

BALTIC WORLDS

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Speaking up!

- Rap music in the Balkans
- LGBT in Lithuania
- Verbal extremism in Russia

also in this issue

Illustration: Karin Sunvisson

GEORGIAN ART SCENE / ROMA AND THE HOLOCAUST / GREEN BRIDGE OF VILNIUS / EUROPEANIZATION IN UKRAINE

editorial

New voices. Echoing voices

Rappers have become postwar public intellectuals who aim to provoke social change and contribute to the progress of these societies after a period of violent conflict. Dragana Cvetanović argues, in her peer-reviewed article, that Balkan hip-hop is a form of cultural activism that mobilizes people for social change: “Rap lyrics and the public discussion led by rap artists might be regarded as the micro public sphere encompassing younger generations”.

New voices are raised calling for change. Something is happening. Is it spreading?

Ausra Padskocimaite reports on Baltic Pride in Lithuania and shows how, slowly but steadily, the LGBT movement is spreading and winning new allies. In addition to younger people, Baltic Pride has also attracted families with children and even some elderly people. As a result, more LGBT persons were able to join this year’s Baltic Pride without fear of retribution.

There are also other voices addressing the masses: voices that could be interpreted as challenging democratic values such as tolerance. And yet, isn’t the ultimate sign of democracy the right to free speech? It appears to be a fine line. In a peer-reviewed article, Dmitry Dubrovskiy discusses the use of linguistic experts in Russian courts to determine whether texts are xenophobic statements or whether they have a hidden agenda and are agitation and propaganda in disguise. This method, according to Dubrovskiy, “places the expert in the uncomfortable position of being either a ‘bard of common sense’ or a ‘constructor of extremism’” – to say nothing of the question of the limits of freedom of speech.

The role of the researcher is also discussed

by David Gaunt, who reflects on the ethical and moral dilemmas scholars can experience when they encounter the standpoints of political activists: in particular, when conducting research into genocide – and not least when the aim is to build a collective memory for all of Europe’s Roma on the basis of the experience of genocide during World War II. In a peer-reviewed article, he discusses whether some voices are excluded from the making of history and if researchers are contributing to silencing the past?

IN GEORGIA the past is silenced without resistance. Demolition has become a common practice in the center of the Georgian capital. Francesco Martínez also finds an ignorance of the past in the Georgian art scene. The new generation is not repairing anything; instead they are starting from scratch, constructing a new art scene through approximations. Martínez sees the act of repairing as both a practical act of restoration, and a moral decision to remember.

In this issue of *Baltic Worlds* we try our best to silence neither the past nor the present; to listen to new voices calling for change as well as the multitude of echoing voices telling us about different pasts. ✕

Ninna Mörner

in this issue



Partisan war in Lithuania

“Some partisans used what must be described as terrorist measures when they killed the families of the defendants.”

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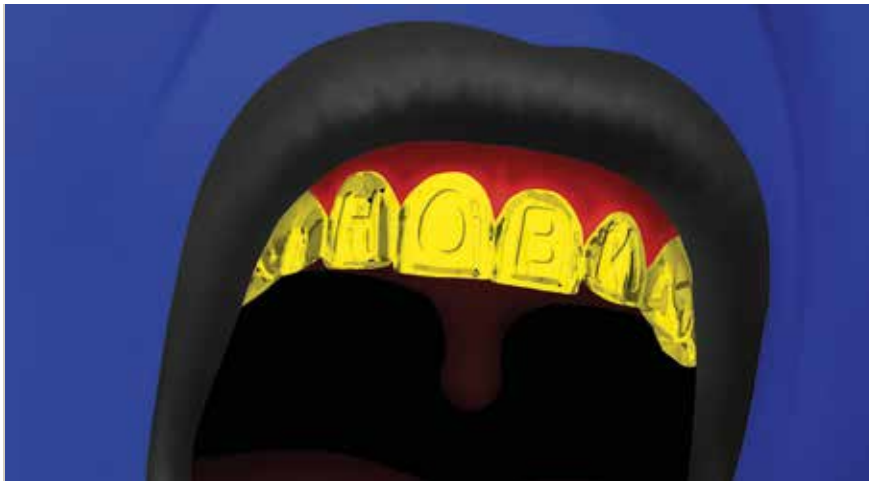


Fashion in the Soviet Union

“Soviet fashion became organized to respond to needs for hygiene, comfort, durability, and beauty.”

