a more active and nurturing father. Thus there is no one dominant image or discourse of good fatherhood in today's Russia, as seems to be the case in large parts of Europe where a "new fatherhood" is actively promoted.⁷¹

The review of previous research also shows that there is a need for further research on fatherhood in the Eastern European context, especially in Russia. Empirically there is a need for a more detailed analysis of Russia's contemporary welfare system and its implications for parenthood, and in particular for fatherhood. In this regard, Lewis's typology and other similar typologies and models could be applied to specific welfare mechanisms, such as parental leave, flexible working hours, and childcare facilities, as well as to fiscal and family legislation, which together set the conditions for fatherhood both as a social institution and as a practice.

There is, in addition, a need to modify existing theoretical and analytical tools or develop new ones that are suitable to increase our understanding of fatherhood in the Russian context. Future analysis will show whether Western welfare typologies are apt for the analysis of the influence of Eastern European and post-Soviet welfare systems on contemporary parenthood. ✖

Note: All essays are scholarly articles and have been peer-reviewed by specialists under the supervision of Baltic Worlds' editorial advisory board.

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TBILISI DESTROYS ITS PAST

The Old Town is transformed

text & photos
Sara Bergfors



A view over Tbilisi, with parts of the Old Town in the foreground. The Freedom Bridge and the Public Service Hall by the river are a couple of Saakashvili's additions to the city.

**It so completely mocked the sphere
Of the eye's range and all of nature,
That it arose and remained a chimaera,
A city as if not of this world.**

Russian poet Boris Pasternak is only one of many famous visitors who have been stunned by the romantic city of Tbilisi, with its brick houses clinging to the cliffs above the Kura River. The covered wooden balconies with their delicate latticework and the sulfur-smelling domes of the ancient baths give the Asian quarter of the Old Town a distinct character.

Georgia is situated in the Caucasus region, on the dividing line between Europe and Asia. Throughout history, the country has been invaded numerous times. Persians, Byzantines, Russians and Soviets – they have all been here, and they have all left their footprint. Wherever you turn in Tbilisi, you see the influence of its former rulers.

Modern day rulers also leave their marks. Lately, there's been an addition of bombastic buildings of glass and steel to the city's skyline. Former president Mikheil Saakashvili, who came to power after the Rose Revolution in 2003 and stepped down only this November, has left a partly transformed Tbilisi behind.

His preferred architectural style is not of the modest kind. His is the love of ultra-modern shapes in glass and steel. Saakashvili launched an aggressive building campaign shortly after taking office. The plan was to change the image of Georgia, to attract investors as well as tourists by showing that the former Soviet republic was transforming itself into a modern and Western-oriented country.

Besides erecting numerous eye-catching buildings all over the city, a prominent part of the plan was to restore the rundown, ramshackle buildings along the winding streets and alleys of Tbilisi's Old Town. In 2009, the government launched a program called "New Life for the Old Town". Now critics claim that the "restoration" was too fast and way too furious; that priceless historical treasures were destroyed when the original brick buildings were demolished and replaced with concrete replicas.

"About a third of the Old Town has gone", says Peter Nasmyth, British writer and publisher who lives part of the year in Tbilisi.

He has witnessed what he calls a "Disneyfication" of old Tbilisi during the last few years. Many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings have been destroyed – some of them simply demolished to leave room for new buildings, others restored in an

insensitive way. Numerous old buildings have been redesigned, often with one or two extra floors added on top. Cheap Turkish tiles and aluminum-framed windows have replaced the original handmade materials, eliminating every trace of history, leaving a shiny, all-too-perfect surface.

"This is a tragic form of gentrification", Peter Nasmyth says.

He is one of the founders of the Tbilisi Architectural Heritage Group (www.tbilisiheritagegroup.co.uk), a network of people from mainly the UK and Georgia dedicated to informing the world about the threats to Tbilisi's architectural heritage, and presenting alternative solutions and ideas.

"What's happening here is very sad. You don't know what you've got until it's gone. Ten years on and the local population will deeply regret what's happened," Peter Nasmyth predicts.

Georgia has had more than its fair share of political turmoil during the last century. Brutal Soviet occupation followed by civil war and deep economic crisis in the 1990s left the country in a poor state. Decades of deferred maintenance has left parts of Tbilisi in desperate need of care. To an untrained eye, many of the



Beauty in decay, Lado Asatiani Street in the Old Town.



PHOTO: TBILISI HERITAGE GROUP

PHOTO: TBILISI HERITAGE GROUP



Lermontov House in Gudishvili Square before and after "preparation for restoration", above.

Computer-generated images of a remodeled Gudishvili Square by Austrian architects Zechner & Zechner.



Restoration – or rebuilding?



Lado Asatiani Street.



Rebuilt houses in Abano Street, next to the famous sulfur baths in the Old Town.

buildings in the Old Town seem to be beyond repair, the once beautiful balconies sagging, brick walls crumbling. But according to Peter Nasmyth, restoration is almost always an option. It's just a lot slower than demolition, though not necessarily more expensive.

"You don't have to knock these buildings down, you can repair them", he says with emphasis. "Many people do it all the time."

A growing number of architects, artists, and academics have been protesting against the rapid transformation of the Old Town. But there is a dilemma: many of the Old Town inhabitants welcome the changes. They prefer the brand new look of the concrete facades, and see the use of modern construction materials as a sign of progress.

"To many Georgians, old is still ugly. This notion is only slowly changing", says Peter Nasmyth. He explains that ten years ago his neighbors approached him saying "Great news, they're going to knock down your flat!" When he protested saying that he liked their quaint, nineteenth-century building, they replied that someone wanted to buy the building and he would be offered a "brand a new flat with a wonderful view. . ." Fortunately, the plan was never realized. But many others have been.

The largest protests have so far concerned the

reconstruction plans for picturesque Gudishvili Square. Protest groups staged numerous demonstrations in this historic square in 2011 and 2012 after computer-generated images of a remodeled, futuristic Gudishvili Square had appeared online, showing a totally transformed area. Contemporary-looking frontages housing international chain stores had replaced the picturesque houses lining the square. The shady acacia trees seemed to be the only thing left of this historic environment. The images were published by Austrian architects Zechner & Zechner, who had won a competition to develop the square.

The Mayor's office responded to the uproar by claiming that they knew nothing of the competition, publishing different pictures showing their own plans for the square's rehabilitation.

Despite the protests, in May last year a construction company started tearing apart the famous Lermontov House, which some say is Georgia's most iconic balconied building in Gudishvili Square. The nineteenth-century building was named after the Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov who is said to have stayed here in the 1820s. Protesters and tourists alike watched in horror as the roof was removed and the balcony ripped off, which is how it remains today. According to the authorities, the building was being "prepared for res-

toration", but previous examples of such preparation left few of the residents believing this.

Today, the Austrian owners of the Gudishvili Square buildings have pulled out, and it is unclear what will happen.

UNESCO itself once wanted to list Tbilisi's Old Town as a World Heritage Site in 2000. However, it suspended the proposal due to a lack of will in the local government towards preservation. The Old Town remains on the tentative list, but is looking more and more unlikely to fulfill UNESCO's ambition, given that since 2000, the City Hall planning department has granted permission to demolish numerous listed buildings.

"They think preservation will hinder development, but all experts agree that it will, on the contrary, attract serious developers", says Nato Tsintsabadze, Secretary General of ICOMOS Georgia (Georgian National Committee of International Council on Monuments and Sites). We meet in her office in the Betlemi Quarter of the Old Town, on a hill overlooking the city. The ICOMOS office is located in a historic building, reverentially restored inside and out, serving as an example of how restoration could – and should – be done.



Tbilisi is famous for its great variety of architectural styles.



Peter Nasmyth with his friend Elisso Sulakauri, who lives in a house built by her great grandfather in 1896. The wooden balcony is very typical for Tbilisi.

The lack of adequate political structures and legislation in Georgia is a major problem. There is no city plan for Tbilisi, and the building classification system published in 2007 is being blatantly ignored: both red-listed buildings (national monuments) and yellow-listed buildings (buildings where only the façade must be preserved) have been bulldozed the last few years. Until last year, decisions regarding listed buildings in Tbilisi were made within City Hall, instead of by the national government. But this is now changing. Saakashvili lost power in last year's general election, and a new government under Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili was installed. Since then, the heroic activities of a few key individuals, such as the new Deputy Minister of Culture, Marine Mirzandari, has led to the new government now making all planning decisions regarding National Monuments right across Georgia, including Tbilisi.

"We do hope that these changes in the law will help us," Nato Tsintsabadze says. "We are watching very carefully how the ministry acts."

Preservation is slow and costly, and it's obvious that the former government wanted quick change.

"Too much hurry is not very wise economically. The old government spent public money in a totally irresponsible way."

No one knows exactly how much money has been spent in the New Life for Old Tbilisi project, but it's millions of dollars.

"There's no transparency, there is no way to find out what is being planned until they actually execute it. They should involve the neighbors before they decide to demolish buildings", Tsintsabadze says.

Georgia is a poor country, and international funding is crucial to afford cultural heritage protection projects.

"Even in rich countries, they don't rely only on public funds", Nato Tsintsabadze says.

Instead, ICOMOS wants the government to create funding mechanisms that will attract foreign investors interested in cultural heritage protection. There is a great interest in the unique historical and cultural values of Old Tbilisi within the international architectural community, but no structures to channel any international funding.

With the new government, the pace of the demolition seems to have slowed down. But the future is still uncertain.

"We have to fight, and we have to preserve as much as possible", Nato Tsintsabadze says. ❌

New threat to Tbilisi's cultural heritage

Tbilisi Heritage Group recently revealed

that the Georgian Parliament is discussing a draft law on cultural heritage which has the potential to remove the protected status of 6,300 historical sites across the country. Among them could be some of the most famous historical sites of Georgia, such as the Narikala Castle, the Opera, Rustaveli Theatre and Marjanishvili Theatre in Tbilisi, as well as Borjomi Park in southern Georgia and the Romanov Palace in Abastumani. Read more about this, and see the petition against the planned changes to the Law on Cultural Heritage at www.tbilisiheritagegroup.co.uk.



The ancient Narikala Castle overlooks the Old Town.

REVERSING THE MYTHS ON WEAK POST-COMMUNIST CIVIL SOCIETIES

How can we understand the intersection between civil society research and social movement studies? How can this intersection be studied in the context of the post-socialist period, and in particular in Poland? What is the state of Polish civil society and how can we assess it in the light of increasing spontaneous and informal forms of activism among Poles? These were the questions addressed at the conference “The Challenge of Collective Action: New Perspectives on Civil Society and Social Activism in Contemporary Poland” organized by Warsaw University and Södertörn University in Warsaw, October 18–19 of this year. The rationale of the conference was to question the conventional view of Polish civil society by highlighting the neglect of spontaneous and informal forms of activism in studies of post-socialist and Polish civil society.

THE CONFERENCE was opened by keynote speaker professor Grzegorz Ekiert, who is widely known for his work on Polish civil society before and after 1989, and for his development of protest event analysis in Poland.¹ Ekiert presented new data on the state of Polish civil society contradicting the widespread perception of it as weak and passive, paralyzed by the legacies of the socialist past.² Ekiert pointed out that, on the contrary, there has been dynamic growth of the non-governmental organizations in the country (both associations and foundations), and a slow increase of “street politics” – demonstrations and blockades in the decades after 1989 – along with the development of more radical political movements in Poland after the global economic crisis in 2008. Moreover, Poland is also exceptional in the European context (with the exception of the Nordic countries) with respect to the amount of charitable activity conducted there, and the high number of sporting activities and organizations active in the country. Ekiert described Polish civil society’s transformation as dependent on four important processes taking place in the country. First, he emphasized the steadily growing “third sector”, whose growth and consolidation over time has made it less likely to take part in protests. He also pointed out the ongoing de-corporatization manifest in the decline in size and influence of trade unions and other professional organizations. The professionalization of the field of civil society organizations, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), has along with the political and economic stabilization in the country (according to Ekiert, Poland has been the most politically stable post-socialist country in the European Union since 2008) resulted in fewer protest events such as strikes, or those connected to elections.

Professor Anna Giza-Poleszczuk commented on Ekiert’s lecture by characterizing the concept of Polish civil society as one involving activity both in theory and in everyday practice. Her objective was to understand the role that the concept is playing in post-communist societies and its specific meaning in the Polish

“EKIERT POINTED OUT THAT, ON THE CONTRARY, THERE HAS BEEN DYNAMIC GROWTH OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE COUNTRY”

public discourse, arguing that the concept is not only widely used in research, but also in the media, in politics, by important figures in civil society, and by ordinary citizens. She pointed out the connection in the perception of civil society between the socialist past and the state of civil society after 1989, where civil society is perceived as a remnant of the past, passive, spoiled in its form and in need of change.³ The common belief was that people, as part of civil society, should be encouraged to be active and take responsibility for matters in the public sphere. Giza-Poleszczuk argued, with support from some of her research,⁴ that this notion of civil society in Poland has been distorted and exceptionally persistent in the public consciousness. She called this distorted notion of civil society a “powerful stereotype”, one that has entered popular imagination since the system change and has been reproduced by the people themselves when describing their civil activity and attitudes. She concluded by asking what effects such a negative notion has for the society, when the activity in the society is constantly seen as poor and in need of change, despite the evidence that civil society organizations are continually increasing in number and influence, and becoming more professional. Giza-Poleszczuk also posed the question of why this negative notion has become so popular in Polish society. She sought the answers in the division of the “old” third sector active under communism, and the “new” third sector created after 1989, and the attitudes towards these, the actual activity of these two and the different level of trust that organizations of the two divisions are awarded among the population. The conclusion was that the Anglo-Saxon model of a “proper” civil society that was introduced after 1989 in relation to the “un-proper” form of civil society prevalent under communism has had far-reaching consequences for the negative notion of Polish civil society of today, resulting in the interpretation of civil society activity and those involved in such activity as unable to function well.

The myth of a poorly functioning Polish civil society was reversed in additional ways by other contribu-

tions presented at the conference. Among the presentations was research on activism in Poland (and most post-socialist countries) on understudied topics such as: LGBT-activism⁵, tenants’ and housing activism, animal-rights activism, mobilizations against ACTA⁶, motherhood and women’s issues, the development of the anarchist movement, activity among think-tanks, right-to-the-city mobilizations, but also activism connected to precarious living conditions, national and religious identity, or sports organizations. What was lacking was research on mobilizations relating to ecological issues, right-wing-oriented activism, and religious movements. However, some interesting points emerged during the conference, especially during the discussions. One of these was the exclusion of some forms and actors from the common conceptualization of civil society in Poland, affecting the interpretation of the state of social and political activism in the country. An important question that was posed by one of the organizers, Dr. Elżbieta Korolczuk, was why some people and groups in the sphere of Polish civil society are de-legitimized, not acknowledged. She argued that actions and claims coming from specific civil society groups are not seen as legitimate and thus not included in the definition of civil society. Moreover, this limited understanding of the activity of civil society is also constrained by the neglect of more informal and non-institutionalized forms of activism, and instead has a focus on the activity of non-governmental organizations. The normative concept of civil society was also discussed in relation to definitions of “civil” and “uncivil” and the more inclusive definition was recommended, in order to understand the depth and breadth of the activity undertaken by figures within Polish civil society.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT conclusion drawn during the conference was that what is called, in the social movement literature, the political opportunity structures (defined as the openness of the political system in a given society towards the activity and claims made by social movements), are highly relevant in Poland today. Also significant are the resources available to civil society actors and organizations, historical and cultural legacies including public discourses, the functioning of institutions and levels of institutional and social trust, and also the influences of collective actors outside Poland (be it in the form of economic support, in their capacity as organizational models, or simply as sources of inspiration). All these structures of opportunity and access to resources set the conditions under which parts of civil society operate and shape, in different ways, the content and scope of Polish activism.

Several of the conference contributors identified a common pattern of entrepreneurial and family-centered orientations in Polish civil society, which functioned as motivations for civic engagement and as an “expression of civicness” (Prof. Kerstin Jacobsson’s

term). This specificity of Polish civic activism was discussed at the conference and interpreted as a logic imported from the private sphere. This might not be surprising, given the picture drawn by Giza-Poleszczuk of the Polish discourse on civil society since the system change, which portrays it as deficient and in need of change. The logic of entrepreneurial individuals fits in well with the expectations placed on citizens to change their ways and act for a better world. Entrepreneurial logic and practices along with “familial orientation” (Elżbieta Korolczuk’s term) are not new in the Polish context; they were, as coping strategies, widespread under communism. They have, moreover, been refined in the new system of neo-liberalism, where the competition for resources (grant-based in the sphere of NGOs) among civil society organizations is high, and the successes (and failures) are ascribed to the efforts of individuals. Those who have not succeeded in adapting to the capitalist system are seen as losers lacking entrepreneurial spirit. This is precisely how socio-economically weaker groups are perceived, and their situation is explained with reference to the previous system having “spoiled” them. This has the effect of de-legitimizing their activism.

THE CHALLENGE FOR FUTURE research on civil society is to provide more general conclusions on collective action and the activity of civil society (broadly



ACTA protest in Sosnowiec in south Poland.

understood) actors in Poland and other post-socialist societies. Future research ought to include comparisons and cover the heretofore under-studied groups and mobilizations active in this sphere, including non-institutionalized, informal, spontaneous, and “uncivil” (as it is commonly defined characterized) forms of collective action. In the Polish context, there is a great need of interpretations of the steadily growing popularity of right-wing mobilizations, the role of religious groups and movements, and the activism of socio-economically weaker groups. ✖

dominika v. polanska

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Post-Soviet Europe and its “beyond”

THREE SWEDISH research centers for Eastern European Studies – the Center for European Research at Lund University, the Uppsala Center for Russian Studies (UCRS), and the Center for Baltic and Eastern European Studies (CBEEs) at Södertörn University – arranged a conference that took place October 2–4, 2013, in Lund entitled *Beyond Transition: New Directions in Eastern and Central European Studies*.

The theme of the conference, *Beyond Transition*, reflects a critical phase in current research on Eastern Europe. Today, 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, it is clear that the former “Second World” has already passed its projected post-Soviet transition period, often with rather disappointing results. There is no doubt that the former Soviet countries have developed “beyond”, but in which direction? Transition theory based on normalization could not predict the current situation we are in, nor could it explain it. Lectures by prominent international speakers were the conference’s *pièce de résistance*. Five speakers helped identify the real key questions in the

agenda of *beyond transition*. The world-famous German historian Karl Schlögel spoke about the political and geographic factors that have been neglected within transition studies, the social groups that were never figured into post-Soviet studies in their capacity as historical players. The French sociologist Georges Mink (ISP-CNRS in Paris and the College of Europe) spoke about current, active power games around collective memory on high political and bureaucratic levels within the EU and in the new EU member states. Memory has become an issue for a hyper-active lobbying industry. Jan Kubik from Rutgers University in the US described a similar situation when he considered the current politics of memory in former Eastern Europe through the lens of political science.

THE BRITISH SOCIOLOGIST Alena Ledeneva (University College London), in her lecture, concentrated on corruption and power in Russia. One shouldn’t interpret corruption in Putin’s Russia as a failure of the system to be revealed and rectified. Corruption is the system itself, within

which power is exercised through a complex relationship between informal communication and the exchange of services within a circle with limitless but diffuse contacts. It is through the corrupt *sistema* that Russia, in its brutal manner and despite unending crises, actually “works” economically, politically, and internationally. But it is also the same *sistema* that locks Russia into the “trap of informality”. Politicians, entrepreneurs, and bureaucrats are hostage to their own shortsighted interests, while the system’s long-term consequences prevent modernization and the development of institutions in particular. ✖

irina sandomirskaja

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Note: This is an abridged version of a report available at the Baltic Worlds website. An earlier version was published in Swedish at the blog *Världen Österut* [The world to the east].

Focusing food

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known as "meal science".

Illustrations:
Ragni Svensson

Introduction. Agro-food dynamics in the Baltic and Nordic context

Over the last several decades, the competitiveness of the European agro-food sector has been challenged by the emergence of new price leaders from far away nations and regions, such as the soybean complex in the Southern Cone of Latin America and the articulation of a meat (beef and poultry) complex in Brazil and a milk complex in Argentina.¹ These newcomers are able to produce food on a larger scale and at a lower cost than Europe, and this has altered power relations in the global agro-food sector. The global demand for food has also changed. The demand for basic food-stuffs stagnated in Europe during the 1980s, while demand has increased in low-income countries, and especially in the Middle East.²

This new situation has increased competition at the industry level, fueling a far-reaching concentration of agro-food companies, through mergers, acquisitions, and strategic cooperation.³ The changes in food demands have also produced a process of transnationalization of the food retail sector that has altered power relations in favor of retailers. For many years, the number one company in the Fortune Global 500 was the American retail chain Walmart, but it was surpassed in 2013 by Royal Dutch Shell. The European counterpart to Walmart is the French retailer Carrefour, a company with a net turnover of €77 billion in 2012, around 365,000 employees in 33 countries, and almost 10,000 stores in Europe, Latin America, and Asia.⁴ Moreover, countries and markets have become increasingly liberalized, and financial instruments are having a greater impact on agro-food prices than ever before.⁵ These new prices and payment schemes have been used by the industry to decrease the number of farms and to increase productivity and production per farm as a way to lower transaction costs.⁶

Globalization has been identified as the main cause of this development, but in the European context, there are also many internal dynamics that determine the main goals and direction of food and agricultural production. This is done through various policy instruments and subsidies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).⁷

The agro-food sector has also developed a local dimension that has gained force in response to an increasingly globalized reality. In addition to supplying products that satisfy nutritional demands, rural

and agricultural businesses also offer recreation and leisure opportunities in beautiful landscapes, ensure future environmental sustainability and biodiversity, provide post-industrial job opportunities, promote growth, counteract depopulation of rural spaces, promote gender equality, and offer regions and nations a sense of history and tradition. This local dimension of the agro-food sector is characterized by the production of local food and other agricultural goods, and by a shift in focus from large-scale agriculture to rural development. Rural agents, and sometimes urban agents, have taken advantage of the new opportunities and have invested in new rural ventures. This has forced authorities to both develop new institutional regulations and promote the new ventures.⁸

The articulation and development of the agro-food sector in the Baltic and Nordic countries is highly influenced by the above mentioned development and by the CAP.

At the industry and retail level, mergers and acquisitions, foreign direct investments (FDIs), and strategic cooperation with companies in neighboring countries have become necessary for survival. The search for partners and investment opportunities in neighboring countries has been thoroughly explained by trade theories. Close geographical proximity often means that there are fewer cultural barriers, and it is easier to perceive opportunities concerning cross-border differences in factor prices or other conditions that might create competitive advantages and, therefore, motivate FDIs, mergers, or acquisitions. Some relevant examples are the expansion of the Swedish group Lantmännen, which has become involved in more than twenty foreign companies, mostly around the Baltic Sea.⁹ The Swedish retail company ICA, which has become the dominant food retail company in Sweden with more than a 50% share of the national market, has also expanded around the Baltic rim. ICA accomplished transnationalization through a joint venture with Kesko to establish the retail chain Rimi Baltic AB in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.¹⁰ However, cross-border investments in the area are not only performed by large industries, but also occur on a smaller scale.¹¹

Regarding farms, the number of these in all countries in the Baltic-Nordic area decreased substantially between 2000 and 2010. For Sweden, the decrease in

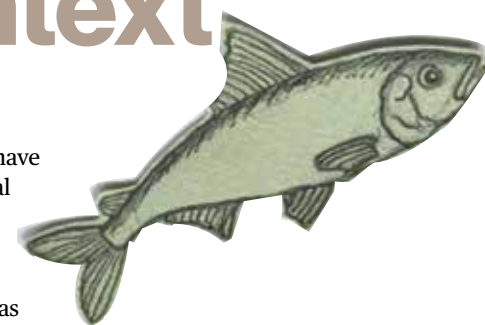
farms seems to have reached a critical point because the value of output between 2007 and 2010 has stagnated, while the value of output in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland, and Norway has increased during the same period.¹²

There is a broad consensus that the changing dynamics of the world market and the rationalization of the farm and industry level gives rise to two main responses at the level of the farm: a focus on increased productivity and a focus on diversification and sustainability. The latter focus is also denoted as *post-productivist* or as the *new rurality*.¹³

In the Baltic-Nordic area, post-productivism is characterized by many different parallel processes. A wave of migrants who are searching for better living conditions and who are equipped with economic resources and managerial and marketing skills have started to develop of new rural firms. Farms are building inns or offering other activities for tourists to complement farm activities.¹⁴ Seasonal workers from Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania migrate to Sweden and Finland to work on farms, pick berries, and plant forests, often as a recurring activity from year to year, in search of additional sources of income.¹⁵ In return, Danish, Swedish, German, and Finnish firms are initiating FDIs in agro-food activities in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.¹⁶

Although the Baltic-Nordic area could be seen as a homogenous region within the European Union (EU) due to shared climatic conditions and geographic location, the agricultural and rural trends in the countries of this region vary widely. These differences become even more pronounced when compared to the rest of Europe, especially if we analyze the adoption and implementation of the CAP. European countries can be classified into four distinct categories based on their structure and response to the CAP:

In countries such as Sweden, with highly rationalized agriculture and with only a few remaining pockets of traditional agriculture located primarily in less favored areas, the diversification and heterogenization of rurality is a very recent phenomenon. Some



scholars argue that these countries have suffered from a loss of food culture and that they have become “placeless foodscapes”¹⁷ or “food deserts”.¹⁸ An important feature of these countries is that the harmonization of the national implementation of the CAP has been slower and has had some unexpected outcomes, as is illustrated by Bonow and Zurek in this volume.

Contrary to the previous category, in countries with a large, heterogeneous, and geographically spread-out agricultural sector, such as Italy, France and Norway, small-scale agro-food industries, often characterized by culinary features, are just as important as large-scale agriculture. In these countries, the use of political tools (e.g., subsidies) designed to promote small-scale agriculture, rural diversification, and multifunctionality in agriculture never disappeared. These features are associated with the size and structural characteristics of the agro-food system as well as its contemporary history.¹⁹

Countries that proactively adapted to the EU, extracting the best of it and in which the new rurality is a recent construction, for example Austria. A main feature is that the pro-active attitude of the state in combination with the geographical proximity to “successful experiences” facilitates the adoption of policy instruments that were developed departing from type two countries.²⁰

New EU members from the Eastern European and Baltic countries (EEBCs) experienced two waves of change. First, socialism was replaced by capitalism, which discontinued existing structures and regulations because of the liberalization of prices, the opening up of imports from abroad, and the promotion of land reform to restore land to owners from the “pre-Soviet” period. After admission to the EU, agriculture and rural development was placed under the rubric of rural development, but with different conditions than in the EU-15.²¹ The EEBC countries have very different features and economic structures. When the expansion of the EU was set in motion, the agricultural contribution to GDP was larger from the ten EEBCs than from the EU-15, with 21% of that share coming from Bulgaria and 15% from Romania.²²

THE COUNTRIES THAT ARE the focus in this section on food and food production in this issue of *Baltic Worlds* mainly belong to the first and fourth categories described above, except for Norway, which is not part of the EU and, therefore, is only indirectly influenced by the CAP. Moreover, despite findings from previous research, Norwegian agriculture and rurality would fit in the second category due to their diversified agricultural sector, and because they have managed to maintain important parts of their traditional agro-food production, a phenomenon illustrated by Tunón et al. in this volume.²³

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland have major structural differences, but the countries share a similar history of land tenure, power structure, and development levels related to the degree of success or failure of the collectivization of agriculture under Soviet rule.²⁴ Although collectivization was more successful in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania than in Poland, the post-Soviet development of agricultural structure and income seems to be the same in all countries. Land tenure and land utilization trends show that the num-

ber of holdings is decreasing in all countries, while land utilization is increasing in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and decreasing in Poland. All four countries have experienced a positive development of farm output.²⁵

Unlike those four countries, Sweden and Norway experienced agricultural and rural development under capitalism. The agenda for agriculture, rural development, and the articulation of the agro-food sector was initially set by the state in both countries, partly conditioned by factors specific to each. The main difference between the two countries is that Sweden is part of the EU and is thus exposed to the dynamics of the common market, while Norway still maintains a national agro-food policy model.

Agro-food realities and dynamics in the Baltic and Nordic countries are often neglected in the European context. Although the same processes of increased levels of productivity and a turn toward diversification are under way in all EU countries, the starting points of the Baltic and Nordic countries are quite different from the rest of Europe, due to institutional, structural, geographical, and especially climatic factors. In addition, because of a changing reality, there are significant institutional and knowledge gaps that need to be addressed. Answering new questions about the agro-food sector in the Baltic and Nordic context can contribute to a better understanding of the actual agro-food reality in the EU, and the development of political tools that facilitate the process of convergence in a more democratic way. The articles presented in this volume answer important questions about the implementation of the CAP in the Baltic and Nordic context, about institutional gaps, about perceptions of nature, and about regional integration in the Baltic rim area through FDIs. ❌

Note: Paulina Rytönen has been in charge of the peer-review process for the four articles in this section.

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Foreign investment and economic integration

Meat industry in the Baltic Sea Region

By **León Poblete & H. Richard Nakamura**

Regional integration processes have been a focus of academic interest since the 1950s and have taken on more importance since the 1980s,¹ primarily because of the development of the European Union. Regional integration in the form of free-trade unions is an important issue because it offers a chance for small open economies to expand the size of their international trade and to obtain similar benefits as larger economies. This comes with all of the implications that this entails for the investment strategies of multinational firms, the development of competitive advantages, and the increase of scale economies.² In addition, Stirk (1996) argues that there has been a tendency for richer countries to open up for regional integration with poorer neighboring states.³ Regional integration offers firms incentives to invest more locally by reducing transaction costs and thereby increasing the rate of return on capital. The European Union's inclusion of the Baltic states and Poland in 2004, for example, brought about a 6% average increase in foreign direct investments measured as foreign direct investment stocks.⁴

Most foreign direct investments have been directed to the manufacturing sector. The food processing industry represents the largest industrial subsector, and accounted for 15%–20% of all manufacturing sector foreign direct investments during the 2000s.⁵ Since the mid-1990s, food manufacturing foreign direct investments have increased in quantity because the overall increase in earnings and living standards has led to increased consumption of meat and meat products. This development of the food consumption pattern is in line with a global trend of increasing meat consumption and production.⁶

Despite this development, very few studies exist that cover food industry foreign direct investments in the Baltic Sea region – defined in this study as the European Union member states surrounding the Baltic Sea except for Germany – in general, and even fewer studies cover food industry mergers and acquisitions

in particular. The exceptions include the study by Hunya (2004), who covered the food industry as a part of an overview of foreign direct investments in the Baltic Sea region, and the consumer trends study by Kniuiptyté (2012).

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to *analyze the motives of the food industry's foreign direct investments in the meat industry in the Baltic Sea region and to determine how institutional factors influence investment decisions*. This study will evaluate and provide a meso-level perspective by investigating the extent to which foreign direct investments in the meat industry, the largest subsector of the food industry, have contributed to economic integration in terms of the integrating and upgrading of local businesses in the Baltic Sea region. Thus, with the intention of finding possible answers to these questions, we investigate a number of interrelated issues that help us understand the impact of the flow of foreign direct investment on the local small and medium-sized firms in the Baltic Sea region's meat industry.

TODAY'S GLOBAL PRODUCTION networks, built up by flexible non-equity modes of international production such as contract manufacturing, outsourcing, and offshoring,⁷ have changed the time dimensions of international manufacturing firms, and long-term investment commitments are no longer a prerequisite for production operations overseas. The phenomenon of “born globals”,⁸ which describes instant or rapid internationalization of business ventures, is an example of today's dynamic global business environment. However, the basic arguments of mainstream internationalization theories are still valid.⁹ In order for firms to establish international business activities, the firms must usually possess superior competitive qualities than incumbent firms.¹⁰ Moreover, closeness of markets,¹¹ business network embeddedness,¹² and cultural proximity¹³ have also been forwarded as significant factors to explain the internationalization process of firms.

One concrete expression of business internationalization is foreign direct investment, which is a significant feature of today's globalizing economy. Here, we are referring to two particular modes that multinational corporations can utilize: greenfield investments, where firms build up brand new operations in a foreign country, and cross-border mergers and acquisitions where firms acquire existing firms in the host country. These two modes are generally different not only in nature but also in terms of the type of firms that undertake greenfield foreign direct investments and cross-border mergers and acquisitions. For example, Andersson and Svensson (1994) and Blonigen (1997) have found that firm characteristics, such as industrial affiliation and firm-specific competitive skills, determine what type of foreign direct investment mode is chosen. Furthermore, Dunning (1992) and Dunning and Lundan (2008) have attempted to incorporate these aspects when categorizing foreign direct investments into four different types, namely, resource-seeking, market-seeking, efficiency-seeking, and strategic asset-seeking investments. As Dunning correctly observes, contemporary foreign direct investment activities are pushed by competitive pressures and scale economies.

The location of the host country, the market size, and possession of firm-specific capabilities are all examples of key factors acknowledged in the theoretical literature as being attractive to foreign direct investments.¹⁴ Furthermore, institutional changes, such as the establishment of free-trade areas¹⁵ and large-scale isomorphic industrial organizational patterns among firms¹⁶ inside the free-trade areas, have also been pointed out as important pushing factors for foreign direct investments. Other factors for foreign direct investment decisions that have been intensely discussed in the foreign direct investment and international business literature are host-country technology absorption abilities and institutional risks associated with technological transfers.¹⁷ In this way, institutional factors are

recognized as being strong determinants for foreign direct investments¹⁸ and for mergers and acquisitions in particular.¹⁹

However, industry level studies on mergers and acquisitions in the Baltic Sea region addressing institutional factors in investment decision making are, to the best of our knowledge, very scarce. The long-term retention of the investments made by foreign firms, which is promoted by governments of the Baltic Sea region with the hope of positive foreign direct investment spillovers, is dependent on the host country's institutional context.²⁰ From the foreign investing firms' perspective, the influence of institutional or contextual embeddedness²¹ on corporate governance and strategic managerial decisions made by the internationalizing firms operating in a global context has become more important than ever before in international investment decisions. Still, after some 25 years of transition from the Soviet-style command economy to a European Union economy, corruption and the question of how to handle issues relating to the gray-sector economy²² are a reality for foreign investors in the eastern Baltic Sea region. Studies on institutional hazards have shown that there is a strong negative correlation between the level of activities of foreign firms and affiliates on the one hand and weak governance structures and general attitudes towards institutional hazards on the other.²³

Thus, we need to address features of contemporary foreign investments that have been largely ignored by the foreign direct investment literature and introduce institutional aspects to the research when we discuss patterns in foreign direct investment behavior and motives. Obviously, there is a need for mergers and acquisitions research that also introduces complementary perspectives to help us better understand the foreign direct investment patterns in the Baltic Sea region. This work discusses the nature of the mergers and acquisitions in the meat industry by taking an institutional perspective on foreign direct investments in the eastern Baltic Sea region.

THE COMPANIES SELECTED for this research were first identified through the ORBIS/ZEPHYR²⁴ company, mergers and acquisitions databases, and expert interviews at consulting companies, academies, organizations, and governmental institutions related to the mergers and acquisitions of the meat industry in the Baltic Sea region. We started with 96 companies and narrowed down the selection to 63 approachable companies. A request was then sent to these companies, of which 37 replied to our query. Respondents were contacted via e-mail and telephone to inquire if they were willing to participate in the study, and 24 companies and organizations finally agreed to interviews at the location of their choice. Chairmen of the board and Chief executive officers were chosen as respondents due to their insights into mergers and acquisition decisions. All interview data were checked through respondent validation. Follow-up questions were also sent to the respondents by e-mail after the conclusion of the interviews in order to improve the understanding of particular issues.

The intention of the in-depth interviews was to get perspectives, feelings, memories, and reflections that could not be observed or discovered in other ways.²⁵

The interviews had a retrospective starting point, and we asked the respondents to describe in detail their companies' journey toward mergers and acquisitions in the Baltic Sea region – illustrating both positive and negative experiences – and to reflect on personal and technical challenges and solutions. Interviews were semi-structured, in that all respondents were asked a series of identical questions, but they were also open ended. This approach ensured commonality of topics across interviews while also encouraging respondents to expand into issues that they regarded as important.²⁶ The validity was assisted by using multiple sources of evidence,²⁷ thus not relying solely on the interviews. We supplemented and triangulated the interview data²⁸ with a comprehensive set of archival data, organizational documents, and publicly available documents such as corporate websites, annual reports, and the firm's documents. In order to come up with the analysis and conclusions, we coded the interview transcripts and organized and analyzed the data systematically. This involved locating, coding, and interpreting the material, and this enabled us to weigh and evaluate importance and visualize the relationships between the variables. Nonetheless, as proposed by Griggs (1987) and Patton (2002), quotations from case studies are included in order to add to qualitative insights and provide support to the data interpretation. The identity of the respondents has been anonymized.

Motives for investments and foreign acquisitions

Internationalization theories state that firms choose new markets according to their perceived geographic proximity and cultural distance, and due to uncertainty they limit investments and only gradually increase commitments to foreign markets.²⁹ The model also assumes that firms, after gaining international experience, will gradually invest further away from the domestic market. In line with these mainstream internationalization theories, the meat producing companies in this study had started or were about to expand progressively into nearby overseas markets. By using foreign direct investments as their internationalization mode, the meat industry mergers and acquisitions can be broadly grouped into market-seeking and efficiency-seeking motives.³⁰ Respondents gave the overall market size, costs, location, and opportunities to expand into other markets through exports as the rationale for investing in the eastern Baltic Sea region. For example, the eastern Baltic Sea region is usually regarded as a bridge for exports to other larger markets such as Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine due to their common history, language, and traditions that provide unique knowledge of the market and logistic conditions in the eastern border region of the European Union. Thus, the merger and acquisition decisions of the investing firms have reflected both the new market opportunities that opened up in the eastern Baltic Sea region during the 1990s and the diminishing opportunities for growth in the mature western Baltic Sea region markets. Interestingly, the company respondents argued that foreign direct investments within the meat industry are mainly market-seeking because labor and production costs are not major factors due to the

intensive use of machinery in production. Instead, the desire to produce closely to the markets they serve is more prominent. However, these respondents still considered labor and production costs as important factors when *deciding* to invest:

“Certain Swedish and Finnish companies have succeeded in decreasing production costs by 30%–40% in comparison to production in their home countries. In terms of distance, since the Baltic states and Poland are close to countries such as Sweden and Finland, it allows quick deliveries, which is very important in the meat production business”

Finnish meat company chief executive officer, interview, April 25, 2011

Industry competitiveness and cost structures

Increasing animal feed prices and shortages of cattle in some countries constitute another concern for the meat processing companies. Animal feed prices are fluctuating due to the global macroeconomic situation, which obviously also affects the meat industry's cost competitiveness. The Baltic states' inclusion in the European Union has also increased the international competition making it difficult for the Baltic and Polish meat processing companies to compete within the European Union market single-handedly. In addition, our respondents added that consumer demand in the Baltic states for new products of high quality is increasing. At the same time, consumers in western markets are more concerned about the origin of agricultural products, which affects companies in the eastern Baltic Sea region negatively. The analysis of the interview data of the cases also suggested that, in general, western consumers tend to associate products from Eastern European countries with low quality and this decreases the potential demand and pushes local producers engage in price competition. For instance, the meat industry in Lithuania is mainly dominated by meat producers and meat processing companies (e.g., livestock production, slaughterhouses, and meat packaging) that operate on a small scale. This results in low labor productivity, low competitiveness of the primary livestock production, and difficulties in complying with quality, hygiene, environment, and animal welfare requirements.³¹

However, there is currently an ongoing development in the Lithuanian meat industry that is similar to what occurred in Poland during the 1990s when the Polish meat industry was restructured in order to create more productive and cost-efficient companies in the market³². Indeed, all respondents agreed that the foreign direct investments in the meat industry have contributed to applying new technologies and innovations to host-country firms in order to decrease costs of production and to ensure food safety requirements, which are required to create new products and to increase value-added meat products. The margins in the meat business are narrow and under constant pressure from price-conscious customers, which has led to technology and scale becoming critical factors for sustained competitiveness.

In line with earlier studies on foreign direct invest-

ment spillovers,³³ foreign direct investments in the Baltic Sea region meat industry are perceived by the respondents as having a positive impact on economic development in terms of higher productivity and production efficiency. Foreign direct investment spillover effects in terms of upgraded technology, production improvements, and creation of new jobs are evident. Development and training of labor skills and creating job opportunities for highly qualified labor are also other common spillover effects from foreign direct investments. In other words, by acquiring a company in the eastern Baltic Sea region, western Baltic Sea region firms have decreased production and labor costs. Furthermore, location advantages and logistics are reported by the respondents to be relevant factors for companies operating in the meat industry because infrastructure and proximity to headquarters are perceived as facilitating business control. On top of this, the total population of the Baltic Sea region is large, and the potentials for economic growth are expected to be positive. This gives an additional advantage to foreign direct investments through mergers and acquisitions, namely, to acquire established brands and use them as a platform for building brands new to the host market. Thus, the main motives for the foreign direct investments are principally the opportunities associated with the ongoing economic growth that is still present in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea region while the markets of the western Baltic Sea region countries have become mature. Given this position,

“the main motives and driving factors in mergers and acquisitions are to increase efficiency, brand recognition, and market share in order to become stronger in the host market.”

Swedish meat company business development director, interview, June 17, 2011

Acquisitions and the market adaptation process

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, foreign investors have been acquiring food production companies in the eastern Baltic Sea region. In the case of Sweden, Swedish meat companies and investors have made significant investments and acquired a considerable number of firms in the Baltic states and Poland during the past decades. Decisions to invest through acquisition generally allow faster access to a host market because companies can benefit from the existing market share of the acquired company.³⁴ Although our respondent companies normally started by acquiring minority stakes in companies, they have since moved to full ownership. The rationale for this acquisition behavior is simple: acquiring another company is the fastest and most effective way to further develop an enterprise and gain market share in foreign markets. As one respondent put it,

“acquisitions are very interesting because additional market share and brand name can be obtained.”

Danish meat company chief executive officer, interview, June 22, 2011

Employing local management is arguably an effective and efficient way to improve company operations in a foreign country because they are a part of local business networks, native speakers, and understand the local culture and market conditions.³⁵ Respondents have also highlighted the importance of communicating to the local staff what business culture is desired in the organization in order to minimize risks and uncertainties. Efficiencies generated through mergers and acquisitions can improve the target firms' ability to compete and can result in lower prices, enhanced quality, enhanced services, or new products. As a result, firms prefer to acquire already productive plants and improve their productivity even further after the acquisition.³⁶

“Foreign direct investments have an important role in the economic development of the Baltic Sea region because foreign direct investments are usually long-term investments, and this money allows companies to rebuild instead of taking a loan from the banks.”

Latvian meat company chief executive officer, interview, March 23, 2011

However, another respondent also argued that

“money is not the only important part but the knowledge that comes along with foreign direct investments, because the Baltic states only have had 20 years of independence from the Soviet Union.”

Lithuanian meat company chief executive officer, interview, April 13, 2011

All respondents stated that it is essential to understand that the three Baltic states – Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia – are different markets with individual consumer preferences, buying habits, and competitive conditions. This makes it difficult for foreign companies to design one single strategy that fits all three markets of the Baltic states simultaneously. Indeed, many companies are not aiming to be the number one in the market, but rather, the respondents expressed a wish to be present throughout the region or to be close to some of their customers. Without having strong international brands, companies might start to expand within the Baltic Sea region, thus obtaining a better position for further internationalization and establishment in larger markets such as Russia or Germany. The meat industry companies are usually not driven by a global strategy; the region is still growing and investors identify opportunities in the transition. Our company respondents forecast exports to increase in the next five years because the meat industry is expected to continue increasing its production overall. This is also the view the European Commission (2007) and FAO (2011) have on the future meat market developments, and they expect that the demand for meat will increase steadily in the next ten years.

The meat processing companies from the western Baltic Sea region, particularly the pork producers, are also attempting to relocate their production facilities to the eastern parts of the Baltic Sea region so as

to capitalize on the region's comparative advantages such as cheaper land and labor, laxer environmental regulations, and access to other markets. In interviews with the authors on April 13, 2011, representatives of the Lithuanian Meat Processors Association and the Embassy of Sweden, Lithuania, discussed less attractive sides of foreign direct investments, which have caused local discontent and negative attitudes, because these live stock breeding foreign investments often affect the local environment negatively in terms of soil contamination, bad odors, and noise pollution.

In the eastern Baltic Sea region, lack of transparency, bureaucracy, and corruption are still recognized as a major problem when doing business.³⁷ The same picture is also given by our respondents, and corruption in particular was identified as an obstacle for business development in the region. One respondent believed that

“in comparison with Scandinavian countries, the Baltic states have a much lower purchasing power, in particular Lithuania, thus, corruption is considerably high and open. . . . This world might be normal in a global context, but it really contrasts with Scandinavia as people there are more used to transparency, organization, things must be fair, and so forth.”

Norwegian retail company subsidiary chief executive officer, Lithuania, interview, April 14, 2011

Our respondents have also stated that the meat industry in the eastern Baltic Sea region is still affected by the gray market, and the existence of illegal trade activities such as unprocessed meat and meat products being smuggled in the border regions, particularly from Poland to Lithuania, has been increasing significantly. As a result, transactions with cheap input material without a traceable source for the meat production are still a problematic issue because certain small companies might be pressured to keep production costs low, disturbing free enterprise and free competition in the region.

“In some cases, meat is transported from one country to another without monitoring and controls for infections, viruses, etc., which is extremely dangerous for consumers.”

Norwegian retail company subsidiary chief executive officer, Lithuania, interview, April 14, 2011

The existence of a heavy bureaucracy is a challenging factor to overcome in the eastern Baltic Sea region because excessive administrative procedures in document handling are required and usually processed inefficiently by bureaucrats. It is hard to assess the spread of corruption in the eastern Baltic Sea region because many intermediary activities are embedded in the local business culture as relationship and/or friendship networks. Nevertheless, this has serious implications in terms of significant transaction costs for daily business operations.³⁸ In an interview with the authors on April 9, 2011, a representative for Business Sweden Warsaw office suggested that one way to circumvent this problem is to build informal personal networks.

Respondents in this research have highlighted that

in many cases the governments are aware that some meat companies in the eastern Baltic Sea region evade taxes and avoid legal salary procedures. Moreover, the Baltic states are relatively less corrupt than other Eastern European countries but are still far behind the world's least corrupt nations of the western Baltic Sea region.³⁹ This exemplifies differences in perceptions concerning corruption, which can also be reflected by the so-called gray economy. The gray economies of the three Baltic states are the biggest in the European Union behind Romania and Bulgaria and account for about 30% of the gross national product in Lithuania and Estonia and 27% in Latvia compared to the European Union average of 20%.⁴⁰

Conclusions

Over the past decades, there has been a major transformation of the meat industry in the Baltic Sea region. After the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, important parts of the meat industry in the eastern Baltic Sea region were managed and owned by governments and small local companies. The meat industry was relatively weak and underdeveloped with outdated production facilities and low productivity. On the other hand, the potential for economic growth in western economies has been decreasing and markets are, to a large extent, mature. Thus, the transition from a planned economy to a market economy and the opportunities presented by the ongoing economic growth in the eastern Baltic Sea region, along with the lack of opportunities for substantial new growth in the western Baltic Sea region, has led to considerable changes in the meat industry throughout the region. As a result, the ownership structure and the characteristics of the industry have changed significantly. In the eastern Baltic Sea region, the meat industry has moved from an underdeveloped, state-owned, and domestically focused position to a privately owned one focused on the international market. Hence, international ownership has increased over the years, mainly through mergers and acquisitions, and Nordic companies have been important actors in this development. Moreover, inclusion in the European Union and the harmonization of laws and regulations have also enhanced the eastern Baltic Sea region's attractiveness for investors. These factors have changed the way meat is produced, processed, and marketed because companies in the Baltic Sea region are focusing on growth and economies of scale in order to maximize the rate of return on capital and to be competitive in the international market.

LET'S NOW MOVE to the economic impact on local firms from foreign direct investments in the meat industry. Our empirical data suggest that foreign direct investments have had important positive spillover effects on the host-country firms in the eastern Baltic Sea region in terms of productivity, delivery performance, quality standards, technology transfer, efficiency, and upgrading of managerial and labor force skills. Other indications of host-country spillover effects from foreign firms in the meat industry have been increases in productivity and innovativeness of local companies through increased competitive pressure and knowledge flows. Furthermore, increased competition



Cattle on a farm in Estonia.

has forced host-country companies to cooperate, improve, and further develop a range of qualities such as efficiency, effectiveness, innovation, technology, and working conditions, which are needed to remain competitive. Other dynamic effects from foreign direct investments, which we recognize from earlier research,⁴¹ have also been the creation of new enterprises and performance improvement of local companies after acquisitions.