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Welcome aboard, Thomas Andrén

Baltic Worlds welcomes Thomas Andrén, associate professor of Marine Quaternary Science at Södertörn University as a new member of the Scholarly



Editorial Council. His main research interests are quaternary stratigraphy and paleoclimatology, sedimentology and, perhaps above all, the quaternary development of the Baltic Sea basin.

"If we understand the geological history better, we also understand to what extent

and how we, the inhabitants of the drainage area, affect this sensitive ecosystem today."

He is currently leading three international research projects. *Baltic Worlds* is looking forward to adding Thomas Andrén's expertise.

At the same time we would like to express our gratitude to Monica Hammer, Environmental Studies, Södertörn University, who has been an active member of the Scholarly Editorial Council since the start of the journal *Baltic Worlds*.

LGBT RIGHTS IN POST-CONDITIONALITY LITHUANIA ONE STEP FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

by **Ausra Padskocimaite**

On June 18, 2016 a march for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rights, known as the Baltic Pride parade, took place in Lithuania's capital, Vilnius. It was the third time that such an event has been organized in Lithuania during its 26 years of independence and 12 years of European Union (EU) membership. In contrast to the previous Baltic Pride parades (in 2010 and 2013), this time the Municipality of Vilnius did not contest the details of the event, and for the first time it could take place without the intervention of national courts. This was also the largest of the three parades with 2,000 to 3,000 participants marching through Gediminas Avenue, the main street of Vilnius.¹

The Baltic Pride took place a few days after the Orlando nightclub shooting in the United States. The news of the shooting resulted in numerous hateful reactions, mainly in the form of online comments, but this seemed to encourage people to show support for the tolerant atmosphere manifested at the Baltic Pride event.² "Many people decided to show solidarity and took part in the march", noted Birute Sabatauskaite, director of the Lithuanian Center for Human Rights.³ In addition to younger people, this year's Baltic Pride march also attracted families with children and even some elderly persons. As a result, more LGBT persons were able to join without fear of retribution. In contrast to the previous pride marches held in Vilnius, this time reactions were not as hostile and, according to the police, there were no major incidents. In the words of one participant: "In 2010, I felt like I was going to some war, there were large metal fences, police on horses, loud screaming from the protesters; this year it was completely different – people were marching, and I did not even see that many aggressive protesters, many people were simply curious."⁴ Thus it seems that, for the first time in Lithua-

nia's history, an event celebrating LGBT rights resembled similar events in more progressive countries.

The question remains, however, whether the changing face of the Baltic Pride represents a changing situation for LGBT persons in Lithuania. In 2012, Inga Aalia and Kjetil Duvold described the situation of the LGBT minority in Lithuania as "fear and loathing", pointing out homophobic attitudes and a lack of tolerance among the population and the political elites, as well as attempts by the latter to amend laws and ban public events promoting tolerance of LGBT persons.⁵ According to the International Lesbian and Gay, Trans and Intersex Association's (ILGA) ranking of 49 countries, in 2012 Lithuania had a higher rating than such countries as Italy, Estonia, Greece, Poland, Cyprus, Latvia, and Malta.⁶ This year Lithuania was ranked 38th – the second worst among the EU countries (its neighbor Latvia was the worst EU member).⁷ For comparison, Malta was the best and Azerbaijan was the worst place to be an LGBT person in the past 12 months.

WHAT SHOULD ONE make of Lithuania's deteriorating position in ILGA's ranking? First of all, a comparison in time is not always straightforward since changes in methodology are difficult to account for. Second, if one compares Lithuania's standing in 2012 and 2016, one sees not so much deterioration as a lack of progress. From a comparative perspective, Lithuania's legal framework for LGBT rights remains quite limited and does not permit, for example, marriage or registered partnership. However, in order to join the EU, Lithuania had to fulfill the membership criteria which, among other things, required "stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities."⁸ Motivated by the EU's membership incentive, Lithuania created a legal and institu-



PHOTO: AUGUSTAS DIDZGALVIS/LGL ARCHIVE

tional framework, which granted some rights for LGBT persons (such as decriminalization of homosexual relations, equal age of consent, and prohibition of discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation).⁹ In addition, Article 2.27 of the Lithuanian Civil Code established the right of an individual to gender reassignment, if it is medically possible.

Yet surveys indicate that the formal protection of LGBT rights did not translate into a dramatic improvement on the ground. Nor did it have an immediate effect on Lithuanians' tolerance of LGBT persons. According to a survey, carried out by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2012, nearly two-thirds (61%) of respondents in Lithuania felt discriminated against or harassed because of their sexual orientation (60% in Croatia, 44% in Estonia, 48% in Latvia; EU average: 47%).¹⁰ In the same questionnaire, 70% of respondents said that they avoid holding hands in public with a same-sex partner for fear or being assaulted, threatened or harassed (78% in Romania, 63% in Estonia; EU average: 53%). When asked about the awareness campaigns addressing discrimination against LGB persons, two-thirds of Lithuanian respondents answered affirmatively (81% in Estonia; EU average: 65%).

According to a 2015 Eurobarometer survey, only one-third of Lithuanians thought that there was nothing wrong with sexual relations between two persons of the same sex (the lowest score of 23% in Latvia, 40% in Estonia; EU average: 67%) and around one-fourth agreed that same-sex marriage should be allowed throughout Europe (the lowest score of 17% in Bulgaria, 31% in Estonia; EU average: 61%). A slightly higher number of Lithuanian respondents (44%)

thought that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals should have the same rights as heterosexuals, but this score was still well below the EU average of 71%.¹⁰ When asked about working with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person, 44% of Lithuanian respondents were "uncomfortable" (the highest number among the EU countries), whereas 35% were "comfortable". The majority of Lithuanians (79%) reported that they would not be comfortable if their child was in love with a person of the same sex. This can be compared to 51% in Estonia, 73% in Latvia, and 32% as the EU average. Interestingly, Lithuanians remain supportive of the abstract idea of human rights, with 88% agreeing that "human rights" is a positive thing (albeit one-fourth argue that human rights should protect "normal people" only).¹²

DESPITE THESE NUMBERS I would argue that there are reasons for cautious optimism. To begin with, Lithuania is a member of the EU and the Council of Europe (CoE) and a party to numerous international human rights treaties that protect principles of equality and non-discrimination, freedom of assembly and expression, the right to respect for private and family life, and other rights.¹³ The Constitution of Lithuania establishes that ratified international treaties form a part of Lithuania's legal system, and in case of a conflict with a national law, priority is given to

the norms of the treaty.¹⁴ Although the majority of these treaties do not directly address the rights of LGBT persons, such protection is granted through their interpretation by different human rights courts and committees. For example, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg, which monitors

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Baltic Pride Summer 2016.

PHOTO: AUGUSTAS DIDZGALVIS/LGL ARCHIVE

states' compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), last year decided that Italy was in breach of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) because it failed to provide legal protection to same-sex relationships (*Oliari and Others v. Italy*).

Research shows that the institutionalization of international norms into domestic law is not inconsequential and that international institutions can have strong domestic effects.¹⁵ By acceding to different human rights treaties, Lithuania provided domestic stakeholders with the necessary tools and a legitimate voice to challenge its future behavior. For example, the Lithuanian Gay League (LGL), the first Lithuanian NGO advocating LGBT rights, was established in 1993, but became visible only after 2004. Today it is the main actor litigating on behalf of the LGBT community.