IT IS OF INTEREST to take into account the institutional factors for investment decisions. Even though countries in the eastern Baltic Sea region have undergone significant reforms involving privatization and changes in legislation and institutional arrangements, the meat industry is still affected by institutionally inclined systemic inefficiencies inherited from the Soviet period. Corruption, lack of transparency, bureaucracy, and a gray economy are still hampering factors for corporate growth, but they also have consequences in terms of food security, animal welfare, the long-term sustainability of the industry, and human health due to inappropriate control and poor monitoring of the meat production. Firms in this study have been aware of these risks when making the decision to invest in the region. Thus, despite the significant market potential of the eastern Baltic Sea region, our respondents considered these issues effective deterrents to a normally functioning market economy and efficient governance of this part of the region. Kivikari (1998) correctly observes that commodity trade alone cannot unify a market and that foreign direct investments considerably promote the creation of new networks and lead to a long-term integration of the national economies. Interestingly, the governmental investment promotion organizations in the region have had a moderate role in the actual investment decision-making process of our respondent firms. Their

role has rather been to provide general information on countries' investment environment. Therefore, improving the institutional infrastructure, decreasing firms' transaction costs, and integrating the Baltic Sea region markets at all levels (i.e., not only trade and foreign direct investments in the eastward direction from western Baltic Sea region) would strengthen competitiveness of the meat processing firms in the eastern Baltic Sea region.

This has given several contributions to the economic integration of the region. As discussed in our theoretical framework, one of the key determinants of foreign direct investments is the technology absorption capacity of the host country.⁴² In the sense of integration and upgrading of local meat companies in the region, western Baltic Sea region meat producers have contributed to the economic integration of the region. Our empirical evidence has been in line with such a proposition. The respondents stress the importance of the institutional and economic conditions of a host country and their abilities to channel and absorb the technology inflows. Such factors have contributed to shaping and motivating investment decisions of Baltic Sea region meat industry companies as part of their growth strategies. The meat companies in the eastern Baltic Sea region have considerable potential in terms of ability to attain higher levels of competitiveness through continued capability transfers from foreign direct investments to host-country firms. By combining the know-how and technological capabilities of the western Baltic Sea region firms with the diligence and capacity to produce at lower costs than the eastern Baltic Sea region firms, the meat industry can produce more value-added products at competitive production prices. Thus, the future development of meat industry companies in the western Baltic Sea region is to a great extent dependent on the development of the eastern Baltic Sea region meat companies, and vice versa. ❌



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Regulating local food

Lessons from Poland and Sweden

By **Karolina Zurek**



The EU policy in general, and the strategy for the Baltic Sea region¹ in particular, emphasizes ecological concerns and envisions sustainable production as a key for preserving the Baltic Sea for future generations. Although this goal is broadly accepted in the region, economic and social differences have caused the regional states to adopt and promote different strategies in order to achieve this aim. However, in the implementation of this strategy, as well as in the implementation of other EU policies, it has been noted that the objective of sustainability might require different policy prioritizations in different EU Member States. Regulation of food production and consumption is a particularly interesting topic in this context. The Nordic countries – characterized by wealthy and ecologically concerned consumers – have increasingly sought to promote sustainability on the consumer side through labeling of ecological alternatives and encouraging local procurement. The Baltic countries and Poland, in contrast, have recently underscored how already existing local small-scale production serves the overall aim of sustainability and might work as a model for the region.

In both approaches, an important function is assigned to the idea of “local”. In recent years, the concept of local food systems (LFS) has received growing attention from social activists, politicians, and researchers.² Although researchers in sociology, geography, and anthropology have been trying to understand the meaning and the implications of the local food phenomenon, legal scholars have given it very little consideration.³ By building on the existing research in the humanities, this article aims to provide an understanding of the role of law and regulation in facilitating or limiting the “local” path to sustainability. This article focuses on the example of a recent

local initiative in a southern region of Poland and juxtaposes it with Swedish experiences of a different application of the “local” concept, and shows ways of utilizing the discourse of proximity in two different legal systems in the Baltic region. The objective of this work is to first analyze the nature and source of the regulatory constraints on the development of localized food strategies in the two states, and more generally in the EU, and then assess the suitability of the two strategies in their associated legal and empirical contexts.

Localizing food production

Ideas of local food, now taken up by policy makers and public authorities at the national as well as transnational level, are not new. They originate largely from social-movement activism. In the 1970s, European and North American discourses of “small is beautiful” developed an orientation towards re-localization of food production and consumption.⁴ Local food was envisaged as an alternative to the disconnected relationship between producers and consumers offered by conventional globalized food systems.

A significant variety of ideological food movements have developed since that time. Although they are all based on a similar set of values, they vary in accordance with which value they choose to emphasize. These range from physical proximity and shortened value chains, community and direct relationships between the producer and consumer, to the quality connected with the specificity of the place of origin, or *terroir*.⁵

Interestingly, most LFS are based on a down-chain perspective of production and define food as local before the link to the consumer has ever been established. Hence, consumers are, in a way, constructed

as un-localized passive recipients rather than as contributors to the process of localization and the meaning of local food.⁶ More recent, progressive LFS movements have expanded their sets of values to include objectives such as community food security and local resilience and stress the importance of socio-cultural embeddedness.⁷

In the EU, the LSF movement took the form of a quality shift and became entrenched in the EU agricultural product quality policy.⁸ Here, quality is attributed to features such as geographical and climatic specificity, traditional farming and production practices, and specific local trust and knowledge. Three major protection schemes have been developed: protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), and traditional specialty guaranteed (TSG). The policy’s value background is presented in the preamble to the Regulation: “Citizens and consumers in the Union increasingly demand quality as well as traditional products. They are also concerned to maintain the diversity of the agricultural production in the Union. This generates a demand for agricultural products or foodstuffs with identifiable specific characteristics, in particular those linked to their geographical origin.” It is important to notice that the reference to locality is indirect through the combination of “specific characteristics” and “geographical origin”. One explanation for this construction is the attempt to avoid recreating political divisions between the Member States and to reduce room for the occurrence of discrimination and protectionism. Hence, place of origin is created not through reference to its political belonging but instead as a “socio-natural construct”.⁹

Although the quality policy is the most widely known example of the EU’s integration of the LFS objectives, the notion and value of “local” have slipped into the EU regulation through other paths. In those

cases, local is seen as an exception to the general rule and is applied under strict conditions. However, these examples are likely to be the true application of LFS concerns in that they clearly refer to the original objectives of the movement and explicitly serve the objectives of sustainability. The following section highlights some examples of such alternative uses of the concept of localization within the EU regulatory system.

Alternative approaches to LFS in the EU

The first alternative way to embrace the concept of “local” in EU regulation emerged primarily in the context of enlargement. In this context, “local” was used to refer to the restricted dispatch market for products originating in the acceding states that did not fully conform to the Single Market rules. Although the original aim of “local” was to signify a limitation, from the perspective of many new Member States, the rule was interpreted more as one that created an opportunity. This was especially the case with regard to small-scale producers, who under this exception were allowed to continue their production irrespective of the fact that they were not able to live up to all of the strict production standards. This specific interpretation and the consequences of this mechanism in the case of Poland will be presented in the following discussion.

In the wake of Poland’s accession to the EU, ac-

knowledge of the existing discrepancies between the EU requirements and the Polish rural reality propelled development of a number of contingency options to facilitate survival of the most disadvantaged participants of the agro-food sector. Transitory measures for adjustment were agreed upon that included, on the one hand, a reduced level of direct payments for Polish farmers and, on the other, extended time for some of them to adjust to the EU rules (e.g., hygiene and sanitary standards). This made it possible for Polish farmers to continue infrastructural upgrading after the date of accession on the condition that they sell their products exclusively on the local market. Moreover, a number of mechanisms to relax some of the stringent EU requirements were created to target small-scale producers. The two most significant of those exceptional provisions are described below.

Direct supply

Regulation 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs¹⁰ lays down detailed and very stringent hygiene rules for food business operators with the aim of guaranteeing food safety throughout the EU. It recognizes, however, that in the case of the direct supply of small quantities of primary products by the food business operator producing them to the final consumer or to a local retail establishment, it is appropriate to protect public health through national law, particularly because of the close relationship between the producer and the consumer. Despite the overarching objective of unification of conditions for all participants in the Single Market, the Regulation leaves room for diversity. This provides an opportunity for national lawmakers to establish locally applicable conditions that would achieve the same effect of guaranteeing food safety and public health, but would be more adjusted to local conditions and limitations. At the same time, it indirectly provides a window of opportunity for those local food producers who would not be able to live up to the EU requirements but who can, by available means and knowledge and in accordance with national legislation, guarantee the safety of their products.

Therefore, direct supply is largely based on LFS ideas, and in particular on the significance of trust and shared values in the direct relationship between producer and consumer. Hence, it is based on the assumption that in the short value chain of direct supply, the consumer’s knowledge of and personal relationship with the producer makes the need for state certification redundant, and the traditional knowledge of the producer, with minor intervention by public regulation, is sufficient to guarantee public health. An important challenge for the national legislator, however, is to provide rules defining and limiting the application of the direct supply mechanism that would be suitable in their local context and guarantee a minimum level of health protection. In Poland, an order of the Minister of

Health¹¹ described direct supply as “exercised directly by producers of primary products, who supply small quantities of foodstuffs to final consumers or to local retail establishments selling to final consumers”. Furthermore, it limits the amount, by specifying “small quantities”, as well as the type of foodstuffs that can be considered under this mechanism. Finally, the order specifies the definition of the local market in which direct supply can take place. The local market is defined as the territory of the voivodeship (provinces in Poland) where primary production takes place and/or neighboring voivodeships.

Marginal, localized, and restricted activity

Regulation 853/2004 on specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin¹² constitutes an important element of the large package of hygiene rules adopted in the EU in 2004, which also contained the aforementioned regulation on the general hygiene of foodstuffs. It lays down specific rules for various sectors of production of food of animal origin. Although its overarching aim is to establish a uniform level of protection throughout the entire Single Market and to guarantee the safety of all food products of animal origin circulating in the EU, it does allow for Member States to have some discretion in extending or limiting the application of the requirements under national law. Limiting application of the Regulation is only acceptable when existing requirements are sufficient to achieve food hygiene objectives and when the supply of food of animal origin from one retail establishment to another establishment is a marginal, localized, and restricted (MLR) activity. Regulation 853/2004 prescribes the conditions for such supply: it should be only a small part of the establishment’s business, the establishments supplied should be situated in the supplier’s immediate vicinity, and the supply should concern only certain types of products or establishments. Specification of those conditions is left to the Member States through national legislation.

IN POLAND, AN ORDER of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development¹³ provided detailed conditions for classifying activity as marginal, local, and restricted, including the type and area of production, as well as the specification of the amount of products in various categories, and it specified minimal veterinary requirements for those activities. In terms of special limitation, the requirement for the distance between production and sale was even stricter than in the case of direct supply. It was required that the place of production and the place of product sales, either directly to consumers or through retailers selling directly to consumers, should be located within the same voivodeship or in the territory of neighboring poviats (basic administrative units) belonging to different voivodeships. This is largely dictated by the organization of the Veterinary Inspection whose participation in food safety control is essential in the case of foodstuffs of animal origin.

Just as in the case of direct supply, the ideas of LFS seem obvious here as well. There is direct contact between the producer and the consumer in the short food chain with confidence and trust between them as well as trust in traditional knowledge and limited



state intervention. This justifies an exception from the general rules.

It could largely be due to the similarities with the LFS set of convictions that these two mechanisms have received increased attention among social activists. They have perceived the regulatory exceptions as a window of opportunity to promote their objectives through the enabling legal instruments. They are working towards achieving the double aim of supporting the disadvantaged local farmers and supporting more sustainable agricultural development. With significant support from public authorities at both the national and regional level and additional external funding, the movement has evolved in a southern province of Poland into a concrete project that is discussed in the following section.

Small-scale local production in the Małopolska province

Recently developed by one of Poland's southern provinces, the "Local Małopolska Product" project builds directly on the legacy of Poland's EU accession negotiations and the exception mechanisms described in the previous section. Inventively over-interpreting the exceptions allows for a broader application to accommodate current local concerns. The project's main objective is to respond to the very specific situation of the local agriculture and food production in this region, which is unique even by Polish standards. Through accepting their limitations and amplifying their strengths, the project aims to help regional farmers and food producers make the most of the available regulatory options and promote sustainable progress in rural areas.

In 2012, the voivodeship of Małopolska conducted a study on the economic aspects of agriculture in the region.¹⁴ Results of that study, together with a strategic development plan, served as a basis for the project. In light of the study, Małopolska can be seen as a case in point of the agrarian map of Poland. In this region, 62% of the land is used for agriculture, which is close to the national average. What is exceptional, however, is the number and size of agricultural holdings. Of the 283,000 holdings, 99.99% are owned by individual farmers, 78.1% of the farms produce agricultural commodities, and 56.7% engage in mixed animal and plant production. This degree of fragmentation of the agricultural land translates directly to the size of holdings in Małopolska. The average size of a holding that qualifies for direct payments is 3.8 ha, while the average size of a farming unit in general is 2.3 ha. Moreover, Małopolska has the largest number of the smallest holdings (less than 1 ha) in Poland, which accounts for 42.8% of the holdings in the region. It is clear that this structure, along with the stagnating atmosphere in the region, creates unfavorable conditions for economic performance in agriculture. According to the experts from the Institute of Agricultural Economics and Food Management, agricultural holdings under 8 ESU¹⁵ should be considered uncompetitive in the EU internal market. In 2007, 86% of the holdings in Małopolska were below 2 ESU.

The "Local Małopolska Product" project aims to facilitate wider use of available regulatory options by regional producers through addressing specific features of the local production and by enhancing knowledge

and support of local consumers. The project is based on cooperation between public institutions, NGOs, farmers, and entrepreneurs to increase the supply and demand of local quality products. It is deeply grounded in the concept of traditional farming, which is characterized by small, low-capacity farms managed almost entirely by a family-based workforce. Such farming units are inherited within families suggesting the transfer of not only the land and the production capital, but also of tradition in terms of production and processing methods as well as the cultural aspects of rural work and lifestyle. From a practical perspective, the project is implemented by the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation in cooperation with the local governance bodies with financial support by the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Program, which contributes the lion's share of the total budget of the project.

With an intention of promoting local entrepreneurship and working toward balanced and sustainable development of the underdeveloped rural areas of Małopolska, the project is pursuing a number of concrete objectives and activities. First, its goal is to develop a model for local Małopolska products. This will facilitate the development of supply and demand for agricultural goods from the least developed parts of the region through assistance with production organization and entrepreneurial schemes, as well as with strengthening of the brand of quality for local goods. Second, the project aims to create an economic education center that will implement and further develop the model as well as encourage the exchange of knowledge and experiences among regional partners. Third, the project has created a local brand center to develop a system of certification, marketing, and sales of locally produced foodstuffs with references to their association with regional nature, culture, and landscape. This quality certification is a basis for an integrated strategy for promotion, marketing, and organization of sales. It should also promote intersectoral cooperation within the region and encourage cooperative entrepreneurial initiatives. Finally, the project facilitates local producers' access to consumers by organizing awareness-raising campaigns, distribution chains, and local product fairs.

AN IMPORTANT PART of the project is devoted to influencing favorable development of the applicable regulatory framework. Considering the traditional local knowledge and sentiments of the local actors, the project initiates and participates in discussions at the regional and governmental level that aim to improve the regulations for local production. The idea is to make the available legal mechanisms, such as direct supply or marginal, local, and restricted pro-



Local production in the Małopolska area.

duction, easier for local entrepreneurs to implement so as to encourage their wider use. This is especially important for the smallest farmers, whose production capacity would not allow for economically viable participation in the market in accordance with the general rules. The project tries to improve the difficult regulatory conditions in two ways. It works to raise awareness and understanding of the existing rules and their application among local producers. Simultaneously, the project develops proposals for regulatory reforms that are more favorable to local food production and presents them to the policymakers.¹⁶ The proposals are supported with a solid impact assessment of the suggested measures and an explanation of how they respond to the concerns of local producers. The proposals also consider the concerns of the region as a whole, such as environmental benefits as well as economic gains (e.g., from development of tourism).

Sustainability through targeting consumption

Yet another approach to applying the concept of "local" in pursuing sustainability policy goals has developed in the context of regional public procurement of foodstuffs by a number of Swedish communes. Although referring to "local" as well, they build on a slightly different emphasis of the LFS values in promoting a shortened value chain. The idea is, on the one hand, to support local food production, especially organic food production, and to work toward a more balanced distribution of production between regions. On the other hand, the idea is to reduce environmental impact of transport by purchasing locally produced goods. There is also an educational element to it. By purchasing local and, by consequence, seasonally grown products for public schools and daycare centers, pupils will learn more about the natural food cycle and presence of various types of agricultural goods. Finally, there is an overarching goal of promoting more sustainable consumption patterns in local communities by encouraging more balanced and less meat-intensive consumption, at least in publicly provided establishments.

Local Swedish authorities have a high level of autonomy in terms of both policymaking as well as resource management. Every year, around 20% of Sweden's GDP is spent on public procurement. In 2004, out of 40 billion euros spent on public procurement countrywide, 25 billion euros was spent by the local authorities.¹⁷ As far as foodstuffs are concerned, public sector purchase of food and catering corresponds to approximately 4% of the total consumption of food in Sweden as measured by the market value.¹⁸ This constitutes a significant purchasing power, which could potentially have an impact on sustainable policy development. The ideas of Green Public Procurement have been practiced in Sweden and other Nordic countries since the end of the 1980s. A survey conducted in 2005 showed that 47% of all public purchase contracts in the Nordic countries included some environmental criteria, and in the case of Sweden the figure was as high as 60%.¹⁹ Swedish local authorities are, however, not totally free in the way they design their purchase policies and contracts because in all of their activities they are obliged to follow the existing regulatory obligation and limitations.

THE SWEDISH PUBLIC PROCUREMENT ACT (LOU, from the Swedish, *Lagen om Offentlig Upphandling*) provides the legal framework for public purchasing by Swedish authorities.²⁰ The LOU implements applicable EU law in the area, in particular Directive 2004/18 on public procurement procedures for works, goods, and services.²¹ It should also be consistent with the entirety of EU internal market regulation. Hence, all the aforementioned elements constitute a framework within which Swedish local authorities exercise their power of public purchase. And it is in relation to this framework that controversies have arisen with regard to the right of local authorities to include the requirement for food to be locally produced in their procurement specifications. In the light of the laws, such requirement can be interpreted as favoring Swedish producers vis-à-vis those from other Member States, thereby constituting a barrier to free trade in the internal

market. There is an ongoing debate among lawyers in Sweden as to what extent such a requirement can be justified.²² There are also pending remedy cases before Swedish courts.

The ongoing discussion seems to suggest that there is no agreed definition of "local food" or "locally produced (*närodlad*) food" accepted by all stakeholders in Sweden. Even some researchers suggest the existence of confusion or misunderstanding between Swedish actors about the interpretation of "local".²³ In the majority of cases, and in the dominating discourse, the understanding of "local" seems to be of purely geographical character. This initially appears to correspond to the shortened value chain ideas of the LFS movement, but after careful consideration, there appear to be considerable differences between the implications of proximity in the two contexts. Although the Swedish interpretation recognizes the environmental benefits of proximity as a result of shorter geographical distance between the producer and the consumer and, consequently, shorter transport of products, it does not carry the element of a closer relationship between the producer and the consumer, which implies the element of trust and knowledge sharing. This element seems to be lost due to the presence of the public authorities that undertake the procurement and subsequent distribution of the products to the public catering establishments such as hospitals and schools. It appears that agreeing on a certain definition of "local" would be particularly important in the Swedish case, not merely because it is in fact used by the state institutions in the process of spending public resources. Not only would it contribute to better understanding and support for the initiative, but it would also increase the transparency of the application of existing rules and procedures by the local authorities. Moreover, it might be important for those local authorities to motivate their preference for locally produced food and explain which of its particular characteristics they wish to promote with their public purchase choices.²⁴ Possible motivations could include the willingness to stimulate local business development,

the move toward local self-sufficiency, environmental concerns about transport and carbon footprint, and the health benefits of fresh seasonal food. Such additional qualification, on top of the special proximity argument, would significantly strengthen the position of local authorities in relation to the law.

Conclusions: when is "local" legal?

This final section concentrates on the position of law and regulation in the process of localization or re-localization of food systems. It highlights the role of law as enabling or, alternatively, as blocking regional sustainability policies based on the references to "local" that were characterized above.

In Sweden, in contrast to the Polish case, the application of "local" for regional needs turned out not only to be controversial, but was even considered as something that breached the existing legislation at the national and EU level. It is interesting, therefore, to speculate as to why the mechanisms applied by Poland and Sweden have been assessed differently and have been met with different degrees of acceptance. From the regulatory perspective, there are a number of interesting differences between the Polish and the Swedish strategies that might be relevant to this observed outcome.

THE FIRST IMPORTANT difference is that the Polish initiative seeks to extend the national application of an existing exemption legalized by the EU system. In contrast, the Swedish authorities are trying to create and justify an exemption from the general rule of the free movement of goods in the internal market. There is a fundamental difference between navigating within existing margins of diversity and invoking new ones. Moreover, the burden of proof in the two cases is completely different.

The second important difference is in the emphasis on the private, as opposed to the public, sphere of activity. As the analyzed initiatives show, Poland's scenarios for agricultural sustainability are built largely on private consumption. Sweden, on the contrary, relies on public purchase in its strategic development. This does not mean that private consumption is underrated, and there are many campaigns and projects directed to private consumers. Those, however, are mostly developed and managed by producers' organizations or special interest groups.²⁵ The focus of the public activity remains on public procurement, which is supposed to support regional sustainable development plans with targeted strategic public purchases that take environmental and social concerns into consideration.²⁶ This, in consequence, translates to a difference in focus, between private resources in the Polish case and public spending in the Swedish one, where the latter is typically an object of more stringent control and requirements.

The third difference between the Swedish and Polish strategies, closely related to the previous one, is the focus on production versus the focus on consumption. Supporting local producers by facilitating their upgrades and strengthening their presence on the local market can be claimed to leave less room for suspicion than state support through strategic public



Farmers' Market in Stockholm.

purchase. There is arguably less room for questions of possible discriminatory effect and protectionism when localization relates to the production process, which is inevitably linked to the location in question, rather than to the process of purchasing local products as an administratively imposed condition for a supply contract.

Fourthly, through this perspective, Swedish mechanisms can be seen as a process of top-down localization where regional authorities engage in stimulating the development of regional local systems through strategic public procurement design.²⁷ The Polish instrument, on the other hand, is attempting to promote local entrepreneurship through the existing localized network by strengthening the pre-established linkages and supporting their further development. This is not merely a matter of policy choice but also of an existing agro-food situation of the locality in question, which is fundamentally different in the two places. Farms in Sweden are getting fewer, bigger, and regionally more concentrated. Today there are some 71,000 farms, while in 1970 there were more than twice as many. Still, production remains the same. The average size of a Swedish farm today is some 37 ha, which is double the size of an average farming unit 40 years ago.²⁸ In this context, differentiated policy approaches are required and justifiable. If the policies are more suited to the local circumstances, they have a better chance of becoming more efficient in achieving the sustainability objective.