Litigation, however, requires not only domestic actors willing to devote their time and resources to legal cases, but also competent courts to decide such cases. As identified in the literature on human rights change, "one of the most important conditions for litigation to be a potentially useful strategy to enforce rights is judicial independence."¹⁶ Such courts are able to decide controversial cases independently and to withstand pressure from both society and political elites. In the case of Lithuania, the role of domestic courts has been mixed. On the one hand, several important decisions facilitated the implementation of LGBT rights, especially with respect to the freedom of peaceful assembly in case of the first two Vilnius Baltic Pride parades. In 2013, the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania decided in favor of the LGL, which for the first time requested that the Baltic Pride march should take place in the central street of Vilnius. The Supreme Administrative Court made its decision in light of the ECHR reiterating the case-law of the Strasbourg Court, which had established that "the state has positive obligations to secure that all groups, including those belonging to minorities and holding unpopular views, can take advantage of the freedom of assembly."¹⁶ On the other hand, not all decisions of the courts have been favorable to the applicants. For example, in 2014 a case was brought regarding comments about

a picture of two kissing men published by one of them on his Facebook account. The LGL, which brought the complaint before a court, argued that the comments were discriminatory and provided grounds for a criminal investigation according to Article 170 of the Lithuanian Criminal Code.¹⁸ Two different courts dismissed the request arguing that traditional family values are dominant in Lithuania and that by uploading such a photo without full privacy settings the person might have tried on purpose to tease or shock people holding different views and thus himself encouraged negative comments.¹⁹ Since these decisions, the LGL has submitted a complaint to the ECtHR. Another questionable decision of the Lithuanian courts concerns a dispute regarding the publication of the fairy-tale book *Gintarinė Sirdis* ("Amber Heart") which featured stories about LGBT persons. In April 2014, the Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics decided that the stories contained information harmful to minors (because they could be seen as encouraging marriage and family otherwise than as stipulated in the Constitution and the Civil Code of Lithuania) and recommended limiting the accessibility of the book as well as marking it as unsuitable for children under the age of 14 years. The author of the book brought a lawsuit before the Lithuanian courts complaining that the decision by the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences to temporarily stop the distribution of the book was discriminatory. Both the district and county courts decided to dismiss the applicant's complaint. The courts argued, *inter alia*, that the distributor was merely following the law (and the recommendation of the Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics) which requires minors to be protected from harmful information. In its decision, the Vilnius County Court stated that limits placed on the freedom of expression were lawful and that the September 28, 2011, ruling of the Constitutional Court should be interpreted as defining a family as a man and a woman, not persons of the same sex.²⁰ The complaint has now been submitted to the Supreme Court of Lithuania. Finally, the Lithuanian courts were also criticized for their handling of discrimination cases because of their willingness "to accept blatantly false reasons for dismissal rather than address the actual homophobic motives."²¹

SUPRANATIONAL COURTS such as the ECtHR provide a possibility for victims to seek justice when domestic legal systems are not adequate. However, the effectiveness of these institutions depends on how countries respond to their decisions. States parties to the ECHR have a legal obligation to comply with judgments delivered in cases against them. In order to fully comply with such rulings countries might have to do as little as to pay monetary compensation to the applicant or as much as to amend the national constitution. The existing ECHR system does not have a strong enforcement mechanism and is dependent on the political will of the states to comply with the judgments of the ECtHR. However, even in cases of noncompliance or partial compliance, the ruling of an international court can draw attention to problems that were previously ignored and provide a ground for putting pressure on a country to improve its human rights record.

Some scholars argue that litigation might not be the optimal

way to promote social change and might lead to a backlash. In Gerald Rosenberg's view, legal solutions cannot solve political problems, and without political support, court decisions will not produce social change.²² In Lithuania, the 2011 ruling of the Lithuanian Constitutional Court which found the State Family Policy Concept unconstitutional was followed by the proposal to amend the Constitution in order to directly link family and marriage.²³ Despite the fact that the draft amendment was not endorsed by the Government or the Parliamentary Committee of Legal Affairs, on June 28, 2016, Lithuania's Parliament, the Seimas, voted in favor of the draft that would amend Article 38 of the Lithuanian Constitution.²⁴ Yet it remains to be seen whether the amendment will become reality, as Article 147 of the Constitution requires that the Seimas vote for the amendment twice at an interval of at least three months and that at least two thirds of all MPs support the amendment.²⁵