In conclusion, a more general observation about the role of law in the localization of food systems can be made. In the contemporary globalized economy, local political decisions about how to achieve regional sustainability goals are increasingly dependent on the transnational regulatory framework. As the cases presented in this article illustrate, the ultimate standard against which the sustainability concerns of two Baltic region states are assessed are the laws establishing the Single Market within the EU. ❌

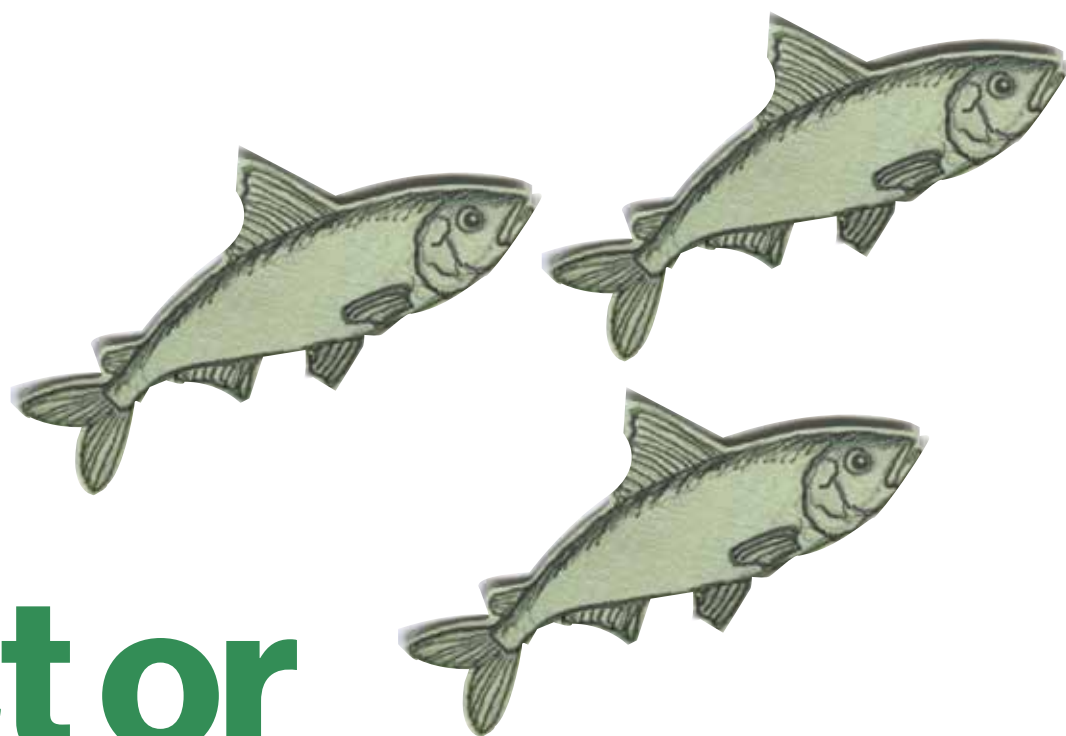


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Conflict or convergence?

Products of origin. An analysis of the Swedish case of Baltic Sea fish

by **Madeleine Bonow**

In response to the contemporary globalization of the economy, food markets are shifting toward differentiation of services and products based on the unique qualities and attributes of the products. A paradigm called the “quality turn” corresponds to the increasing variety of food services. “Alternative foods”, including organic products or products qualified by their origin, and new methods of marketing these foods (farmer’s markets, local contracts, etc.) are developing through the mainstreaming of innovation.¹

Protected designation of origin (PDO) is a certification scheme that certifies products by their origin, and is one of several important tools to strengthen the competitiveness of rural areas, especially for small-scale food processing in rural and less-developed areas in Europe.² A PDO provides groups of producers with protection against unfair competition for products whose unique sensory characteristics essentially depend on the local geographic and cultural conditions as well as the local know-how of the production site. A PDO certification informs consumers that the product quality and its value depend on the geographic origin of the product.³ Despite the potential value of PDOs for producers, their use is unevenly distributed throughout the EU. The organization of the quality

certification systems and corresponding legal provisions vary between countries. France, Italy, and Spain are models for the development of the PDO scheme and have more than 800 PDO-certified products. However, countries such as Sweden, Finland, and Denmark have a much smaller number of products that are certified. In Sweden, several products have applied for a PDO, but only one, Kalix Ljörom, has been certified under the scheme. The reason for this failure is mainly that Sweden’s current customs do not correspond to the rules and traditions used to create the PDO scheme. To increase the likelihood of successfully obtaining PDOs, Sweden should work to reinvent local knowledge and local food and to recover its traditional food culture.⁴

Institutional theory

Institutional theory brings together economists, sociologists, and historians whose common interest is the impact of institutions on the behavior of, and coordination among, economic actors.⁵ The interdisciplinary perspectives from sociology,⁶ political science,⁷ and business management⁸ bring further insight to the

economic perspectives.⁹ North defines institutions as “formal rules or informal constraints and their modes of implementation that guide and regulate the behavior of economic actors”.¹⁰ “Formal” institutions are explicit and take the form of constitutions, laws, regulations, and codes, and “informal” institutions are often implicit and comprise social norms, conventions, personal habits, and organizational routines.¹¹ Institutions govern the “rules of the game”,¹² and they generate restrictions as well as create the tactical choices available to firms at a number of levels.¹³ These institutions set the fundamental political, legal, and social rules that establish the basis for production, exchange, and distribution.¹⁴

Terroirs and the institution of PDO

The articulation of the common agricultural policy (CAP) and the development of the common market are components in a massive project of institutional assimilation in which a country’s historical experiences and institutional setting is subordinated to common European institutions. A particular institutional concept in the small-scale food industry is that of *terroir*. This concept is important to the industry because

the region of origin of a product is a specific asset, and its development has been the cornerstone of the industry's strategy on a national level. The *terroir*, traditionally a homogeneous geographical area, can be defined according to a variety of concrete, tangible factors such as soil, geology, geomorphology, hydrology, climatology, and sunshine.¹⁵ However, a *terroir* is also a homogeneous territory endowed with a very strong identity that is characterized by a set of natural, cultural, historical, and social resources enmeshed in both the place and history of the area of production.¹⁶ Moreover, *terroirs* are structures of individual and collective skills explicitly or tacitly transferred from generation to generation that build an enduring collective trust and facilitate the exchange of geographical resources. Economic players and their interactions build *terroirs*. Thus, a *terroir* is a territory, and as a territory it can also be analyzed as a "situated institutional setting". It is no longer an unassuming bounded set of resources, but a social and historical construction of a set of institutions embedded within a given geographical area that gives it its identity. It is a system in which firms incorporate a sense of land and place into their businesses as a means of connecting their products with a community's uniqueness.¹⁷ Building on this idea, "terroir strategy" is a community-level perspective that focuses on the firm's ability to capture and build capabilities around community resources. This in turn enables the firm to deliver a product that will be competitive in multiple types of markets and that can be sold at a premium price. In a *terroir*, actors are connected by geographical, organizational, and institutional proximity.

In 1993, the EU passed legislation that provided for a system for the protection of food names based on geography or a traditional recipe. The product is awarded one of three marks: PDO, protected geographical indication (PGI), or traditional specialty guaranteed (TSG). Under this system, a named food or drink registered at a European level is given legal protection against imitation throughout the EU.¹⁸

As a formal institution, PDO is the cornerstone of the system. France and Italy have a long history of using the scheme, which was developed with the French scheme *appellation d'origine contrôlée* as its model; therefore, PDO is known by both producers and consumers in these regions. The quality and characteristics of PDO-certified products are exclusively or essentially due to the geographical environment, including natural and human factors. PDO is a label and a set of formal rules, standards, and regulations whose purpose is to protect a locally embedded product from competition.¹⁹ The combination of geographical, organizational, and institutional proximity drives the identification between the place, the company, and the product. This forms a high barrier to entry that gives insiders a monopoly on the niches they create, generating a "rent" situation because the product can be differentiated, marketed, and sold at a high price. Producers who register their products for protection benefit from the raised awareness of their product throughout Europe, which can give them competitive advantages over large businesses and increase awareness of the importance of regional and specialty foods.²⁰ Products covered by geographical quality designations have associated values of specificity or

"typicity" and excellence. Besides being a defining feature of geographical designations, the impact of the PDO is both "horizontal", because it plays the role of a territorial marker and a guarantee of the uniqueness of the product, and "vertical", because certification constraints reinforce the presumption of quality.

Institutional approach to a comparative analysis

Institutions exist in a distinct national configuration.²¹ The implementation of a PDO in Sweden reflects the implementation of a new formal and informal institutional establishment (laws, traditions, and knowledge). This paper will apply an institutional approach to a comparative analysis of two products: one that has received a PDO, Kalix Ljörom, and one that is applying for a PDO, surströmming. Because institutions exist in distinct national configurations, it is interesting to see these institutions interact to form national constellations with their own logic and non-random types or patterns.²²

The aim of this work is to identify the conflict or convergence of the institutions in both of the cases and the impact this has on the PDO application process and outcome. The study was completed by conducting interviews and participatory observations and text analysis.

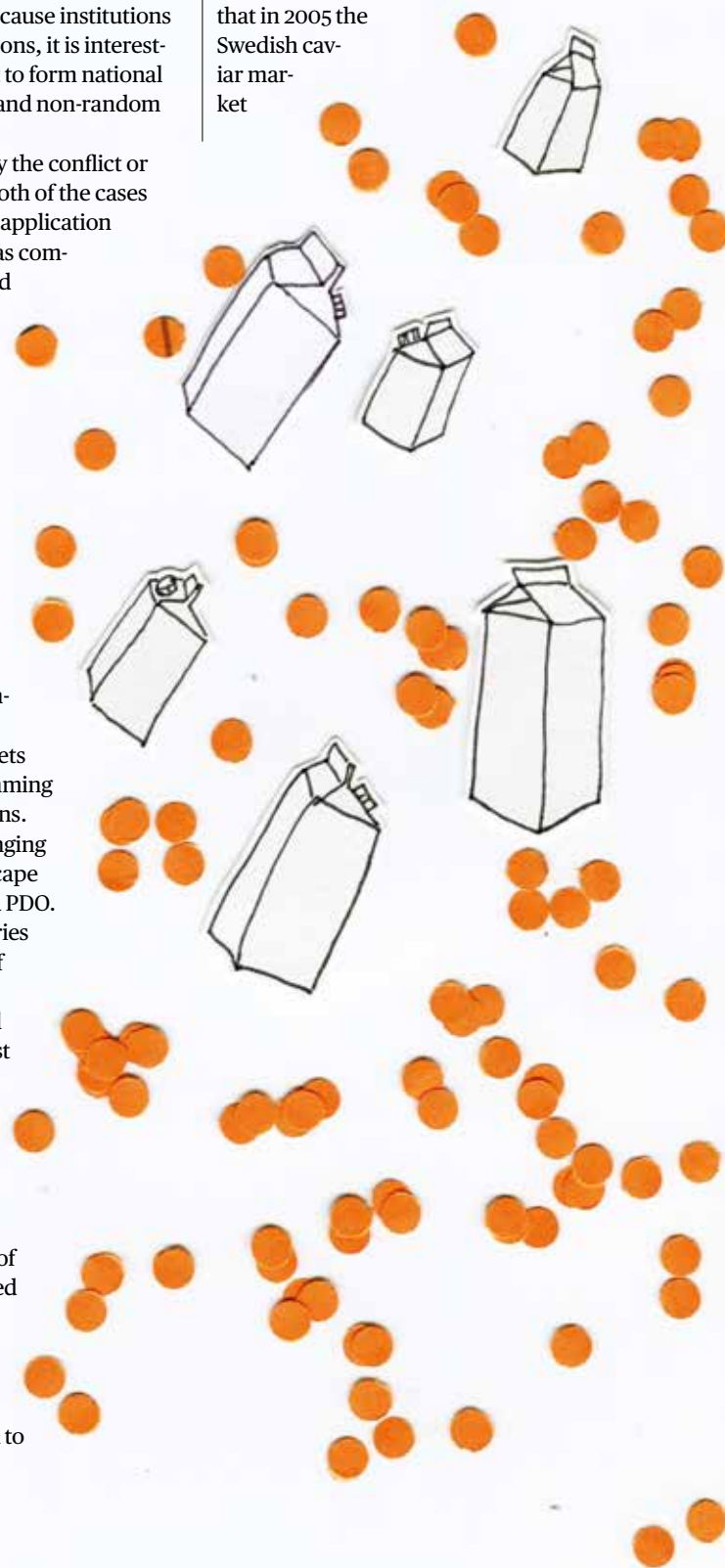
The cases under comparison are natural resource-based, embedded in old traditions, and have local tacit knowledge as the primary cognitive basis for their conventions. They sustain small communities, and Kalix Ljörom contributes to the wealth of a larger region. Both cases involve the transformation of a scarce, but harvested, natural resource (fish) according to a specific set of conventions. Kalix Ljörom has moved into the world of alternative niche markets and new conventions, but surströmming is still locked into the old conventions. These case studies explore the changing dynamics of the institutional landscape during the application process for a PDO.

Sweden differs from other countries like France or Italy in the tradition of using *terroir*. The idea of using a *terroir*-based certification is unusual in Sweden because *terroir*, in its most comprehensive geographical and cultural meaning, is not a familiar concept in Sweden. There are many reasons why Swedes do not have any relationship to *terroir*. First, the structure of the agro-food sector and its near total eradication of traditional agro-food systems resulted from the view that food was a necessity for day-to-day survival. This attitude led to a reduction in the importance of cultural values and sensory quality that has contributed to

a less vibrant regional food culture and has affected the buying habits of the population.²³ In addition, wine has never been produced in Sweden, and *terroir* is considered a basic concept in wine production. Furthermore, the geographical distance between Sweden and countries where *terroir* is known by both producers and consumers is quite significant.²⁴

The application process for Kalix Ljörom and surströmming

Sweden's first PDO application was submitted to the National Food Agency (NFA) in 2006 for the caviar Kalix Ljörom with the financial support of the municipality of Kalix, the Swedish Board of Fisheries, and the fishermen who produced the caviar. The reason for this application was that in 2005 the Swedish caviar market



had been penetrated by cheaper alternatives from other nations and by roe from other parts of Sweden that had renamed their products as Kalix Ljörom. This new competition forced all stakeholders to join forces to find a solution to maintain the uniqueness of their product.²⁵

The Kalix Ljörom group encountered many problems with the application process. The first was that the NFA, which is in charge of PDO applications, told them not to apply. Because the PDO application requires a massive amount of information, no previous application had ever been completed in Sweden. However the one responsible for the PDO application of “Kalix Ljörom”, Tryggve Bergman, contacted another person at the agency who offered some support and guidance. The application was first rejected, but after a visit to Brussels, Bergman learned what mistakes were made and received information about how to complete all of the requirements of the application.²⁶

ANOTHER PROBLEM with the application was defining the specific geographical area where the fish that produce Kalix Ljörom are located.²⁷ A comparative isotope analysis of different caviar harvests in combination with the breeding grounds for the vendace (*Coregonus albula*, the freshwater fish whose roe is the source of Kalix Ljörom) was performed. The analysis showed that the distinct features of Kalix Ljörom result from the brackish water (low salt level) near the mouths of the four large freshwater rivers in the northwestern area of the Gulf of Bothnia as well as the unique characteristics of the vendace.²⁸

The application was finally accepted in the fall of 2010.²⁹ Because the application was approved, the Swedish government has provided financial support to reinforce the control and implementation of the EU quality scheme in Sweden, and the NFA has developed the first training courses about the EU quality scheme.



PHOTO: MORNER/FICKR

³⁰ The NFA also established a monitoring program to detect fraudulent use of PDO, PGI, and TSG.

The application process for surströmming started in 2012. The NFA invited the Surströmmings Akademien (The Surströmming Academy) to apply for a PDO for surströmming because it is a unique product from the Norrland coast. The producers had also started to suspect Chinese interest in making this product in China.³¹

In this case, the main obstacle in the start-up phase was obtaining financial support to fund the application. Unlike the application from Kalix Ljörom, the Surströmming Academy did not have the assistance from the municipality in terms of money or man-hours. The Surströmming Academy applied for funding from the NFA to finance the application process and received 50% of the cost of developing the application for the first year. This was far from enough. Obviously, the NFA was now more willing to help, and their knowledge had increased substantially since the Kalix Ljörom application. However, the infrastructure for supporting the application process was still lacking.

THE AUTHORITIES were more aware of the benefits of PDO certification this time, but the fishermen and small firms producing the product were not. The first task was to ask the producers and fishermen to participate in the application. An initial meeting was held in the autumn of 2012 to convince them of the benefits of this scheme and to persuade them to organize themselves in an association, which is necessary to be able to seek the PDO. None of the producers at that meeting knew anything about the PDO scheme, and there was little willingness to participate and pay money without knowing whether they would gain anything.

Defining the terroir, or the production area, was another major obstacle. The production of surströmming has traditionally taken place near Högå Kusten [The High Coast], where the herring have been caught commercially since the 1600s. This area would be the obvious choice, but today one of the largest producers in this business is located outside of this area and would be excluded from this PDO. This was regarded as a problem because the application process needed their support and money to proceed. No one at that meeting understood why the producers could not be included. These problems could be solved with more information and lobbying activities by the Surströmming Academy. After the seminar, the board of the Surströmming Academy talked to all of the firms producing fermented herring, and the firms agreed to co-finance the application if the Surströmming Academy could obtain sponsorship from the municipalities that have processing firms to help share the cost.³²

The largest obstacle was harder to tackle. The fish used to make surströmming have high levels of dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Wild-caught fatty fish from the Baltic region,

such as herring and salmon, often contain concentrations exceeding the EU limits for dioxin and dioxin-like PCBs. This means that the herring caught in the Gulf of Bothnia to make surströmming are considered toxic and are banned for export. Since 2002, Sweden has had a temporary exemption from the EU dioxin limit, which allows Sweden to sell fish exceeding the limits in the Swedish market if the consumers are informed of its dangers. Sweden received a permanent exemption in 2012.³³

CAN A PRODUCT with toxic content apply for a PDO? The firms wanted to know this before committing to any funding of the project. The members of the Surströmming Academy have tried to determine the answer to that question but have not yet succeeded. They have asked the NFA and have received different responses. They contacted many officials in the Ministry for Rural Affairs with similar results. The Surströmming Academy's view was that if the NFA urged them to apply for a PDO, they would not reject the application because of these toxins when it was submitted.

At a meeting between the Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs, the Surströmming Academy, and the NFA in December of 2012, the question was raised of how Sweden would handle the PDO application for surströmming given the exemption Sweden has to consume fish caught in the Baltic Sea. The Swedish government replied that they could not accept an application for a PDO that does not follow other European legislation. In other words, the fermented herring should be allowed for consumption in the EU. This would not be possible with the surströmming because it is banned from the European market.³⁴ However, in a meeting on January 16, 2013, the Ministry of Rural Affairs stated that there are no legal grounds to prevent an application for a PDO for surströmming if the requirements of the Swedish dioxin exemption are followed as well as the requirements of an application for a PDO. They pointed out, however, that it is not possible to get advance notice from the European Commission on whether or not they will approve an application for a PDO of surströmming. Another issue mentioned at this meeting was that in light of the Swedish media's discussion about the dioxin exception, an application for a PDO for fermented herring might result in negative publicity for the product, not the positive publicity that the trade needed.³⁵

In the beginning of 2013, the National Board of Agriculture (NBA) rejected the Surströmming Academy's application for further funding of the PDO application process. This was a setback to the project because it had no other means to do the laboratory testing and other research required to be able to continue the submission process, and the project is currently on hold.³⁶ From the beginning, all of the actors and institutions involved have been in conflict and no convergence has yet been reached in this process.

The implementation of the PDO for Kalix Ljörom

The implementation of the PDO for Kalix Ljörom caused a number of new problems at local and national levels. First, it greatly increased the bureaucracy concerning the fishing, processing, control, and selling of the product, which caused some frustration.

At the local level, this led to substantial investments in processing facilities that created some controversy between the fishermen and the authorities. The increased control of the production exposed a lack of established standardized practice.³⁷ The second problem was to stop disloyal competition from marketing false products because Sweden lacked an organization to enforce the rules of the PDO.³⁸ Third, Swedish consumers do not know the meaning of PDO, and the NFA, which is responsible for informing the public about the quality scheme, has not invested in informing the public. The lack of knowledge in general is a clear impediment to the institutional harmonization within the EU. All of these problems, from an institutional point of view, indicate that the institutional convergence process expected from the CAP has been difficult to achieve.

The first immediate positive effect of the PDO was that wholesale prices of Kalix Ljörom doubled from SEK 450 to SEK 900 per kilogram.³⁹ The fishermen receive around SEK 700–750/kg.⁴⁰ The second positive effect was that fishermen started to monitor the development of the stock. A coastal self-management system was established in 2010 and includes a yearly inventory of the stock before the fishing season can begin.⁴¹ The third effect was positive publicity for the municipalities where the fishing occurs. The municipalities promote the exotic features of the archipelago where the whitefish lives, and boat tourism in the archipelago is expected to increase.⁴²

Institutional constraints, conflicts, and convergences

The purpose of this article was to analyze and highlight some of the main problems and opportunities faced during the application process and the implementation of the Kalix Ljörom PDO and the PDO application process of surströmming. The study also touched upon the notion of the PDO and its institutionalized expression in the terroir at the local level in the two cases. As expressed in this article, this process has proven to be quite complicated.

Kalix Ljörom has successfully followed the path of the PDO system to achieve self-sustained industrial and territorial development. This has involved implementing PDO guidelines for meeting quality standards and increasing value along the production chain. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, networked cooperation between local production systems and regional regulatory and professional bodies diffuses cutting-edge technical and marketing knowledge down the production chain. The ultimate objective is to upgrade the regional system to produce premium caviar for expanding niche markets. The present case study suggests that its implementation represents some institutional innovation that involves many actors and numerous regional levels. From an institutional perspective, the weaknesses of the PDO as an institution are a reflection of the PDO system's lack of institutional uniformity in Sweden.

The implementation of PDOs requires a high degree of institutional proximity among local actors. In the case of surströmming, a real convergence of views, values, and common rules of action is missing due to the lack of institutional embeddedness among organi-

zations and individual actors. The innovation is lost in the practical concerns and conventions of the NFA and other actors. The Höga Kusten region is undoubtedly bounded from a geographic perspective; however, the institutional proximity is still limited. This is mainly because the knowledge on defining the production terroir is lacking, and individual producers do not know how to use the terroir as a resource and how it could build market assets.

In both cases, Kalix Ljörom and surströmming, the main institutional constraint was the lack of infrastructure for the support of the PDO during the application process and the lack of knowledge and the initial reluctance of the NFA and NBA to proceed with the applications. This conflict between the NFA and other authorities was demonstrated by its inflexibility in adopting the new ideas of the PDO and the innovations that, in this case, would improve the product. The lack of understanding of how the regulations worked and the lack of institutional embeddedness among organizations and individual actors formed the basis of the conflict in the surströmming case.

The national authorities are at present too passive, and many producers do not know about the PDO scheme or how to complete a PDO application. This absence of knowledge is a threat to institutional convergence in Europe. Furthermore, the authorities that have the power to grant funding for new applications in Sweden counteract the European quality schemes. As in the surströmming case, this endangers the support for future PDO applications. The cases also illustrate that cooperation is needed to build organizational and institutional proximity and that education about the concept of terroir is essential, given that it is largely unknown in Sweden.

For Kalix Ljörom, the insufficient resources and

knowledge of the NFA about how to secure the PDO has allowed food fraud to flourish, and this jeopardizes the economic base for the fishermen and the reputation of the product.

THE MAIN ECONOMIC BENEFITS of possessing this PDO have yet to be realized. Kalix Ljörom is sold as a gourmet item in specialty stores, and the increased income levels for the fishermen might provide the right incentive to secure the compliance of the coastal management program and secure the future survival of the whitefish. Surströmming might not ever sell as a gourmet item, especially outside of Sweden. However, in this case the most important reason to apply for a PDO is to protect the trade and support the local fishermen and municipalities. The municipalities in the fishing areas and especially the rural population of the archipelago might find future income opportunities through tourism and even festivals. But this has yet to materialize. ✕

Note. Kalix Ljörom (vendace roe from Kalix) and surströmming (canned fermented herring, *Clupea harengus*; literally: sour herring).



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Checking the year's batch of surströmming at Ersson Brothers in Skärva, 1946.

PHOTO: LÄNSMUSEET GÄVLEBORG

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by **Håkan Tunón,
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Views of landscape

Reflections on the governance of Scandinavian transhumance

Old dairy cattle breeds at Rønningsvollen summer farm in Budalen, 2009, represent both biological and cultural heritage and a potential for the production of local food specialties.

Landscape is an extremely complex term and has multiple meanings.¹ Sporrøng² presents a holistic approach when he states that “landscape is the entirety of the physical and cultural components, a combination of cultural preferences and potentials and physical conditions developed in a specific society”. When managing, governing, or studying the landscape, however, governmental agencies and researchers often concentrate on one or a few aspects, such as forestry or cultural heritage, and fail to see the landscape as a whole. This approach conflicts with traditional Scandinavian farming based on animal husbandry and the extensive use of outlying land, and creates several problems for Swedish and Norwegian “traditional farmers” still practicing small-scale transhumance. Some governmental agencies hope that this situation will change with the implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

Perspectives on the landscape

Different perspectives on landscapes arise from people's different identities, backgrounds, and experiences. The perception of a particular environment is deeply rooted in the traditions of a society and influenced by the professions, education, and experiences of its people.³ Past and present social and cultural environments also guide how landscapes are interpreted. Studies of landscape preferences in Norway show that agriculturally modified landscapes with “old-fashioned character” (e.g., small-scale, non-industrial) are preferred by the general public.⁴

The various authorities and agencies of Sweden and Norway have different perspectives on the landscape and on-going farming activities. The different agencies, such as the Board of Agriculture, the Board of Forestry, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Heritage Board, and the National Food Agency in Sweden, and the Norwegian Environment

Agency and Directorate for Cultural Heritage in Norway, have specific interests and regulations that affect the local farmer.⁵ This is sometimes called compartmentalization,⁶ and it influences the way authorities identify and appreciate values in the landscape, as well as how they propose different actions vis-à-vis the governance of the landscape as a whole. Even within a specific agency, different and sometimes contradicting perspectives prevail. In a single landscape, very different values or interests can be favored such as forest, fodder or food production, hunting opportunities, or biological, cultural, or recreational values. Even within the area of nature conservation, there are possible contradictions between the governance of the wild biodiversity of “virgin forests” and the biodiversity of anthropogenic biotopes. This is evident in the management of several Norwegian forest reserves,⁷ as well as in management plans for new nature reserves in Sweden that specify “free develop-



The summer farm is a place where history and present meet. Svedbovallen, Hälsingland, Sweden, July 2009, and Litj-Tyldvollen, Forradalen, Sør-Trøndelag County, Norway, August 2009.

ment” of the protected ecosystem, although much of the biodiversity has developed in a grazed, semi-open wooded landscape. In the end, however, there is only one landscape.

Compartmentalization also exists within academia and results in different perspectives on landscapes. There is, for example, a vast difference in how a biologist, an agronomist, and a historian will perceive a certain landscape, and among biologists, as well as historians, perceptions might differ based on which aspect of biodiversity or which historical time period they study. In a single landscape, one biologist might see shady forest habitats as a potential for biodiversity while another might predict good biodiversity with an open, semi-natural grassland habitat. The varying perceptions of landscape also influence how we view the effects of human activities in the landscape, such as animal husbandry. There is a continuous debate on whether present grazing activities are compatible with the historical land use that shaped the biodiversity and landscape structures valued today (i.e., the biological cultural heritage).

To the farmer, this situation of compartmentalization can become very confusing and unsatisfying. For instance, a civil servant or scientist giving management recommendations is most often considering only one or a few particular details. The administration and bureaucracy might divide the daily farming tasks between agencies, even though all of the activities are a part of the livelihood of the farmer and contribute to upholding the biological and cultural values of the summer farming landscape. Various requests from different agencies, and sometimes from departments within a single agency, often create conflicting situations and consequently threaten the continuation of traditional farming practices. This occurs both in Sweden and in Norway, but the problem is perhaps more prominent in Sweden due to the incompatibility between the EU and national and traditional views on land use. The urge for historical authenticity in these contexts might interfere with, for instance, a farmer's

ability to get environmental subsidies or to abide by regulations for animal welfare.

The farmers have, by necessity, a more holistic approach to the landscape. They have to relate to their farming as one entity, and all activities aim to create a viable situation for the farmer and the animals all year round. Farmers might refer to themselves as part of the entity, and often claim that they belong to the land rather than the other way around.

Nature conservation and cultural heritage conservation are no longer treated as unrelated elite activities, but are moving in the direction of a more integrated view of nature and culture in the landscape.⁸ An example of this is the selection of twenty-two agricultural areas containing both natural and cultural heritage by the Norwegian Agricultural Authority, the Norwegian Environment Agency, and the Directorate for Cultural Heritage with the intention to maintain them through good management and through cooperation among farmers, municipalities, and county authorities. Some of these areas were summer farming landscapes.⁹ This seems, so far, to be a successful holistic model for the conservation of valuable cultural landscapes.¹⁰

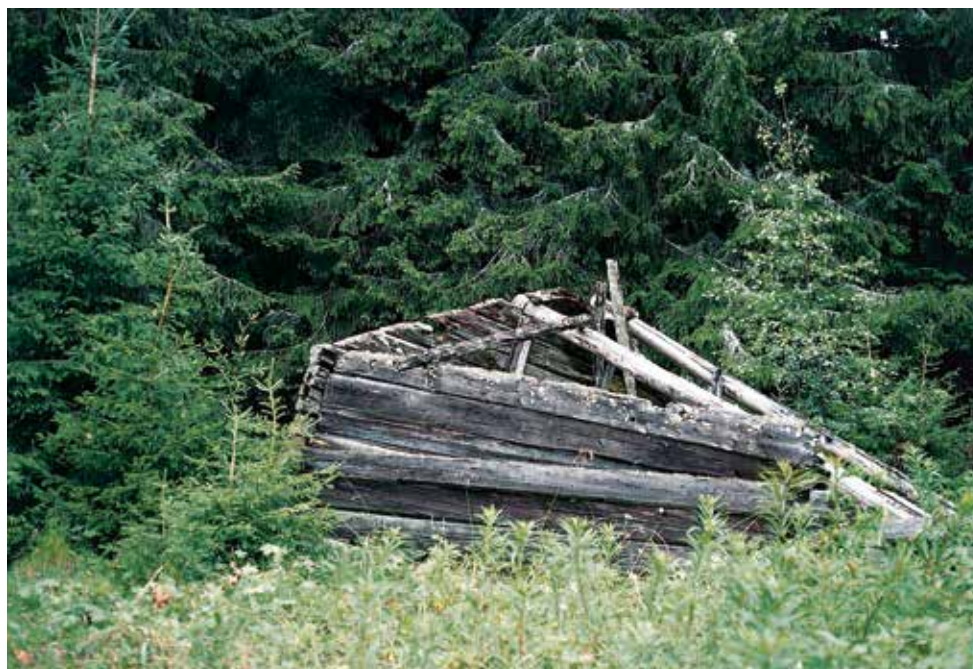
Forest and alpine ecosystems in Scandinavia have traditionally provided for grazing and winter fodder production.¹¹ The importance of these ecosystems has varied with time and place, but in Norway, as well as in most of Sweden, traditional agricultural practices have depended on both outlying land and infields.¹² For instance, a study of old forests in the northeastern part of central Norway (near the Swedish border) shows that about 70% of the winter fodder in this region was harvested from outlying land in the traditional farming system.¹³ The local term “hay forest” (*høyskogja*)¹⁴ underlines the importance of the forest for winter fodder production. Consequently, the summer farms, and the landscapes of which they are a part, are traditional areas for agricultural production.¹⁵ In Norway this is still seen as important, but in Sweden the stated goal of subsidization is to preserve and create cultural and nature values at the summer farms.

Today, outfield grazing is rare in Sweden and decreasing in Norway. This endangered practice requires immediate political and economic action to reverse the negative trend and preserve the biological, sociological, and historical values connected to active outfield farming practices. Based on these reflections, we can begin to analyze the different perspectives on the outlying areas. Should we identify these areas as wilderness or as anthropogenically influenced? Are they part of an agricultural landscape, a forested area, or a mountainous wilderness? Answering these questions partly requires acknowledging the influence previous generations of farmers have had in shaping our present day biodiversity and landscape structures.¹⁶

Development of Scandinavian transhumance

Animal husbandry has been a part of the farming systems in Scandinavia since their emergence five or six thousand years ago.¹⁷ There is evidence that agricultural practices arrived in Scandinavia with immigration that brought well-developed systems of dairy production and cereal production.¹⁸ The practice of grazing cattle in the forest is presumed to date back to at least the Iron Age,¹⁹ and probably to the beginning of agriculture in the New Stone Age. It is likely that the landscape, especially close to the settlements, already at that time had a grazed character.²⁰ Traces of intense grazing in the mountains in western Norway date from 500 BC, but archaeological and vegetation analyses of historical data show that extensive use of the mountainous areas probably originated even earlier. Although the utilization of outlying land has varied with the population density, extensive livestock grazing has shaped the Scandinavian landscapes over several millennia.²¹

During pre-industrial times, the Fennoscandian boreal forests and a large part of the mountainous areas were influenced by several types of human activities. The forest was an essential part of the agricultural



PHOTOS: HAKAN TJUNON, CSM AND BOLETTE BELE, BIOFORSK

In the absence of grazing, many species, like the Black Vanilla Orchid, *Nigritella nigra*, will gradually disappear, as will the meadows and cultural buildings. Rossåsvallen, Hälsingland, Sweden, August 1998.

practice that provided different types of resources and opportunities including fodder such as hay, leaf, and lichen; wood for construction, fuel, fences, and handicraft; hunting possibilities; slash and burn cultivation; and, most importantly, grazing resources. In both Norway and Sweden, grazing and fodder harvesting have shaped most landscapes and kept most forests semi-open, but today management authorities and biologists often overlook these anthropogenic dimensions of the forest landscape and its biodiversity²². This often results in loss of nature types, biodiversity, traditional ecological knowledge, and valuable fodder.

Today, the remaining summer farms are of interest for their biological value, cultural value, and tourism. They are still important grazing areas for livestock and the production of local food products, especially in the mountain regions of Norway and in northern and central Sweden.²³

The aim of this study is to draw attention to the conceptual gaps concerning perspectives of landscapes between academia and government officials and the farmers using the summer farming landscape for food production (small-scale animal husbandry) in Sweden and Norway. We will discuss the discrepancies in the views on how this landscape should be governed in order to maintain and enhance its value and potential.

THE SCANDINAVIAN PENINSULA is situated relatively far to the north, between N 55°35' and N 62°00', similar to southern Greenland. Due to the warm North Atlantic Drift, a branch of the Gulf Stream, the climate is considerably milder than in other parts of the world at similar latitudes. Most of Norway and the central and northern parts of Sweden belong to the coniferous and boreal deciduous forest. In large parts of these areas the conditions are seldom favorable for the cultivation of cereals and other important food crops. Consequently, the traditional lifestyle has, to a large extent, been a meat- and milk-based livelihood focusing mainly on animal husbandry with some trapping and fishing. In Scandinavia, two types of traditional

transhumance still exist, reindeer husbandry and the use of summer farms (*fäbodbruk* or *säterbruk* in Swedish, *seterbruk* or *stølsbruk* in Norwegian, also called summer shielings). Reindeer husbandry is a form of transhumance that is connected to the Sami people, Europe's only indigenous people. In this article, we will concentrate on the use of summer farms. This is a traditional pastoral agricultural production form currently affected by several governmental agencies, policies, and interests. The reflections in this study encompass the entire area of Swedish and Norwegian summer pastoralism, but in particular the counties of Dalarna, Jämtland, and Gävleborg in Sweden, and Sør- and Nord-Trøndelag in Norway. Some of the reflections and conclusions in this article might also be relevant in reindeer herding contexts.

Norway is a mountainous land with restricted possibilities for large-scale agriculture. Mountains constitute about 45% of the total land area of Norway, and topography, local climate, and other factors strongly restrict the cultivable area and the possibilities for large-scale agriculture.²⁴ However, the outlying land areas are extensive and offer many different possibilities for grazing and fodder harvesting. From the Iron Age, when permanent infields were established, until the twentieth century, Norwegian farming has utilized both outlying land and infield pastures.²⁵ The animals grazed primarily on outlying land and, in many parts of the country, most of the winter fodder was also harvested there.²⁶ The subalpine areas were especially important for the traditional farming systems, and summer farms made it possible to utilize remote grazing resources. In the middle of the nineteenth century, there were 70,000–100,000 active summer farms in Norway and in 1939 there were 26,400. Today, about 1,100 of the farms are still in use.²⁷

In contrast, southern Sweden has relatively large areas highly suitable for increased intensification of agriculture. During the modernization and rationalization of agriculture in Sweden that took place after the Second World War, the central and northern regions

of Sweden were considered unsuitable for modern farming. Thus, farming in those areas was more or less abandoned with a few exceptions. The number of active summer farms decreased from several thousand in the late nineteenth century²⁸ to approximately 200 in 2012.

Four main sources of empirical information were used in this study: experiences from previous research projects, qualitative interviews, field studies at summer farms, and written documentation.

Experiences from previous research projects include studies of landscape values, grazing impacts on biodiversity, habitat preferences of different breeds of animal, and connections between cultural values and biodiversity.²⁹ The interviews were “semi-structured life world interviews” as described by Kvale.³⁰ Interviews with key informants and focus group discussions, as well as field studies, were conducted 2013. The written sources surveyed and analyzed in the study consisted of articles in scientific publications, conference proceedings, monographs, policy documents of government agencies, and statistics obtained from the Viltskadecenter at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

FROM A NORWEGIAN FARMER'S perspective, the outlying landscape and the summer farming landscape is still important for grazing and food production, and thus for the Norwegian farm economy.³¹ In 2011, 2.2 million livestock animals grazed outlying pastures.³² Grazing is seen as important for the maintenance of common goods and as positive for animal welfare, and the Norwegian government promotes grazing of outlying land and active summer farming through subsidies. In 2011, 85% of all ewes, lambs, and goats and about one in four cattle grazed on Norwegian outlying land for more than five weeks. Utilizing fodder resources from outfields is still important for the Norwegian farmers and economy.³³ However, the fodder potential in Norwegian outfields is estimated to have a capacity for as much as twice the present number of livestock

animals grazing there.³⁴ In Sweden, the rationalization process of agriculture has progressed much more than in Norway, and the number of livestock animals grazing the outlying land is consequently much smaller.

Studies from Norway also show that summer dairy farming in species-rich semi-natural pastures in mountain regions improves the nutritional quality of milk and milk products³⁵. This creates a win-win situation; mountain pastures improve the food quality and, in return, cattle grazing contributes to the maintenance of both biodiversity and open landscapes.

In high-cost countries such as Sweden and Norway, it is often difficult to sustain a reasonable income from small-scale husbandry that includes utilization of out-field fodder resources. Therefore, many farmers improve their livelihood by developing tourism and local value-added food products. Non-urban environments are among the preferred destinations for post-modern tourists, and farms with small-scale food production represent a lifestyle and a set of values that have been shown to be important elements for tourists seeking natural and cultural experiences.³⁶ Bertella³⁷ concluded that any policy regarding food tourism should be based on the particulars of the specific region, the terroir. Successful food tourism can also lead to other benefits such as sustainability of the local environment and preservation of cultural heritage.³⁸ The combination of tourism, culture, and local food are shown to be responsible for substantial business activity in rural areas in Norway and provide opportunities for development and growth.³⁹ At the same time, tourism is not the original purpose of summer farms, and if the prerequisite to receive subsidies is to work in a traditional way there might be an inherent problem.

Biodiversity values and forest and alpine grazing

In Norway, grazed forests are now, according to the red list for ecosystems and habitat types, defined as belonging to the red list category *near threatened* (NT), and semi-natural grasslands are *vulnerable* (VU).⁴⁰ In Sweden, grazed forest habitats have decreased the most during the last century.⁴¹ Grazed forests are sparse. As a result of continuity over many years and the existence of old trees, sun-exposed wood, litter-poor soil, flowering bushes and trees, and border zones, they are species rich.⁴² In the traditional husbandry systems, grazing animals were able to move over large continuous areas, resulting in dispersal of plants and animals between remote areas. The large areas that animals covered created a gradient in grazing time and pressure,⁴³ and resulted in a mosaic with early and late grazed areas. This also created a gradient in grazing and trampling pressure, with the most intense effects just outside the infield (*fäbodvallen* in Swedish or *setervoll* in Norwegian) of the summer farms. These semi-natural patches are still valuable areas for biodiversity, and studies show that remaining patches are preferred as grazing areas for dairy cows both in the Swedish and Norwegian summer farming landscapes.⁴⁴

The species richness of grazed forests and alpine areas varies with climate, soil conditions, supply of nutrients and water, and the intensity of grazing and



A farmer at Nyvallen, Härjedalen, Sweden, together with the leading cow Nejljika [Carnation], an 18-year-old Swedish mountain cow with plenty of experience. July 2012.

trampling.⁴⁵ Biological traces of former land use, such as grazing, in forests and alpine areas are, however, often difficult to verify, and the degree of “wilderness” of a landscape is often discussed in connection with biodiversity, conservation, and forest management.⁴⁶ Field layer vegetation established in grazed forests and alpine areas is more or less the same as vegetation found in other semi-natural pastures at the same climatic gradient.⁴⁷ Plants associated with traditional agricultural practices have been part of the scenery for at least 2,500–3,800 years, but the number and variety of plants are declining due to overgrowth processes in both lowland and upland areas. In Norway, more than 80% of all threatened species are found in forest, agricultural, or semi-natural habitats.

In days past, a shortage of hay in the winter resulted in many semi-natural habitats needing additional food sources such as leaf fodder. Both in the infields of both the homesteads and the summer farms as well as on outlying land there were often pollarded trunks of goat willow (*Salix caprea*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), and downy birch (*Betula pubescens*) as well as coppiced hazel (*Corylus avellana*), alder (*Alnus* spp.), and downy birch. Pollarding increases the longevity of trees, and old pollarded trees are important habitats for a variety of species, including mosses, lichens, insects, and birds. Today most are threatened due to end of this type of farming, overgrowth, and afforestation.⁴⁸ Light and age are two especially important factors contributing to the conservation value of pollarded trees as well as other trees and bushes in semi-open forests. Typically, sun-exposed stems and branches become thicker, and the trees survive to a greater age, which promotes the formation of substrates such as sun-exposed dead wood that are rare or lacking in forests.⁴⁹

Many different mushrooms grow in grazing lands, not only threatened red-listed mushrooms such as *Gomphus clavatus* and *Sarcosoma globosum*, but also

the commonly used food mushrooms such as chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*), parasol mushroom (*Macrolepiota procera*), and *Agaricus* spp.⁵⁰ Mushrooms prefer ground trampled by animals, and many species also depend on cow dung.⁵¹

Many plants, for example *Nardus stricta* and *Lycopodium clavatum*, also grow well in grazing and trampling grounds, often by competitive exclusion of more palatable species. Other species prefer the more sunlit forest resulting from grazing, such as *Botrychium lunaria*, *Platanthera chlorantha*, and *Pyrola* spp. Some species, such as *Rhinanthus* spp., are dependent on trampling because their seeds cannot germinate in litter-rich soil. Examples of red-listed species in the summer farming landscape are *Nigritella nigra*, which is endangered in Norway and Sweden, and *Pseudorchis albida* (near threatened in Norway and endangered in Sweden).⁵²

CONTINUED FOREST GRAZING is also important for many insects. For instance, dung beetles require cow dung free from anti-parasite drug residues in a continuous supply year after year, and they also depend on good soil quality.⁵³ Furthermore, the outlying soils are often sandy mineral soils unsuitable for cultivation, but they are needed for the ground-nesting wild bees now threatened in all of Europe.⁵⁴ The outlying land is definitely to be considered a cultural landscape shaped by various extensive human activities.

Market economy or full-cost subsidies?

The agro-environmental measures in Sweden imply that funding is given to farmers that manage specified types of habitats in a certain way. Farmers are compensated for the costs of managing an area calculated from a general formula. In some regions, this might be a fair deal for farmers because the actual cost is



PHOTO: BOLETTEBELLE BIOFORSK

Activities at the Gjermundshaug summer farm, Alvdal, Hedmark County, Norway, July 2011. Tourists gathering (left) and rinsing the butter (right).

lower than the calculated cost, and the animals are, in most cases, re-located to less productive pastures instead of using arable fields for grazing. The farmer is then compensated for the potential lower growth of the animals. The situation is more complicated for summer farms. The distance from the home farm is often great, which could cause problems when legislation dictates that all animals have to be counted and examined each day but the farmer is simultaneously required to harvest hay or crops at the home farm. Farmers both in Norway and Sweden might also, for economic reasons, need to have a part-time job far from the summer farm.

The present level of compensation in Sweden is €2,050 for an active summer farm plus €80/ha of grazed area. Many farmers complain that the payment is much too small, and the fact that the payment has decreased substantially for many of the farmers since 2006 is very frustrating. It is easy to understand the frustration of the farmers because the compensation for forest grazing in other parts of Sweden is €205/ha, and €275/ha is paid for grazing “species-rich open grasslands”. These types of pasturelands are fenced, whereas summer farm grazing is not, and the animals are often situated fairly close to the home farm, which reduces the cost and time spent looking after the animals. In Norway, eleven out of twenty County Governors now offer an active summer farming payment through Regional Environmental Schemes. Ten of these County Governors request dairy production on the summer farm.⁵⁵ Also, the Norwegian government promotes grazing through various other payment schemes.⁵⁶

One of the most discussed parts of the agro-environmental measures in Sweden is the five-year commitment. This is certainly a difficult requirement for the practice of summer farming because the issues of large carnivores and the economic problems create uncertainties in whether the operation can continue

for the full five years. If a farmer does not meet the five-year commitment, there is a risk of having to re-pay all the payments received prior to that date. The uncertainty for farmers has started a discussion on having one-year commitments instead. It has not yet been decided if this proposal will be approved for inclusion in the common agricultural policy (CAP).

The definition of pastures, especially outland pastures, is frequently debated in the EU. One of the criteria for land to be defined as a pasture within the EU is that the number of trees has to be less than 50 trees/ha. In Sweden, this definition has been revised to 60 trees/ha. However, outland and summer farm pastures very seldom fit into this definition despite the fact that they have been the predominant area used as pastures historically in Sweden. Another criterion of the definition is that the production of fodder has to be high to be considered agricultural land, which, according to the EU Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, means a relatively productive (thus, often species-poor) grassland without a substantial amount of impediments or trees. This implies that outland pastures do not qualify for direct payment within the CAP, despite the importance of outland pastures to the agricultural system and their use as an important feeding resource for cattle in several regions today. Sweden is using the measures in the agro-environmental schemes to pay for the management in outland and summer farms, but the payment is remarkably low compared to payments for other types of pastures in Sweden, which in some cases receive additional income through direct payments.

The number of summer farms and utilized outlying pastures has decreased dramatically over the past century. This is, among other factors, highly dependent on the structural changes and intensification of farming and increased competition both nationally and globally. Despite the fact that just a fraction of the summer farms and outland pastures are still in use, few

political initiatives have been introduced to increase this number. The latest suggestions for regulation of the subsidy system in Sweden aim to decrease the economic support for summer farms, at least for those with a large number of animals. Although it costs more per cow or sheep to keep fewer animals on summer farms compared to keeping a larger herd, there are several factors to consider. Managing a summer farm includes the need to be away from the home farm during a long period in the summer, which may be difficult for a full-time farmer because other farm tasks must be completed, such as harvesting winter fodder. This aspect of farming increases with the number of animals. The management of summer farms can be hard to coordinate with other employment, at least during parts of the year, and especially if the farm is far away. This is a reason for at least offering the same amount of subsidies for large farms as for smaller. The large farms have more opportunities to be active and survive in regions where other types of employment are scarce.

In Sweden, small-scale pastoral farming is subsidized mainly for preservation of natural and/or cultural heritage values rather than for production of agricultural products, but in Norway the subsidies serve a multifunctional purpose. The supporting policies, at least in Norway, are intended to help maintain rural settlements and secure the strategic capacity for independent food production. Investigations in Norway show that maintenance of cultural landscapes and common goods are parts of the agriculture and agricultural policy that are appreciated and supported by people in general.⁵⁷

In Norway, agriculture is supported in several different ways, but to be entitled to receive support, a farm has to comply with several requirements. Only farm firms can apply for production support, and they must carry out “normal” agricultural production. Agro-environmental support is provided by national,

regional, and local agencies, and grazing is promoted by various payment schemes. Still, Norwegian farmers face challenges with regard to support. One of the challenges pointed out by them is that the level of payments today differs between different Counties.⁵⁸

Conflicting interests: the issue of large carnivores

The biodiversity found in open semi-natural pastures, summer farms, grazed forests, and semi-natural alpine habitats depends on continued extensive grazing and trampling of livestock⁵⁹, and in alpine areas reindeer grazing and trampling is also important for biodiversity.⁶⁰ This extensive practice of utilizing the outlying land makes the free-ranging animals more vulnerable to attack, especially sheep.⁶¹ On the other hand, free-ranging livestock have more possibilities to escape the attack. When attacks occur in fenced areas, the injury and death of livestock are often greater. The carnivore situation has gradually become more problematic for the farmers during the last decade. In Sweden, many summer farmers have stopped moving their sheep to the summer farms or have given up having sheep altogether because of the inability of sheep to protect themselves. In Norway, the situation resembles the one in Sweden about five years ago; most farmers have, so far, not experienced any problems, but some attacks have occurred.