In addition to pressure from a growing civil society within Lithuania, naming and shaming from outside can be decisive. The case of the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information, which defined public information promoting homosexual, bisexual, or polygamous relations as detrimental to minors, demonstrates just that. After the Seimas amended the law in 2009, it was criticized by international human rights NGOs, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.²⁶ The European Parliament (EP) passed a resolution condemning the law as violating the EU's and international human rights obligations. According to the EP's resolution of September 17, 2009: "The EU is a community of values based on human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, equality, and non-discrimination. The EP invites the President of the Republic of Lithuania and authorities to ensure that its national laws are compatible with human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in international and European law."²⁷ As a result, a direct reference to homosexual relations was removed from the text of the law.²⁸

The Law on the Protection of Minors is not the only piece of legislation that attracted criticism from abroad. Since 2012, Lithuanian MPs have been attempting to establish fines for showing disrespect for constitutional moral and family values. The author of the amendment openly admits that the aim is among other things to establish administrative responsibility for organizing events detrimental to public morals such as "marches and parades by homosexuals."²⁹ In 2015, Lithuania's prime minister, Algirdas Butkevicius, criticized the proposed administrative fines saying that the MPs have not evaluated their effect on Lithuanian society and Lithuania's international image. According to Butkevicius, laws that contradict human rights as well as national and international law should not be discussed.³⁰ In the end, the vote on the law did not take place, as the majority of parliamentarians voted in favor of the Liberal Movement Political Group's proposal to remove the question from the agenda.

Yet, there are also examples, which illustrate the limits of international

pressure. In 2007, the ECtHR decided a case against Lithuania concerning the rights of transgender persons. In its ruling, the ECtHR found that a legislative gap with respect to gender reassignment surgeries left the applicant "in a situation of distressing uncertainty vis-à-vis his private life and the recognition of his true identity," which violated individual rights under Article 8 of the ECHR (§ 59–60, *L. v. Lithuania*). Although Lithuania paid monetary damages to the applicant, who was able to complete gender reassignment surgery abroad, it did not make legislative changes. Despite continuous pressure from the Committee of Ministers of the CoE as well as criticism from the civil society, Lithuania still did not comply with the judgment. On the contrary, in 2013 a small group of MPs suggested banning gender reassignment surgery. In their view, such operations are very controversial and Lithuanian society is not ready to accept the practice. Moreover, according to the MPs, the proposed amendment would "protect the Lithuanian state from new cases arising before the ECtHR."³¹ Interestingly, Lithuania does not openly refuse to comply with the ruling and has even created a working group to address the problem, although one might ask to what extent there is a genuine commitment to finding a solution. Perhaps the effectiveness of naming and shaming depends on the actor in question (the parliament or the government), but more research would be helpful in understanding how this mechanism works. Notably, the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference has submitted its comments to the working group, which exemplifies the role that the Lithuanian Catholic Church plays in politics and lawmaking.

WHILE SOME STUDIES have shown that LGBT activism might play a central role in changing popular attitudes, others have emphasized the role of political elites. According to some scholars, "elites are likely to have an especially strong impact when the issue of political tolerance arises."³² Marcus et al. argue that people will pay attention to the behavior of political elites both with respect to information on what is happening and on how they should respond to issues of threat and tolerance.³³ Since Lithuania's accession to the EU, only a few Lithuanian politicians have shown support for LGBT rights. According to the FRA survey in 2012, 58% of respondents thought that offensive language about LGBT persons by politicians was "very widespread" in Lithuania. Moreover, while this year's Baltic Pride parade attracted many politicians from abroad (including Ann Linde, the Swedish Minister for the EU Affairs and Trade, Alice Bah Kuhnke, the Swedish Minister of Culture and Democracy, Israel's ambassadors Amir Maimon, Norway's ambassador Dag Malmer Halvorsen, the vice-president of the EU Parliament Ulrike Lunacek and others), only a handful of Lithuanian politicians joined the march.³⁴ The mayor of Vilnius and the leader of the Liberal Movement party, Remigijus Simasius shared a video welcoming the event, but cited personal reasons for non-participation. Following the Baltic Pride events, "15 min", which is one of the

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most popular news websites in Lithuania, “named and shamed” Lithuanian politicians for not participating in the event.³⁵