Large carnivores have a high conservation value because they are threatened in most countries both within and outside Europe. Today in Sweden and Norway, the populations of large carnivores are growing. Conservation of large carnivores is very costly because carnivores move over large areas where they affect the everyday life of livestock owners. Every year, large sums are paid as compensation for damage and mitigating measures.⁶² However, many farmers have large indirect costs that are not compensated, such as lower milk production and lower fertility in affected livestock, long hours spent searching for animals escaping from attacks, and sleepless nights from worrying about animals. Swedish studies have shown that peo-

ple living in carnivore-dense areas feel that they do not have any influence over decisions and management because the decisions are ultimately directed from the EU government authorities.⁶³ Without acceptance, effective management is inhibited as shown in both historical and social sciences studies.⁶⁴ Resolution of conflicts between stakeholders regarding carnivore management is essential in order to reach acceptance. The most important questions are related to effective management of problem animals and acceptable and well-functioning damage compensation systems.

Conclusions

Different people view landscapes and their values very differently. In this article, we have focused on the outlying grazed land of the Scandinavian transhumance systems. Through narrow professional views, the governance and management of these landscapes is divided into separate elements without holistic strategies. Different professions focus on “their” specific elements, objects, or phenomena in the landscape. Some focus on cultural aspects, while others focus on biological values. Central in this landscape of perceptions are the farmers, who strive to run a viable farm while trying to manage the interests of most of the other groups that perceive different values in the landscape.

The compartmentalization concerning the management of the landscape and its resources results from the lack of coherence among governmental institutions. This not only has negative effects on biodiversity and cultural values but also increases costs for the affected farmers. This is particularly the case with regard to the increasing population of carnivores that threaten the livelihood of today’s summer farmers as well as the biodiversity that is dependent on continued grazing.

The economy of small-scale farming in Sweden and Norway has not grown like other sectors of society. Today, compensation for conservation of ecological and cultural functions and values is a necessary element in most summer farm enterprises in Sweden. However, the

compensation for summer farming is relatively small compared with support given to other farmers. Active summer farms are now very few in number compared to 100 years ago, and in Sweden, little is done on a national level to actually increase this number. On the contrary, the latest proposals for management compensation indicate that the support levels might be even further reduced. In Norway, summer farming is supported in most counties, but here the subsidies are also generally too modest to make summer farming attractive to the

next generation. Adequate compensation for continued management of summer farms and the grazing of outlying land is crucial if this customary practice is to continue in the future.

The outlying grazing land and summer farms represent a meeting point for different interests and business ventures. For the long-term viability of summer farms in Sweden and Norway, it is essential to establish a genuine dialogue between the administrative authorities and the different stakeholders, particularly the farmers, because their management, often based on generations of local and traditional knowledge, is the very basis for upholding the many values connected to the summer farming landscape. To be able to make a living on their summer farms and, at the same time, contribute to the preservation of cultural and nature values, the farmers need regulations and subsidies that are well designed and stable. However, a large proportion of today’s landscape governance and rural policy is characterized by “short-termism” and “projectification”. Consequently, there is a need for increased and open dialogue with the farmers, a more holistic view of landscape governance, and fewer fluctuations in management policies.

We believe that the separate perspectives of different authorities and scholars on the Scandinavian transhumance landscapes can meet. The summer farms and the landscapes of which they are part can serve as the base for high-quality food production, and can contribute with sources of a wide range of valuable knowledge and skills rooted in pre-fossil energy-based agricultural systems, while at the same time conserving and developing biodiversity and the cultural and recreational values of the landscape. For this to happen, the sum of the conditions for the farmers must be supportive of continued use of the summer farms, and the farmers need to be part of, and able to influence, the policymaking and management of these landscapes. The summer farm landscapes, like all landscapes, need to be managed from within a holistic, long-term perspective.

FINALLY, WE WILL CONCLUDE and summarize with the following points. There is a need for

- holistic and long-term perspectives on governance and management of landscapes with a focus on the farmers’ situation;
- increased dialogue between authorities, scholars, and local farmers and communities, as well as increased participation of local farmers and communities in decision-making processes;
- increased dialogue between and within different authorities and research institutions; and
- identification and evaluation of conflicting targets, and genuine efforts through dialogue to reconcile these. ✖

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Dairy products produced at different Swedish summer farms represent local specialities from traditional small-scale food handicraft.



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STETTIN (SZCZECIN)

A NODE IN A GEOPOLITICAL NETWORK

by **Thomas Lundén**

In a Polish context, Szczecin (German: Stettin) is a medium-sized city, located in the northwestern corner of the country, with poor connections to the capital, Warsaw, and with a declining economy of shipping and shipbuilding. But for many centuries, Stettin was much more important, commercially and geopolitically, as its relative proximity to Sweden and its natural resources formed a north-south axis of “coal-for-iron” trade.

Commercial shipping, like other types of transportation, rests on an interaction among dealers, artifacts, places, and, of course, goods to be transported. An additional factor is the political: the formal rules that those involved are supposed to obey – at least in theory. In shipping, the seas form an additional “gray zone” of rules about territorial waters, economic zones, and bilateral agreements that are utilized or transgressed by states, shipping companies, and captains. The history of Stettin is an example of how the relative force of these factors changes, and how in turn they change realities. In wartime, different rules apply – even for states that are not formally involved.

Stettin is located in the Oder River Valley, which is around eight kilometers wide. This was the northernmost point where overland connections between east and west were possible, with the exception of the complicated estuary in the delta of the Oder and Swine rivers (in Polish, Odra and Świna) on the Baltic coast. The town was also protected from the dangerous coast by the large lagoon between Stettin and Swinemünde (Świnoujście).

Stettin is mentioned in eleventh-century documents as a trading post between Germanic and Slavic-speaking tribes. The intrusion of Germanic colonization resulted in Magdeburg Rights in 1243, and Stettin played an important role in the herring trade with Skåne in Denmark. Politically, the town was mostly the capital of the Duchy of Pomerania, but for around 80 years it was capital of the Swedish province of the same name. In 1720, Szczecin was captured by Prussia,



which later became the core of the German Empire.

Contacts with Scandinavia did not cease in 1720. During the 18th century, Stettin was an important importer of Swedish train oil and an exporter of grain.¹ While Stettin was under Swedish rule, the neighboring state of Brandenburg (later Prussia) built canals from the Oder River towards Berlin in order to direct trade away from Pomerania. After annexation by Prussia, Stettin became the major port for both Berlin and Breslau (Wrocław). Its importance grew with industrialization. The Oder River flows from the Silesian coal district, and when the iron ore of northern Sweden became technically usable for steel production thanks to the Thomas process, Stettin was in a strategic position, particularly after Germany lost the Lothringian mines in 1919.² Coal from Silesia could also be exported to Sweden, which had no coal. The river is not always navigable, but the Prussian state built a dense net of railways. The Gällivare iron mine was connected to Luleå in 1888, permitting export by ship. The Kiruna mine was connected to Narvik on the Norwegian ice-free Atlantic coast in 1902, but the Luleå-Stettin connection was shorter, simpler and – particularly during wartime – safer.

On the German side, the Swine River was canalized in 1870 and connected to Stettin in 1889 by a deep fairway across the lagoon. The Oder River was prepared for shipping from Breslau almost all year, except during icy conditions. The building of icebreakers became a Stettin specialty, with different versions for the rivers and the lagoon. In 1898, the emperor inaugurated a free port, and traffic on the Oder reached a peak. In 1914 Stettin was again connected to Berlin by a canal with locks to manage the 36-meter difference in elevation. Stettin in 1910 was Germany's biggest Baltic seaport, with exports of grain, sugar, flour, cement, and chemicals.³

Luleå, at the other end of the Baltic Sea, developed into northern Sweden's leading seaport, not least through iron ore exports. The arriving tonnage had increased considerably, and in 1900 Sweden's largest cargo ship, the Nordstjernan shipping company's *Oscar Fredrik*, loaded 7,000 tons for her maiden voyage. From 1914 to 1915, the number of ships loaded increased from 296 to 985. Iron exports to Germany beat all previous records.⁴ Why?

The First World War had begun. While Sweden was neutral, Germany was at war with Great Britain, France, and Russia. Sweden needed coal and Germany needed iron ore. German ships shuttled between Stettin and Luleå, while Russian submarines searched for prey. German ships sought refuge in Swedish territorial waters, and some of these were sunk or hijacked by Russian submarines or destroyers. Russia in such cases falsely asserted they were in international waters, though some German ships clearly were outside Swedish jurisdiction when they were attacked.⁵ Almost all such incidents occurred in 1916: for later, the situation in Russia became revolutionary and Russia's war effort weaker, and after Lenin's coup against the weak Kerensky government in 1917 Russia established a truce with Germany.



Three generations: Wilhelm, Werner, and Arthur Kunstmann.

But shipping is subject to other dangers too. From a diver's report:

Cargo-ship *Hansa*, built 1910 at Stettiner Oderwerke AG. Purchaser: Neue Dampfer Co. AG, Stettin. Material: Steel. Speed: 13 knots. Home: Stettin. Crew: 18. Load: Iron ore. Wrecked: July 29, 1917, on route Luleå–Stettin. Place: Öja Bremersvik (south of Nynäshamn, Stockholm). Cause: Collision with fishing vessel.⁶

With the Versailles treaty, the geopolitical conditions changed. There was a ban on the extension of the Stettin free port.⁷ After a contested referendum, the region of Upper Silesia was divided between a reduced Germany and a reinstated Poland.⁸ Poland now tried to steer coal exports away from German territory, and to that end built a harbor at Gdynia, its only safe access to the Baltic Sea.⁹ Because of Poland's partial annexation of Silesia, Stettin lost its position as the major exporter of coal and grain. In 1919, turnover had fallen to the level of 1873.

The creation of the Polish Corridor and Danzig's position as a free city under the formal dominion of Poland makes Stettin's outer harbor, Swinemünde, a sea link to East Prussia and a naval base.¹⁰ But Stettin's contacts with Luleå and other Swedish Baltic seaports continue. Hitler's assumption of power initiates a rearmament that requires Swedish iron ore. In 1936, a Swede, Gösta Häggkvist, makes a vacation voyage from Luleå to Germany, and shoots a film. From the script: "Loading of iron ore from stockpiles in railway cars Cargo ship *Viktoria W. Kunstmann* (7800 tons) at the loading dock At sea on the *Viktoria* On the boat, 'my fellow passengers, members of Hitler Youth in Stettin' who were given this voyage to Luleå and back as a bonus for doing good work. So 'the first German buoy, Swinemünde. Ships in Stettin harbor. Iron ore being unloaded. A glimpse of Stettin. North German landscape shot from the train to Berlin.' The film continues with his trip by train and ferry back to Sweden."¹¹

The Kunstmann ships were a well-known sight in Luleå Harbor.¹² But after this, the ship *Viktoria W. Kunstmann* disappears from the records. What happened? Looking for information: The ship was owned by the shipping company W. Kunstmann in Stettin until 1936, but was later renamed SS Radbod and was sunk by British Beaufighter airplanes near Ålesund, Norway, on December 5, 1944. But why did it change its name?

The answer is political. The shipping company

"THE VOYAGE OF THE VIKTORIA W. KUNSTMANN IN 1936 WAS PROBABLY THE LAST TRIP THE HAPPY HITLER YOUTH WOULD TAKE ON A 'JEWISH' SHIP."

W. Kunstmann was established in Swinemünde on April 1, 1870, by Wilhelm Kunstmann, born in 1844. Its first ships were a brig, the *Adler*, and a schooner, the *Minna*. In 1889, Kunstmann launched its first steamer, the *Clara Siegmann*. After that, all Kunstmann ships were steamers, with names ending in *-ia*. A Stettin office opened in 1886, later to become the company's headquarters. From 1915 on, all ships were christened with the family name Kunstmann. Their main task was to ship iron ore from Luleå, Oxelösund, and Gävle to Stettin, where it was sent on river barges or by rail to Silesia. The Kunstmann company purchased the Mercur Shipyard in Stettin.

After 1933, the operations became increasingly insecure, and in 1936 the company was forced to sell. The Kunstmann family was Jewish. A non-Jewish company, Johannes Fritzen & Sohn, bought them out, and the purchase price was transferred to Great Britain, where the Kunstmanns had been able to emigrate in time. Both buyer and seller were punished for illegal monetary transactions, and Werner Kunstmann Jr., the son of Albert Kunstmann, who died in 1940, spent four months in a British prison for his "cooperation with Nazi Germany". His father had been awarded an honorary doctorate and an honorary title of Senator at the University of Greifswald; he had been a board member of two German shipowners' associations and a member of the German delegation to the League of Nations in the 1920s, but all his titles were made void by the Nazi Government. His academic titles were posthumously reinstated in 2000.¹³

The voyage of the *Viktoria W. Kunstmann* in 1936 was probably the last trip the happy Hitler Youth would take on a "Jewish" ship. First Jewish property was eliminated; later, the Jews themselves. But the Swedish-German coal and ore trade continued, even increased (ref. Fritz, 1974).

In 1939 a new shipyard was built in Stettin for smaller vessels and submarines, and in 1940 a naval base was established. "As during the First World War, Stettin developed during World War II as the main transfer place for traffic with Scandinavia".¹⁴ In October 1940, the ship *Isar* called at Luleå in neutral Sweden. The *Isar* had been used earlier that year in "Operation Weserübung", the Nazi attack on Norway.¹⁵ The *Isar* deliv-



Viktoria W. Kunstmann.

ered a German military division for further transport to occupied Norway. A German warehouse for provisions and equipment was established at Luleå, and evidently supplied by sea for some years.¹⁶ But there was traffic in the opposite direction, too. The Swedish vessels *Viril* and *Wormo*, built in the 1930s, were chartered in 1942 by the "Fischereinkaufsgemeinschaft Norwegen" to deliver fresh fish from Luleå to Stettin.

Starting in 1943, Stettin, Swinemünde, and Pölitz (the site of a plant for refining Silesian coal into aviation fuel) were targeted by Allied bombers. British bombers on their way to Stettin and Königsberg passed over Sweden and were attacked by German fighters. In the spring of 1945, the Soviet Army advanced while retreating German troops blew up bridges and port facilities. The Soviet Union took over the Stettin harbor, while Pölitz, Swinemünde, and the city of Stettin, all on the western side of the Oder, were put under Polish administration as an exception to the Oder-Neisse line drawn at the Potsdam Conference.¹⁷ The German population was expelled. In June, the ship *Poseidon* had already delivered the first group of repatriated Poles, returning west with expelled Germans. In July, the *Isar*, the same that had participated in Operation Weserübung and called at Luleå in 1940, was carrying Poles from Lübeck to Stettin, probably Polish slaves now going "home" to Szczecin, which was being emptied of its German population. The *Isar*, after changing names and owners several times, ended up in Turkey, and was scrapped in 1965.

The port was sufficiently repaired for the Soviet administration to be able to ship industrial equipment from Berlin and Stettin to the Soviet Union as reparations. All major industries in Stettin were dismantled, including the double tracks of the railroads. Only part of the harbor was available to the new Polish administration. In late May 1946, the Polish shipping company Poltrans unloaded the first barges of Silesian coal, destined both for local consumption and export. On June 19, the Swedish ship MS *Ruth* unloaded viscose for the artificial silk plant in Wrocław, formerly Breslau. Another Swedish ship, the MS *Anna Greta*, was the first to be provisioned by the Polish State Center of Trade.¹⁸ Because of a death on the quay of Stettin in 1946, another Swedish ship, the steamer Havsbris of Stockholm, was involved in a maritime declaration at the City Court of Malmö, but the circumstances are unknown.¹⁹

On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill delivered a lecture at a US college, saying, "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent." He was right in putting Stettin, now Szczecin, behind the Iron Curtain, but the very border between Soviet and Western power would



A view over Stettin.

“SZCZECIN BECAME A SLUICE FOR SMUGGLING JEWS TO THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN ZONES FOR FURTHER TRANSPORT TO PALESTINE OR THE UNITED STATES.”

run further west, at the limit of the Soviet Occupation Zone. But Swedish contact with Szczecin continued. Now all of Silesia (Śląsk) was Polish, and as before the Treaty of Versailles, all the transport routes were within the same state (although now a different one), with the exception of the River Oder, divided between Poland and its “socialist brother country”, the GDR.

The expulsion of Germans from territories under Polish administration met with enormous obstacles. In February 1946, Poland and Great Britain reached an agreement about the transportation of expellees: Operation Swallow would carry 1000 persons per day by sea from Szczecin to Lübeck and 1520 per day to Bad Segeberg by train. Poland would provide trains, food, and protection. But conditions were terrible. The transport through the Soviet Zone of Occupation to Schleswig-Holstein in the British Zone caused enormous problems. A reception camp in Gumience, Szczecin, was a former sugar plant without windows, doors, or furniture, and social conditions were appalling. The camp was planned to hold expellees for one or two days, but the train capacity to the British Zone could not cope with the flow of expellees. Even the Soviet authorities complained about conditions, while Poland replied that the expellees were in such bad condition that Szczecin was becoming one big hospital. Finally the British authorities managed to increase transport capacities to evacuate the German population.²⁰ A curious, tragic and paradoxical prehistory of Jewish transportation through Stettin was the brutal transportation in March 1940 of 1200 Jews from Stettin to Lublin in Nazi-Occupied Poland, which caused the usually Pro-Hitler Swedish explorer Sven Hedin to complain to Heinrich Himmler.²¹

A strange effect of the postwar conditions was that some Polish Jews pretended to be ethnic Germans in order to be transported to Western Germany.²² Transports from the areas of Eastern Poland annexed by the USSR brought about 25,000 Polish Jews to Szczecin in 1946. With the unclear situation just after the war, Szczecin became a sluice for smuggling Jews to the British and American zones for further transport to Palestine or the US. According to some reports, tens of thousands of Jews used Szczecin as a gateway to life abroad. A small portion of this exodus was legal. In November 1948, the ship *Beniowski* left Szczecin bound for Israel with 615 Polish Jews aboard.²³ What happened to this voyage is not clear from my sources, but the *Beniowski* had visited the town before. Under the name of *Kaiser*, it had been launched in 1905 from the Vulcan shipyard in Stettin to ply the North Sea

and the Elbe River, but it was bought by the Hamburg America Line. In 1919 it was taken over by Great Britain as a war reparation, but sold back to the former owner. After serving Germany in the Second World War, it was again made a war reparation to Great Britain, but was handed over to the Soviet Union and renamed the *Nekrasov*. In 1946 or '48 it was acquired by Polish owners and renamed the *Beniowski* (after a Polish explorer and adventurer), and after its voyage to the Mediterranean it sailed as a training ship along the Polish coast between Szczecin and Sopot/Gdynia, before finally being scrapped in 1954 – in Szczecin, 49 years after it was launched there.²⁴

The history of Stettin/Szczecin does not end with the scrapping of the *Kaiser/Nekrasov/Beniowski*. But in the 1950s, the local situation became more stable, for better and for worse, as did Poland's relations to the outer world. And that is another story, and another geography. ❌

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The synagogue in Stettin.



A newspaper ad.

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ALBANIAN MEDIA ON LIFE SUPPORT

At first glance, the media in Albania appear to be free. Press freedom and the absence of censorship are guaranteed by law. In practice, the Albanian media are cornered and severely crippled by strong political and economic interests, and journalists are working in a shaky environment where their economic and personal safety is at risk.

The history of media plurality in Albania is short. During the period of communist rule, the party's Central Committee published the most important newspaper, *Zeri i Popullit* [Voice of the people], with a circulation of around one hundred thousand. State-owned Radio Tirana was the dominant radio station, and broadcast internationally in some 20 languages.

Since the collapse of the communist regime in 1990, the media landscape has developed at a great pace. An impressive number of newspapers and other media outlets have spawned. There are 26 daily newspapers published in Albania today. Their combined circulation is believed to be less than 70,000 copies. For a population of just under three million, 26 daily newspapers might sound like a great number, but a clear majority of them are sustained as mere side products of big business conglomerates who use them as forums for their own political agendas, to attack enemies, or to promote the owners' interests.

There are also about 60 local and two national commercial radio stations, along with one public national station, Radio Tirana. There are also a large number of local and cable TV stations. The three most popular national television broadcasters are the public broadcaster RTSH, TV Klan, and Top Channel.

These outlets all have their place in Albania's media landscape, which is polarized along the country's political battle lines. The degree of independence from the government or the opposition varies, but almost all outlets can be said to lean towards one or the other of the two political camps.

THE ALBANIAN MEDIA are in a difficult financial situation, which exposes them to pressures from special interests. As one of the largest sources of finance,

the government wields considerable power. All government ministries have their own advertising budgets to invest in public information campaigns. The lion's share of this money – between 14 and 15 million euros annually in total – has traditionally gone to government-friendly media. The former government, headed by the Democratic Party, frequently used these funds to reward some outlets for their reporting, punishing others by giving advertising to their competitors. It is too soon to say whether the new prime minister, Edi Rama of the Socialist Party, who won a landslide victory in the elections on June 23 of this year, will carry on this practice.

Private advertising is managed similarly. Here the government's influence is indirect, yet just as strong. It is important to emphasize how closely intertwined business and politics are in Albania, as they are in many countries with similar levels and cultures of corruption. And since the media are polarized along political lines, businesses that advertise in oppositional media are seen as actively supporting the opposition. Business owners are well aware of this and know that their choice of media will have consequences for their relations with the state. This puts oppositional or critical media at a disadvantage compared to more government-friendly outlets. A company that advertises in oppositional media risks increased pressure or scrutiny from the tax office or discrimination in future bids for public contracts.

THESE PRACTICES skew the competition in the media market. Advertising revenue is not determined primarily by the quality, popularity, or circulation of the outlets, but by their political allegiance. Again, oppositional media are in an unfavorable position in relation to their pro-government competitors.

The financial situation is also detrimental to the journalistic product. The resources to do more in-depth investigative reporting are lacking, and it is hard to keep talent in the profession. The dependence on political and business interests also affects the editorial structure of the news media because those interests can in essence buy the loyalty of publishers and editors.

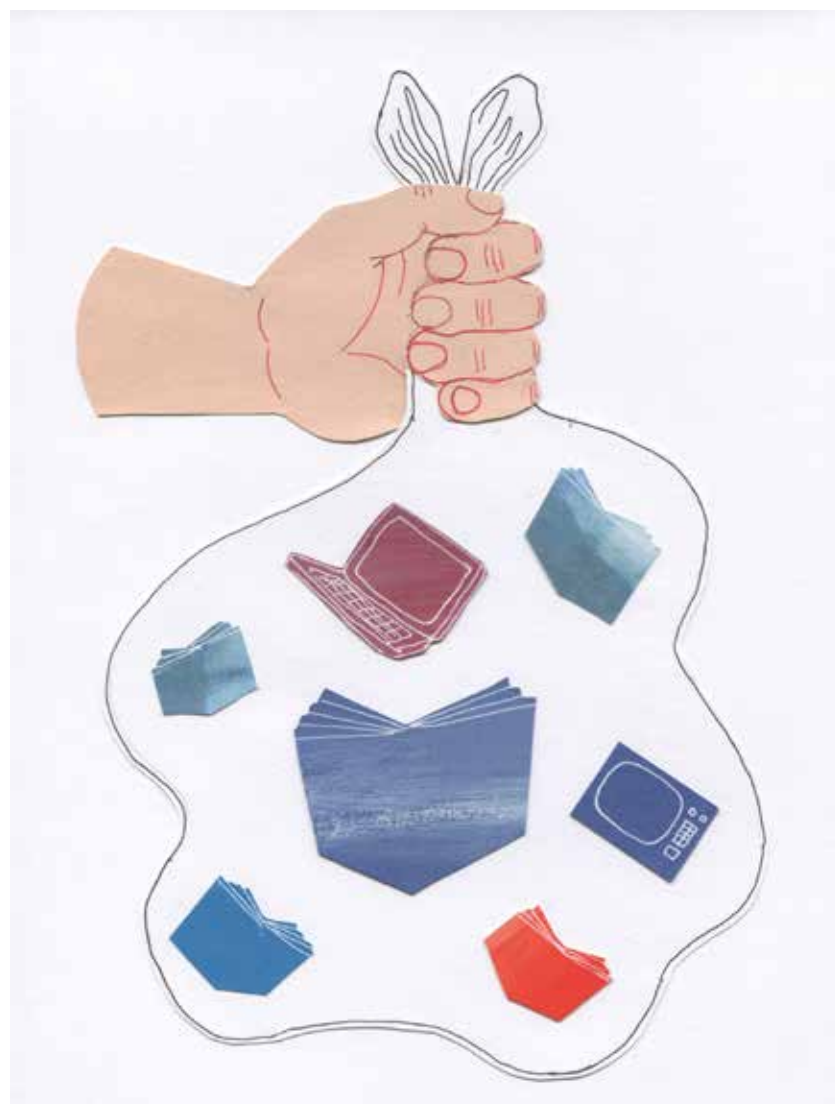


Illustration: Ragni Svensson

Weak rule of law increases the individual risk that Albanian journalists take in their reporting. A large majority of journalists work without any kind of contract with their employer, and those who have one do not believe it offers them any real protection. It is common practice for employers to violate labor rights, such as vacation time, working hours, or even payment of salaries. A 2012 study by the Union of Albanian Journalists found that 20 out of 25 daily newspapers were late in paying salaries to their employees, with delays as long as two months. However, Albania has a relatively weak tradition of organization in the media market, and the union's ability to do anything about this situation is limited.