In the upcoming parliamentary election on October 9, only two out of fourteen political parties (the Liberal Movement Party and the Lithuanian Green Party) in their election programmes mention support for same-sex partnerships. The only openly gay MP, Rokas Zilinskas (of the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats party), voted in favor of the amendment to Article 38 of the Constitution. With respect to same-sex partnerships, Zilinskas has recently stated on his Facebook page that, “the state can but does not have the obligation to support same-sex relationships, call them family, and grant them legal protection.” It is of course impossible to estimate the precise relationship between the behavior of politicians and public attitudes, but some surveys seem to indicate that the level of tolerance in Lithuania has decreased. For example, according to the Eurobarometer survey (2015), the percentage of Lithuanian respondents who are comfortable or moderately comfortable with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person in the highest elected political position has decreased compared to 2012, and as many as 59% of Lithuanians reported being uncomfortable.³⁶

TO CONCLUDE, the EU’s policy of membership conditionality played an important role in creating Lithuania’s formal framework for LGBT rights protection, since acceptance of homosexuality at the time was low and the demand for change did not come “from below”.³⁷ According to “the spiral model” of human rights change proposed by Risse et al. the process almost always begins with some instrumentally or strategically motivated adaptation by national governments to growing domestic and international pressures, but often “sets in motion a process of identity transformation, so that norms initially adopted for instrumental reasons are later maintained for reasons of belief and identity.”³⁸ Yet, it is also possible that a backlash will occur against the unpopular norms introduced solely because of the EU pressure. According to Epstein and Sedelmeier, as the incentive structure for the new member states changes, we would expect deterioration in post-accession compliance with costly pre-accession demands of international institutions.³⁹ Given Lithuania’s Soviet past, its Catholic identity and a lack of debate preceding changes in the area of LGBT rights, post-accession resistance was hardly surprising. Instead of contributing to a more tolerant and open Lithuania, the majority of politicians attempted to limit the scope of LGBT rights through new legislation, and the few attempts to actually broaden the protection, for example, by legalizing same-sex partnerships, were unsuccessful. The existing legal norms did not produce a “culture-shifting” effect and popular attitudes remained as a result largely negative.⁴⁰

Even though the EU’s conditionality *per se* did not make Lithuanian people more tolerant, it may have created the conditions for winning hearts and minds in the long run. Despite the fact that the majority of LGBT persons continue to hide their sexual or gender identity (in 2012, 81% did so at school and 55% at work), the problems they face are no longer invisible, and even backlash-like developments contribute to sparking a de-

bate. As one Lithuanian LGBT activist told me: “The positive development is that we are talking about it – there isn’t a day that you don’t find an article on the news related to LGBT. The more often people talk, the more often they encounter, the more often they rethink their fears and views, the better; it’s a process – the ball is rolling and we can’t stop it, it’s just a matter of time...”⁴¹ In Sweden, which is often regarded as one of the most progressive countries in the world in terms of LGBT rights, it took 65 years from the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1944 to the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2009. Hopefully, events such as this year’s Baltic Pride will send a positive message to those still living in the closet in Lithuania. ✖

Ausra Padsokocimaite is a PhD candidate at UCRS Uppsala Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University.