And then there is the threat of violence. Although attacks against journalists are sporadic, not regular, the fact that they occur at all works as a deterrent to reporters. In the anti-government protests of January 2011, several journalists, including Fatos Mahmutaj of ABC News, were seriously wounded and forced to leave the country after the ensuing threats. Topics like organized crime and corruption are particularly dangerous to investigate.

This environment makes journalists prone to self-censorship: in reporting

and investigating news, their economic and physical security is always – to some extent – at risk.

A FREE PRESS is commonly viewed as an effective tool in stifling corruption. With deep-rooted corruption permeating all branches of government, Albania is in dire need of such a tool. In order to achieve palpable improvements in the work against corruption – which is necessary to advance the country's bid for long-awaited EU membership – Albania's political elite thus needs to start treating the issue of press freedom with the earnestness it deserves. So far, however, the situation has been growing worse, not better. In Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2012, Albania dropped to 113th place, down from 95th place in 2011, giving the country the lowest score among all European countries. Reporters without Borders' "Press Freedom Index" shows an alarming downward trend for Albania. From 34th place in 2003, the country has dropped to 96th place in 2012. ❌

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Through Polish eyes. Polish-Swedish relations during the Second World War

Paweł Jaworski
Marzyciele i oportuniści:
Stosunki polsko-
szwedzkie w latach
1939–1945
[Dreamers and
opportunists: Polish-
Swedish relations in
1939–1945]

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Paweł Jaworski's *Dreamers and opportunists: Polish-Swedish relations in 1939–1945* is the first monograph covering the complex of Polish-Swedish relations during the Second World War. The author uses a vast range of sources from Polish, Swedish, and British archives, the Swedish press, and the Polish exile press. The book is only available in Polish, which is unfortunate given its potential readership among Swedish and Nordic scholars if published in English. Such a publication would not only provide a coherent picture of Swedish-Polish relations, but also add fuel to the heated debate between the representatives of the “realistic” approach in interpreting Swedish policy during the Second World War and scholars who can be defined as representing “the moral turn”, focusing on what they view as a policy of appeasement of first Germany, then – to a much lesser degree – the Soviet Union.¹

THE BOOK IS DIVIDED into three thematic parts. The first deals with the evolution of the diplomatic contacts and political relations between the two states during the war, starting with a brief introduction to their interwar relations. As the author notes, the interwar period in the history of the Scandinavian countries was one of popular pacifist sentiments, disarmament, and a fierce policy of non-alignment. The insular policy was supposed to shield the countries from the armed conflict that loomed as inevitable from the late 1930s on. So was the policy – Sweden's at least – of keeping a safe distance from states viewed as too adventurous, such as Poland. Then the monograph traces relations between the states from the German attack on Poland in September 1939 (a summary of the prior history is provided) to the establishment of de jure relations between Sweden and the People's Republic of Poland in the summer of 1945. This automatically meant the abolition of diplomatic relations with the Polish government in exile based in London, and the acceptance of “Lublin Poland” (after the town where the state was declared) as the sole representative of the Polish people. Needless to say, that government was a representative of the rulers of the Soviet Union. In general, the author finds, Polish-Swedish relations were reserved due to strong German pressure before early 1943, and to growing Swedish fears of Soviet domination in the Baltic Sea area after Stalingrad and the successes of the Soviet counteroffensive. The conflict between the Soviet Union and the Polish government in exile after the German Army found thousands of bodies of Polish officers in the woods outside Smolensk in the spring of 1943 was most unwelcome in official Sweden and the majority of the newspapers. By its calls for an independent investigation, Poland was considered to be obstructing the Allied war effort, although most Swedes with the exception of the Communists very well realized who the perpetrators were. The official attitude of Sweden towards the government in exile turned from lukewarm to frosty as the war proceeded. Besides the Katyn question, the Polish stance on the non-negotiability of its eastern borders was considered particularly unrealistic and harmful,

supposedly confirming the prewar image of Poland as an inflexible and irresponsible adventurist.

The second part of Jaworski's work examines economic relations and how they were maintained through the war. Swedish imports of coal from Upper Silesia constituted the main issue. Sweden depended on German coal, and a majority of the coal imports had been estimated to come from Polish mines. When the end of the war was approaching, the Swedish government initiated talks with the Polish government controlled by the Soviet Union to secure imports of this important fuel after the war. During the war, there was considerable doubt as to the judicial aspects of purchasing products and raw materials that came from an occupied country where industry and important infrastructure had been seized and nationalized by Nazi Germany.

The third part deals with the life of Polish refugees and soldiers and sailors who were interned in Sweden during the war. It also digs into the activities of the Swedish Red Cross in the General Government and the liberated part of Poland controlled by the Soviet Union. The author views Sweden's humanitarian aid in Poland in 1944 and 1945 as a step towards gaining goodwill from the new Communist authorities. At the same time, Jaworski discerns true empathy and commitment to the Polish cause among the Swedish public who massively supported the humanitarian aid.

THROUGHOUT THE BOOK, the author maintains a very critical approach to Swedish policies towards Poland during the Second World War, which were rooted in maneuvering between German and Allied (increasingly Soviet) demands. One almost gets the impression that it was Sweden that framed Poland in its new borders and pushed it into the Soviet embrace, and not the decisions at the conferences in Teheran and Yalta, where Polish freedom was disposed in one of the darkest acts of *realpolitik* of the century. While Jaworski acknowledges the strains on the actions of small states in the international political space, he sees Swedish policies as going far beyond what was required to maintain a status quo and keep Sweden outside the conflict. To be frank, I do not agree with this proposition. It would have been advisable to dig deeper into

the works of A. W. Johansson rather than using a single book, as Johansson's thoughts on Sweden and the Second World War are more multifaceted than Jaworski indicates, reflecting the complexity of the Swedish situation and the choices made. In fact, Johansson can be considered the grand old man of the realistic paradigm in Swedish historiography.² However, the question of official Swedish foreign policy during the Second World War will always remain a matter of interpretation, and positions range from the moralistic to the realpolitik (or “pragmatic”) view. The writing of history is a political act. From the Polish perspective, given the gigantic human and material losses during the war, Sweden's policy might be viewed as one of cowardliness.

To my mind, these minor shortcomings do not overshadow the fact that the book as a whole constitutes an impressive work based on sources painstakingly gathered and analyzed over a long period. It is a well-researched piece of historical science and should be translated into English in order to further discussions of Sweden and the Second World War. For a Swedish reader, the book also would refocus some of the attention paid to the Swedish appeasement policies towards Nazi Germany to such policies practiced towards the Soviet Union, and thus bring a new dimension to the never-ending discussions of Sweden's position towards totalitarian regimes during the Second World War. ✕

piotr wawrzeniuk

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- 1 This topic is extensively discussed in Wawrzeniuk, Piotr, “Låt oss vara realistiska” [Let us be realistic], in *Historisk tidskrift för Finland* [Historical journal of Finland], 2012:4, pp. 571–578, a book review of Stenius, Henrik et al., *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War: National Historiographies Revisited*, Lund 2011: Nordic Academic Press.
- 2 Johansson, Alf W., *Den nazistiska utmaningen: Aspekter på andra världskriget* [The Nazi challenge: aspects of World War II], Stockholm 1997 [1983]: Rabén Prisma, is a very good introduction to approaches to security and neutrality among a number of states with stakes in the Baltic region.

A painful legacy of World War II. Nazi forced enlistment in the Alsace and Lorraine

Florence Fröhlig
Painful legacy of World War II: Nazi forced enlistment: Alsatian/Mosellan prisoners of war and the Soviet prison camp of Tambov

Stockholm University 2013
Acta Universitatis
Stockholmiensis
242 pages



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During recent years she has conducted research in connection to Jewishness in Sweden, and with a focus on narrative, investigated themes such as anti-Semitism, intertextuality, materiality, and emotion.

Florence Fröhlig's doctoral thesis in ethnology is concerned with the legacy of Nazi forced enlistment in the Alsace and Lorraine regions during World War II. From 1870 to 1945, Alsace and parts of Lorraine changed nationality five times. In 1939, when France entered the war, the region was part of France. When France was defeated a year later, the regions were annexed to the German Reich.

IN AUGUST 1942, the German government decided that all men from these regions born between 1908 and 1928 were to be enlisted in the German army. The young men had no choice but to enlist since the Germans threatened to kill their families if they did not comply or if they deserted. These men called themselves "les malgré-nous" ("against our will"). In total, 130,000 men were so enlisted. The majority was sent to the Eastern Front and many of them were eventually imprisoned in Soviet prison camps. The Soviet authorities gathered the French prisoners in Prison Camp 188, situated in the forest of Rada, near the town of Tambov in Russia. In July 1944, the Russians handed over 1500 of these prisoners to France. These men made a long journey to Algeria, where most of them joined the Free French Forces. After the war, Alsace and Lorraine were handed back to France, and the surviving prisoners returned home. Forty thousand of the malgré-nous never returned, however.

The thesis focuses on the experiences of these men who fought in the German army during World War II and were prisoners of war in Russia, and who came to be seen as traitors on their return to France, since they had fought against their own country. Florence Fröhlig's grandfather and great-uncle were two of these men.

Fröhlig's focus places the lingering aftereffects of war, as well as individual and collective efforts to overcome them, at the center of her analysis. She examines various strategies adopted by former prisoners and their descendants to deal with the past. The aim of the thesis is to examine how knowledge and memories about forced enlistment and Soviet captivity have been remembered, commemorated, communicated, and passed on since the Alsatian prisoners of war bore the stigma of enemies or traitors on return-

ing to France. Fröhlig is interested in both individual and collective responses to the legacy of World War II, and she regards the people engaged in these processes as memory actors. The focus of the thesis is on their strategies to transcend painful memories and hand them down from one generation to another, transforming a legacy into a heritage.

Fröhlig is influenced by a wide range of theoretical and methodological work in which processes of remembering and commemoration are at the center of interest. In her introductory chapter, she offers theoretical discussions on the concepts of narratives, experiences, rituals, memory, place, and space, and also trauma. Fröhlig views narratives and commemorations as interpersonal acts, and in the case of the former prisoners and their descendants, as strategies and actions used in efforts to give meaning to their experiences and memories. These acts take place within the constantly changing framework of cultural systems and are viewed as processes of remembering.

THE THESIS IS ARRANGED around four strategies of dealing with the experiences of forced enlistment and internment in Soviet prison camps. These stages are chronological but overlap. The first is silence, both individual and collective. Fröhlig writes about this strategy in Chapter 2, titled "To Silence Experience". She shows that there are several types of silences intertwined with one another, and distinguishes four of them. The first one is a political silence. In the post-war era, European societies plunged into a period of forgetting. This sort of forgetting concurred with the hope of the regenerative power of the future, a central value of modernism. In connection with this collective silence there was also an individual, self-protective silence. This is the second silence, which Fröhlig calls liturgical silence. This silence is a survival technique, aimed at overcoming suffering and moving on from the war and its consequences.

The third kind of silence that is discussed is a consequence of the fact that the testimonies of the kinds of experiences the former prisoners of war had had were not well received; there were no empathetic listeners. Hence there was no place for the experiences to be acted out, no space available for expressing them. The fourth form of silence discussed is linked to the humiliation of the former prisoners. Many felt guilty for being deserters and for having fought against their countrymen. In the immediate postwar period, the only script available was the war hero script, which could not cover the experiences of the former prisoners of war.

This construction of silence about forced enlistment and experiences of imprisonment led to a blocked communicative memory, resulting in the difficulty of handing down the memories to the next generation. Despite the silence, children and grandchildren of former prisoners still sensed and in a way carried the burden of the blocked experiences. By distinguishing these four silences, Fröhlig demonstrates that silence in the post-war period was not only due to the tension between personal experience and political

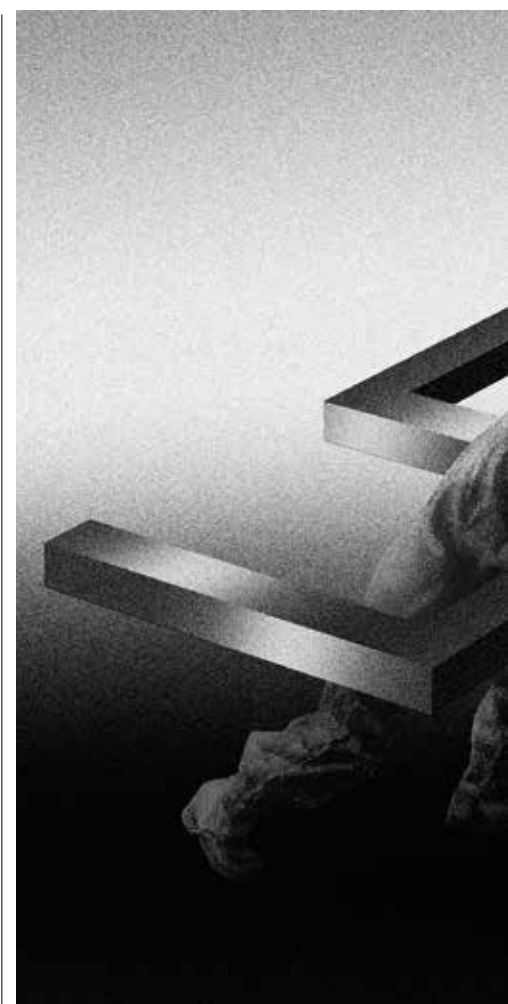
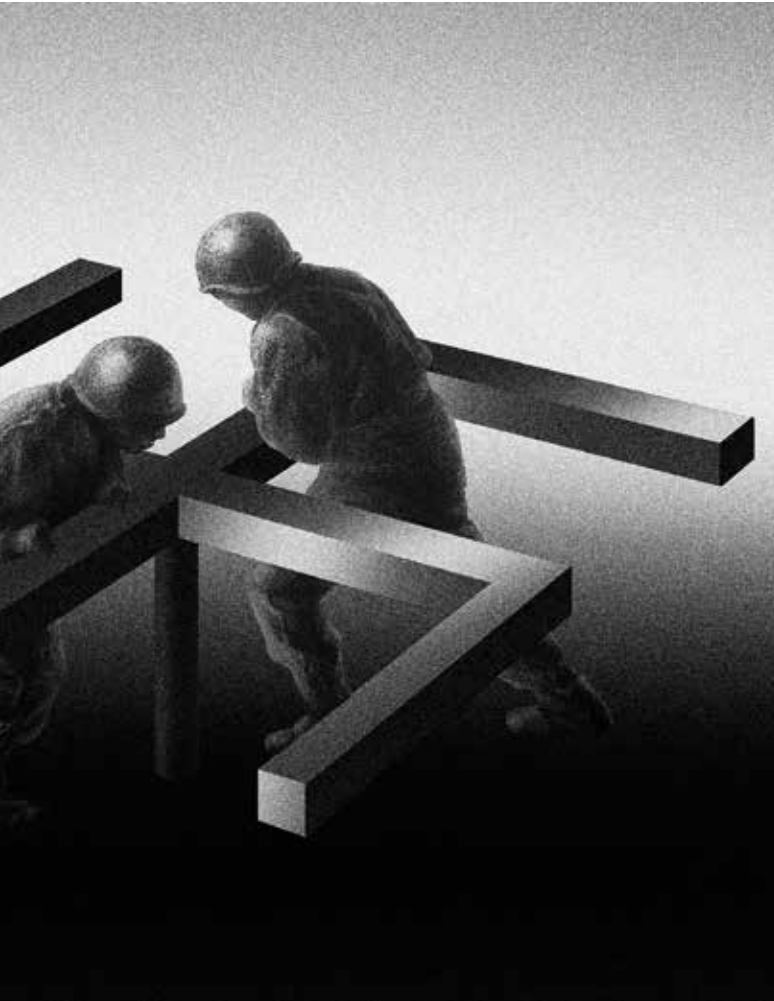


Illustration: Karin Sunvisson

memory, but also connected to the very nature of the experience.

The second strategy for dealing with the past is the constitution of families of resemblance, which Fröhlig writes about in Chapter 3. Families of resemblance were constituted by organizations that defended the interests of the former prisoners of wars. These organizations became intermediaries between French society and the forced conscripts, trying to reintegrate them into the French patriotic discourse and political memory. Within these interest organizations, a collective memory of the events was constituted.

Fröhlig discusses the changes in the interest organizations and the constitution of new ones in the national and international context of remembering and reconfiguring the Holocaust. Commemoration of the Holocaust changed dramatically during the 1960s, when it came to function as a kind of model for non-heroic war experiences such as forced enlistment and imprison-



The first and second strategies are examined mostly through historical records and written testimonies, while the analysis of the third strategy is based mainly on oral interviews with 13 former prisoners of war born in Alsace and Lorraine between 1922 and 1925.

IN HER ANALYSIS of the interviews, Fröhlig demonstrates that the narratives were structured chronologically and that they emphasized the dichotomy between individual and collective history. The narrators avoided heroism and emotionality, but followed the genre of the “survivor of the Russian camps” narrative or the “victim of Nazi Germany” narrative. Fröhlig notes that, since trauma is difficult to talk about, the former prisoners of war may have found comfort in the formal structure of such master narratives. They wanted to talk about their experiences since

they were “invested with a mission to add their words to the campaign against denial”, as Fröhlig writes. She concludes that the agents of remembrance whom she interviewed are turning the tangible and intangible legacies of World War II into heritage. This is done by transforming the legacy from the private and familiar sphere and inscribing it into the public sphere.

The fourth strategy, the pilgrimages, is examined by participant observation on two pilgrimages, surveys, and interviews with 13 of the participants. Through her field observations of the two types of pilgrimages, one for the former prisoners and one for their young descendants, Fröhlig examines how the prisoners and their descendants engage with the past by remembering and reassessing meaning in terms of the social, political, and cultural needs of the present. In this chapter the importance of place and aspects of self-in-place are thoroughly analyzed, and enable Fröhlig to demonstrate how memory is constructed, conducted, and transmitted.

The pilgrims travel to the site of Prison Camp 188, in the forest of Rada outside Tambov, Russia. This place is called “the French camp” and is symbolically important. The pilgrims tend the place and make it familiar with the help of various artifacts, both major ones such as monuments and a cross, and minor ones

such as tobacco pipes and flower arrangements. Other ways of taking in the place and making it familiar include cleaning it, arranging the soil, and forming lines of honor. All these and many other tasks and customs construct a place out of space. In so doing, the pilgrims not only appropriate the place, but also incorporate it in their ongoing lives and their physical existence.

In this manner, the pilgrims confront their grief and pass on or receive the memories of the former prisoners. As the pilgrims themselves argue and as the genre of pilgrimage attests, it is regarded as a healing process. In addition, the pilgrims’ agency is a clear challenge to the paradigm of French remembrance in which the experience of these prisoners of war could not be articulated. During the pilgrimages a new narrative is being put together. In this narrative, the legacy of forced enlistment is repositioned as a part of French history. In that sense, the pilgrims are engaged in presenting a selected and consensual interpretation of past events.

This narrative or interpretation depends upon how it is received not only by the former prisoners of war, the descendants, the interest organizations, the Alsace and Lorraine regions and France, but also by Russia and the Russians. Fröhlig shows that acknowledgment by the Russian authorities is important in forming a narrative, and in return for this acknowledgment, the pilgrims are called upon to reevaluate their preconceptions of Russia and Russians.

THE THESIS SHOWS that memories are not ready-made reflections of the past, but reconstructions of it in the present. The formation of social memory is an active, ongoing process that changes over time. What is being remembered and how it is remembered depends on the cultural frames, moral sensibilities, and demands of the present. But remembering is not the aim of the process; it is a medium of transformation. The strategies of the former prisoners and their descendants are aimed at transforming the legacy into heritage while simultaneously overcoming traumatic experiences of the past.

In my view, this is an important work that covers a whole range of different and interesting aspects of experience, memory, cultural heritage, and narrative. The empirical data is elegantly presented and analyzed, the methods are thoroughly discussed, and the theoretical framework is appropriate. It is obvious that Fröhlig is up to the task she has set herself of examining the former prisoners’ and their descendants’ way of dealing with the past. ✖

susanne nylund skog

ment. The constituting of families of resemblance offered a platform and a framework for the former prisoners to articulate and narrate their experiences. This third strategy is analyzed in Chapter 4, “To Speak Out”. The new realm of remembrance not only opened up a space and an opportunity for the former prisoners of war to communicate about their experiences, but also provided a space for empathetic listening, which was lacking in the immediate postwar period.

The fourth strategy that Fröhlig discusses is the organization of “pilgrimages” to the site of the Tambov prison camp where most of the prisoners from Alsace and Lorraine had been gathered during the war. These pilgrimages bring together three to four generations, and offer an opportunity for Fröhlig to examine the transmission of memory, which she does in Chapter 5, “Pilgrimages to Tambov”.

The studies of the four strategies demand different empirical sources.

The monolithic other of the Cold War. East versus West

Fontana, Josep

**Por el bien del imperio:
Una historia del mundo
desde 1945**

**[For the good of
the empire: a history of the
world since 1945]**

Barcelona 2011

Pasado y Presente

1230 pages



Adrià Alcoverro

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Por el bien del imperio has an intellectual depth that can stand alongside Tony Judt's *Postwar* (2005), and extends over 1,000 pages (including over 200 pages dedicated to references to diverse sources), ending with the current financial crisis. It was an ambitious project that took more than fifteen years to complete and is a fascinating read in a historiographical style that uses the narrative rhythm of fiction. The book includes a number of sections that will appeal to readers with a particular interest in the Baltics and Eastern Europe, both during the Cold War and after the fall of the Soviet Union. This review will highlight some examples.

Fontana describes the Cold War as a historical period that was not particularly "cold": on the contrary, its periphery was very violent and it constituted a system of social control in both East and West due to each side's contrived image of the other as a monolith. In this bipolar world, there was a war against internal dissidents and a cultural war based on prejudices that were deeply rooted not only in the public sphere, but also in the intelligence services. Governments poured vast sums of money into these secret agencies for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the "enemy's" psychology, yet even with their swarms of supposed experts and agents, their preconceptions rendered them incapable of understanding what transpired on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Examples include the CIA's Manichean view of the Latin American backyard, the disastrous failure in Vietnam, the fact that nobody at the US

embassy in Tehran spoke Farsi and none of the CIA's employees was able to make direct contact with a local, and the failure to understand the true significance of perestroika. All of these reflect the permanent denial of the existence of a heterogeneous Eastern Bloc. There are also examples of this simplification of the *other* in the East: Stalin's paranoid reactions to countermoves such as the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, the beginnings of NATO, and the establishment of the Truman Doctrine, all of which triggered the bloody persecution of artists, writers, and composers who had "fallen into the error of cosmopolitanism", or even in the field of science, where a grotesque distinction was made between bourgeois pseudoscience and socialist science. During this same period, Stalin accelerated the destruction of antifascist alliances in favor of a hegemonic Communist Party in satellite states, centralized in and fiercely controlled by Moscow, thus ending all hope of building a more just and free world in the East.

During the Cold War, the times of greatest tension between the two superpowers were mostly born of misinterpretations that exaggerated the actual level of danger in order to justify a permanent arms race. A good example of this was the Euromissiles Crisis of the mid-1980s which, coupled with President Reagan's aggressive rhetoric, made the Soviets believe that it was a real attack maneuver. Paradoxically, Reagan himself was surprised that the Soviets were so convinced of an imminent attack. Playing to the gallery (elections, hidden messages to the military), unnecessary risks, jumping to conclusions based on preconceptions, misunderstandings, and plenty of misleading information were the ingredients that at times took the world to the brink of a nuclear war.

Fontana also delves deep into the peripheral impact of the Cold War. The wars and violent corruption that erupted in Africa and Asia as part of the decolonization process, led by the old colonial powers and by the United States to serve their own interests, were part of one of the "hottest" chapters of the Cold War (Fontana's chapters 2 and 3). Yet the most severe inter-

ventionism occurred not on the periphery, but in Europe's core. The bloody military intervention and subsequent repression in Hungary in 1956 (Chapter 4), and the regular and indiscriminate use of the military to do away with all social malaise, demonstrate an unyielding attitude against conceding any sort of liberty to satellite states or the Soviet Union itself. The Soviet Union's fear of change was sustained in large part by the resistance of its bureaucracy, which acted as a true counter-power. The fall of Nikita Khrushchev was due in part to that bureaucratic resistance to reform (Chapter 5).

There was also interventionism in Western Europe. The financing of pro-fascist terrorist groups and the ballot stuffing in Italy involving the Vatican and Christian Democrats were CIA moves devised in the heart of Europe to foil a Communist Party electoral victory in Italy (Chapter 1). The support of right-wing dictatorships in southern Europe and the distrust it generated, including Henry Kissinger's direct threats of military intervention, and the 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal are evidence of just how afraid the Western allies were of any change in government.

The Prague Spring and May 1968 ended all hope

Fontana's rather pessimistic interpretation of the tumultuous year of 1968 is that the May protests and the Prague Spring represented the collapse of all hope for change, which led to periods of reaction that marked later decades on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



PHOTO: PEP PARER/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Josep Fontana Lázaro, born in 1931 in Barcelona, is one of the most renowned historians in Spain with a career of more than 40 years and hundreds of publications. Fontana is a pupil of Pierre Vilar, perhaps the most important Hispanist working in the 20th century specializing in the history of Catalonia. He was influenced by the historian Jaume Vicens i Vives, a central intellectual figure in Catalonia during the early dark years of the Francoist dictatorship.

He is also a respected teacher who

has formed several generations of historians in Spain. He has taught and researched at several universities, including Universitat de València and Universitat de Barcelona. He was recently awarded honorary doctorates at Universidad de Valladolid (2011) and Universitat de Girona (2013). Nowadays he is professor emeritus of Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. His work has been prolific and varied: economic history, nineteenth-century Spanish history, all the way to the present *Por el bien del imperio*.

I MEET JOSEP FONTANA in his office in the most emblematic building of Universitat Pompeu Fabra, the "Dipòsit de les Aigües" (water works), restored and converted into a central part of the university library, holding many archives, including Fontana's personal archive of some 37,000 documents. Fontana's office is well lit and situated

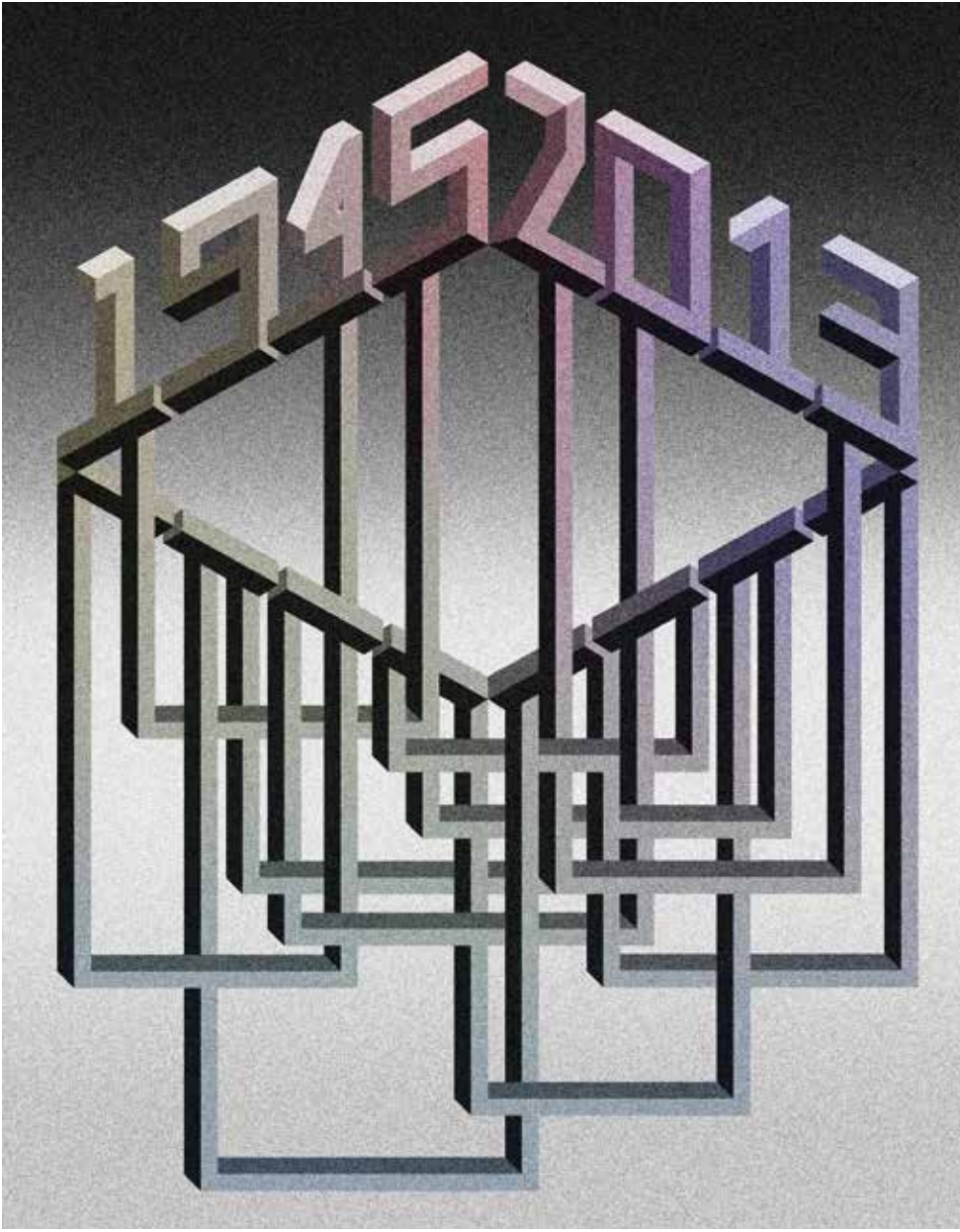


Illustration: Karin Sunvisson

There are interesting parallels between Prague and Paris: both were fruitless attempts of a young and somewhat naïve generation to cause change in the old order so that a new order could be created in a better world (Chapter 7).

Alexander Dubček's "socialism with

a human face" tried to bring about partial democratization: a model of socialism that was open to greater participation of civil society in the decision-making process through the decentralization of the party, and to more freedom in the press and the cultural world. Dubček's socialism was mostly an effort to recover the merits of the Popular Democracy projects at the

end of World War II that were based on anti-fascist alliances. Dubček, unlike Imre Nagy in 1956 Hungary, did not want to break away from socialism or the Warsaw Pact. Nevertheless, Leonid Brezhnev, who had managed to recover part of the Stalinist praxis with the help of the bureaucratic counter-power, interpreted the events in Czechoslovakia as a conspiracy to destabilize the Soviet Union's area of influence and quashed the reform. The defeat of the Prague Spring ended all attempts to build a democratic socialist alternative, a "third way" that was closer to the people and could have revitalized the socialist project which had been swept away by rigid structures that hardly ever spoke of socialism or of a better world any more. These same structures of power collapsed only a couple decades later and exposed what they really had inside: little more than authoritarian bureaucratic systems designed to retain power. This, and the absence of an alternative, no doubt contributed to the effortless introduction of neoliberal capitalism in Eastern Europe.

The May '68 protests were a movement that initially surprised the established order, especially when the largest French trade unions gave the students their explicit support. However, by mid-May, the first disagreements began to emerge between workers and students, who did not share the same list of demands. The students were unable to articulate a clear program, and the French unions negotiated their salary raises directly with the government. It was in this context that then president of the Fifth Republic, Charles de Gaulle,

CE IN TODAY'S WORLD — A CONVERSATION WITH JOSEP FONTANA

inside one of the massive glassed-in arches in the recently restored façade of this building designed by Josep Fontserè in 1874 with the help of a young architect named Antoni Gaudí. In these privileged surroundings, the interview begins.

According to Fontana, the myth that was born during the Cold War is very much alive today. There is a political need to keep the myth alive, and many deterministic views are connected to it. In fact, myths were in play even during the Cold War: from the moment they started using satellites, each side knew the other's military capabilities. Even President Kennedy was surprised when he first arrived at the White House and realized the United States wasn't as vulnerable as was thought. From a strategic point of view, a Soviet invasion of the US was impossible. Even so, the production of arms had to continue due to the pressures of the arms industry.

What do you think of Vladimir Putin's Russia?

"The origins of the Putin era can be found in the previous decade's recklessness. During the second half of the 1990s, a large part of the state's power was in the hands of powerful oligarchs who were in collusion with the Kremlin, largely due to its reckless transition and policies. Putin's arrival signified the state's recovery of political control with authoritarianism, as well as the restoration of a certain measure of economic stability, which is something that a large part of the Russian populace considers satisfactory when set against the constant chaos and crisis of the 1990s. Putin reached a pact with the oligarchs: I'll enable you to continue to make money, but leave politics to the Kremlin. The Kremlin has unceremoniously and unlawfully persecuted unruly oligarchs like Mikhail Khodorkovsky. In any

Continued. The monolithic other of the Cold War

sure of the military's support, staged a dramatic power play when he declared that he would not resign, and instead dissolved the National Assembly. For this move, he received the support of a great part of the "average" population, who were afraid that a period of revolution would ensue. And so the state regained control of the situation and crushed the student movement.

The values that the May '68 protests reflected, which were reshaped over the course of the 1960s, did leave their mark, however: women winning new spaces of liberty and the United States' civil rights movement are seen as parallel processes. In addition, these same values became the basis of environmental movements and transcended part of the established moral order that was still quite dominant in the 1950s. Nevertheless, none of the movements in this mixed bag that emerged in May '68 was ever able to articulate an alternative that truly threatened the establishment. In many cases, they were co-opted by the order they sought to bring down.

A few years after the defeat of the May '68 movement, the Thatcher-Reagan Conservative Revolution commenced (although in the US it was President Carter who started it), inspired by an economic mindset that undermined the Keynesian model that had been in place since the end of World War II. It was an authentic neoliberal counter-revolution that in recent decades has increased social gaps and progressively concentrated economic and political power in an elite that is increasingly removed from the general citizenry (Chapters 11 and 12). This fact shows

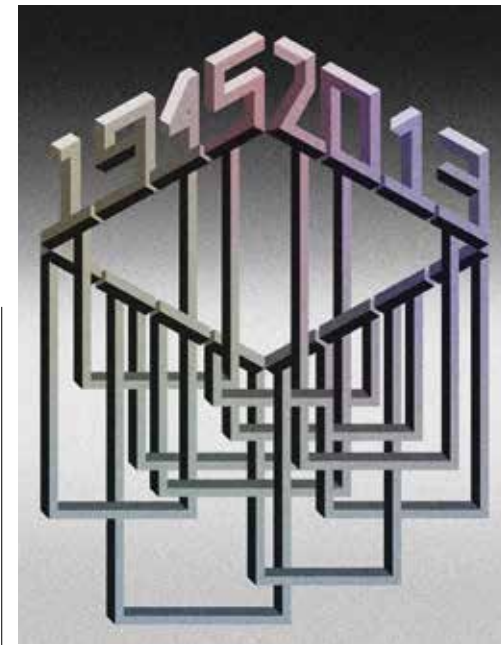
how little the political and economic elites fear social discontent, which was true even just a few years after the "revolutions" of the 1960s.

The fall of communism: the collapse of a system

Fontana's interpretation of the events that led to the end of the Eastern Bloc and of "actually existing socialism" is one of self-destructive implosion, of elites that, seeing themselves incapable of sustaining their stronghold within the established order, decide to destroy it and stay at the cusp of the new order. Fontana downplays the idea that communism fell because of social revolutions (only Romania literally removed the head of government) and states that the main reason can actually be found in a system that had become more and more difficult to sustain after the 1970s.

Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika was meant to tackle these issues, specifically in the economic arena: the objective was to change the logic behind the Soviet Union's economic relations with its satellites, which had until then been based on economic paternalism. This paternalism ensured the political control of economic reforms undertaken by the governments of its satellite countries, but forced the Soviet Union to spend an enormous amount of money to fill the economic gaps that the relation generated. These circumstances made it difficult to create policies that upheld the well-being of Soviet citizens, who were generally worse off than the people of other Eastern European communist states. When we add to this the cost of maintaining all Eastern Europe's military bases, or the Cold War's logic of deterrence, we can guess how urgently Gorbachev felt the need to neutralize these matters (Chapter 13).

The problem was that Gorbachev's proposed reforms were hard to fit into the rigidity of the *nomenklatura*, which saw any reform as a loss of power. The reforms were not aimed at destroying the Eastern bloc; they were an offer to reformulate socialism. The problem was that there wasn't a reformist interest



within the system, nor a clear alternative. Hence, they opted to leap forward, or rather leap into the abyss. Fontana's book details how perestroika quickly went from being a reform process to an out-of-control process plagued by nonsense, contradictions, powerlessness, and much improvising in order to intercept problems that emerged in every area of Soviet influence. It was a critical error in judgment that had an undesired outcome for its initiators, and would later be used to the advantage of a few new *apparatchiki*. Thus began the colossal theft dubbed "privatization", the proportions of which had never been seen before.

The embrace of neo-liberal capitalism

The book clearly relativizes the interpretive framework of the end of communism, which postulates that the overall citizenry of communist states "embraced" the Western model of capitalism as the only possible means of obtaining freedom and democracy. People thought that they would gain well-being

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ... CONTINUED

event, it's ironic that for so many, Khodorkovsky is a symbol of the fight for democracy and freedom when he amassed his fortune by systematically ripping off assets that belonged to all Russians."

And what about determinism?

"Hiding behind this determinism that we find in studying transitions is the fact that, during the course of many of these processes, atrocities were committed that did not serve any democracy-related need, and they are legitimized simply by demonizing the communist past. All this to justify a hegemonic discourse that is also a weapon of social control."

Does the academic world buy into this?

"The academic world does not exist apart from it. Every day it is more and more connected to political and economic powers. There

is a conservative orthodoxy, a defender of the established system, that increasingly shuns other interpretations. The competition to obtain financing and the challenges of surviving in the academic world all play a part in keeping these prevailing interpretations out there."

What is the role of history in science?

"Any analysis of a political and social phenomenon is always a historical analysis. Models that are built to predict the future can only be validated in the short term, never in the long term. What sets apart historians from political scientists or economists is that historians are always analyzing from a greater distance and can always connect their narratives to social and cultural change. So the historian's contribution is necessary to understand the present. From their

and new spaces of liberty with the change in systems, but the actual result was different. Ensuring the well-being of the people was the last thing to be considered in the transition from a planned economy to a free market. Fontana thus opposes the deterministic thesis that the general decline in well-being in the majority of Eastern states was a “necessary evil” or an inevitable effect inherent in any transition towards a free market economy. During the privatization process, a great many irregularities resulted from the combination of dramatic inequality and loss of social services, especially in Russia. This was predictable in a situation where in just a few months all the wealth of such an enormous country was transferred to private hands at bargain prices. These violations did away with most social services and the savings of 118 million Russian citizens, and gave way to the creation of a new oligarchic class that held most of the state’s power during Boris Yeltsin’s presidency (Chapter 15).

The import of neoliberal capitalism in Eastern Europe is in line with the process of deteriorating living standards that began in the 1970s and that has continued ever since. The plan that was made for privatization was not the only conceivable formula, as indicated by different economists in both the East and the West. The most orthodox form of this neoliberal economic policy was, however, touted as the only possible way – the triumph of what Fontana calls “actually existing capitalism” in the East – in the context of globalization (Chapter 19).

The failure to achieve parliamentary

democracy with a Western slant also carries global significance. Parallel to social deterioration, many states are experiencing a general democratic regression. Civil society is increasingly fragmented and not even close to holding a balance of power. Political and economic control is in fewer hands today than it was in 1950, although there are technically more democratic systems than ever before. In post-communist states, communism’s legacy was a political and moral vacuum that has left few obstacles to the creation of phony democracies subject to great oligarchic powers.

One of the book’s strong points is the way in which Fontana is consistently able to link geopolitical dimensions to their impact on the state, both in the political-economic and in the socio-cultural arena, while considering the fundamental importance of ideology to them all. In its nineteen chapters, Fontana convincingly elucidates the real motivations behind the regime changes, coups d’état, economic policy shifts, and wars that characterized the period. One can only hope that his work will be translated into English without delay. ✖

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vantage point, historians can help people think historically, a necessary ingredient for a critical analysis of the present, and to be able to confront prophecies such as Fukuyama’s. The other side of history is that it can be used as a vehicle to try to sell us any political product, like political irrationality and its frequent supposedly historical pretexts, aimed at loading voters with prejudice. Just look at the tone of the electoral campaign in the US and its constant references to socialism. As my teacher Pierre Vilar¹ would say, ‘We have to think historically, so people can think for themselves.’” ✖

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references

- 1 Pierre Vilar (1906–2003). Hispanist; considered one of the great authorities on the history of Catalonia.

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relations in cross-border areas: The role of Szczecin as central place in relation to the divided Pomeranian hinterland”.

University cooperation on the agenda

FIFTY SCHOLARS, practitioners, and supporters of past and present Baltic Sea region academic cooperation met at the University of Turku on October 28, 2013, to discuss the possibilities for future cooperation, in particular in the context of the 2009 European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Participants agreed that the region has worked as a kind of social laboratory for new regionalism, multi-level governance, and soft power. The success of previous cooperation can be validated by the intention of the EU to use the EUSBSR as a model case for future macro-regional projects.

Longstanding challenges such as environmental degradation, resource management, and transport security have been infused with new relevance as the Baltic Sea has begun to play a more significant role for Russia’s fossil fuel exports and hence for the global economy. From the discussions at the conference, the new EU-level interest in the region as well as increased Russian attention to the Baltic Sea was a strong indicator of the contemporary relevance and future importance of Baltic Sea cooperation. ✖

CARL MARKLUND

Note: Read the report in full at our website.

MAIDAN 2.0 LETTER FROM KYIV

“**A**ppearances are often deceptive, and the Kyiv Maidan 2.0 might be an example of this. Once again we can observe the tents where protesters stay overnight in the frosty weather, and the stage in the middle of the Maidan where political leaders and public figures deliver speeches, and where musicians perform for the cheerful crowd. Only the colors of the flags are different. Today’s Maidan is not as peaceful and festive as it was nine years ago. The escalation of tensions began on Friday night, November 29, when two thousand riot police troops violently beat a few hundred students who stood overnight in the square with a modest demand to the government that they sign the Association Agreement with the EU. The video recordings of that “special operation” eventually emerged on the Web and shocked many. The clear goal of the police was not to disperse, or remove, or even arrest the protesters but primarily to “teach them a lesson” – to encircle and beat all of them with the entirety of their wrath, including even those who fell down or tried to escape.

This evoked widespread indignation. Thousands of people flooded the streets on Sunday, December 1, with more radical demands that the government step down, that the police officers and their superiors involved in the beating be prosecuted, and that early presidential elections be held. The government responded with equivocal apologies and unequivocal threats, but also – with something that many believe was a staged provocation. A few dozen masked thugs joined protesters at the presidential administration and brutally attacked the police with stones, chains, and gas sprays. Surprisingly (or perhaps not at all) it was regular police, with no special equipment, who were exposed to the provocateurs. Only after the violence was properly filmed and the thugs disappeared did the riot police that hid in the building interfere, crushing everybody in the narrow street, including journalists and bystanders.

TODAY, ON DECEMBER 10, as I write this article, the situation is unpredictable. Whereas the Western diplomatic efforts seek to broker a peace and mediate negotiations between the government and opposition, the president, Viktor Yanukovich, is apparently turning to Moscow for help, which as always comes at a high price. And the Ukrainian opposition, even though ready to negotiate, has raised three preliminary conditions that might be unacceptable to the pro-Yanukovich and especially the pro-Moscow hawks: to free all the political prisoners, to remove all the riot police from the streets, and to fire and prosecute the minister of the interior and the subordinates who were involved in the beating of peaceful protesters. Whatever the outcome, three conclusions can be already drawn.

First of all, Ukrainian society proved once again its resilience, its ability to self-organize and act mostly peacefully, despite various provocations – both from the government and from within, from the radical and presumably anti-government groups who are broadly suspected of being in cooperation with the government. Most importantly, both the 2004 and the 2013 protests were clearly value-driven. People went in the streets not for bread, higher salaries, or a populist leader but for their own dignity, justice, and hope to live like they were “in Europe”. They still try (and will try in the future, whatever happens today) to complete the unfinished revolution that swept away the corrupt authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989–1991 but stopped reluctantly at Ukraine’s western border. If the West fails, once again, to properly understand this message and to respond adequately, we will probably witness another cycle of authoritarian *Gleichschaltung*, stagnation and, inevitably, popular

resistance and upheaval. Even though a substantial part of Ukrainian society looks in the opposite direction and is largely entrenched in their Soviet values, the very nature of those values makes their civic mobilization low and unsuitable for the government. Moreover, all the opinion surveys reveal a strong correlation between the respon-

dents’ young age and their commitment to European values.

Secondly, the unprecedented monopolization of power and concentration of resources carried out by Yanukovich and his inner circle (the “Family”) within the past four years did not make their position stronger than that of Leonid Kuchma who had pursued more flexible “divide and conquer” tactics. Today Yanukovich faces resistance not only from civil society and entire regions, which encompass virtually half of the country; he also seems to get very lukewarm support from fellow oligarchs. So far, all the major TV channels they control provide very balanced, non-partisan coverage of events – a striking difference from 2004 when all the main channels, until the revolution erupted, aired extremely dirty propagandistic materials against the opposition. The tough control of Yanukovich’s close associates over the law-enforcement agencies may tempt him to use even more radical measures against the protesters, especially of his Moscow advisers and provocateurs push him in this direction. The victory will be, however, pyrrhic. It is easy to win with bayonets but very difficult to sit on them. Russia may help, of course. But even if Yanukovich cedes all sovereignty to Mr. Putin, the Kremlin would encounter the same problem with Ukraine as it had with Hungary, Poland, the Baltic states and some other indigestible regions of the empire. They may delay Ukraine’s westward drift, but it will hardly stop it.

AND, THIRDLY, the Ukrainian opposition is in a weaker position today than it was nine years ago when the “Orange” mobilization was merely a continuation of an electoral campaign, when the electoral fraud was largely expected and protest actions were well prepared, when Viktor Yushchenko as the common leader had an undisputable authority over all factions, and the incumbent Leonid Kuchma was a lame duck with a vested interest in a safe retirement. Now, the protests erupted from below and apparently surprised even the leaders of opposition who seem not yet to have a common leader, a unified position, nor clear tactics. The presence of the radical nationalistic party Svoboda in their ranks also makes their position more vulnerable, even though Oleh Tiahnybok, Svoboda’s leader, has declared support for nonviolent struggle. This means that their negotiations with Yanukovich’s regime will not be easy and that the international mediation is even more needed today than ever.

The West would certainly not be able to solve the multiple problems that would remain. But the West may help to facilitate the conditions for problem solving itself, especially when the Kremlin spares no efforts to do the opposite. ❌

mykola riabchuk



Opposition rally at
Shevchenko Park.