references

- 1 Around 300 participants in 2010 and between 400 and 800 in 2013.
- 2 The expected number of participants was around 1,000 but some sources report that as many as 3,000 people participated. After strong criticism from human rights organizations and some public figures (e.g., Andrius Tapinas), in the beginning of August the Prosecutor’s Office decided to start pre-trial investigations regarding some of the comments, which could be qualified as inciting hatred and violence against a group or a person because of sexual orientation.
- 3 Interview with the author.
- 4 Laima Vaige, PhD candidate, Uppsala University; interview with the author.
- 5 Inga Aalia and Kjetil Duvold, “Fear and Loathing in Lithuania,” *Baltic Worlds* 2(2012): 40–47.
- 6 The ranking takes into account countries’ progress in legal protection and policies with respect to equality and non-discrimination, family life, hate crime and speech, legal gender recognition and bodily integrity, freedom of assembly, association and expression, and asylum. ILGA-Europe, Rainbow Map 2012: http://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/Attachments/ilga-europe_rainbow_map_side_a.pdf.
- 7 The third Baltic State, Estonia, which was the first post-Soviet state to legalize same-sex partnerships in 2014 (the Registered Partnership Act came into force on 1 January 2016), was 22nd. ILGA-Europe, Rainbow Map 2016: <http://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/rainbow-europe/2016>.
- 8 http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm.
- 9 The place of LGBT rights in the EU’s membership requirements was somewhat ambiguous. With respect to acquis conditionality, at the time of the accessions in 2004 and 2007, only one directive addressed the issue of LGBT rights (the Employment Equality Directive, 2000/78/EC, addressed discrimination based on religion or belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation in employment and occupation). In the 1990s, the European Parliament passed a number of resolutions calling for equal rights for homosexual persons and recommending the Commission “to take into consideration respect and observance of the human rights of gays and lesbians when negotiating the accession of applicant countries”, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A51998IP0824>.
- 10 This was the highest number in the EU. FRA LGBT Survey, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-lgbt-survey-2012?mdq1=theme&mdq2=3507>.
- 11 The percentage of persons who support equal rights of homosexuals and bisexuals was not very different in other countries of the CEE:

- 44% in Estonia, 48% in Croatia, 42% in Latvia, 49% in Hungary, 37% in Poland. "Discrimination in the EU in 2015": <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2077>.
- 12 "Vilmorus" survey, September 5–15, 2013 (funded by a stipend from the Swedish Institute's Baltic Sea Region Cooperation).
 - 13 Lithuania is a party to such treaties as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the European Social Charter, etc.
 - 14 Article 138, the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania; Article 11(2), Law on International Treaties of the Republic of Lithuania.
 - 15 Xinyuan Dai, "The 'Compliance Gap' and the Efficacy of International Human Rights Institutions," in *The Persistent Power of Human Rights: From Commitment to Compliance*, eds. T. Risse et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
 - 16 Beth A. Simmons, *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 132.
 - 17 The Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania, Case No. A-858-2475-13, July 23, 2013.
 - 18 Article 170 bans public mocking, contempt, incitement to discrimination, hate, and violence towards various groups on a number of grounds including sexual orientation.
 - 19 Ruling of February 18, 2015.
 - 20 The Lithuanian Constitutional Court, Case No. 21/2008, September 28, 2011: <http://www.lrkt.lt/en/court-acts/search/170/ta1112/content>. In the ruling, the Court established that although marriage has an exceptional value in the life of society, it is only one of the grounds for the creation of family relations: "this does not mean that the Constitution, inter alia the provisions of Paragraph 1 of Article 38 thereof, does not protect or defend families other than those founded on the basis of marriage, inter alia the relationship of a man and a woman living together without concluding a marriage, which is based on the permanent bonds of emotional affection, reciprocal understanding, responsibility, respect, shared upbringing of the children, and similar ones..." Note that the ruling does not refer to same-sex relationships.
 - 21 The LGL and The Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights, *Human Rights Violations of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People in Lithuania: A Shadow Report*, July 2012, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/ngos/LGBT_Lithuania_HRC105.pdf.
 - 22 Gerald Rosenberg, "Courting Disaster: Looking for Change in All the Wrong Places," 54 *Drake Law Review* 795 (2005).
 - 23 Currently, Article 38 of the Lithuanian Constitution stipulates: "The family shall be the basis of society and the State. Family, motherhood, fatherhood, and childhood shall be under the protection and care of the State. Marriage shall be concluded upon the free mutual consent of man and woman..." The draft amendment (No. XIIP-3981) was registered for the first time on December 15, 2011 (signed by 98 MPs). The first voting on June 19, 2012, did not reach the threshold of 94 votes (short of just one vote). A very similar draft was registered in 2013 with the support of 108 MPs (No. XIIP-1217). The proposed amendment aims to add that family is created on the basis of marriage (which is between a man and a woman), but can also arise from motherhood and fatherhood. Moreover, marriage, family, motherhood, fatherhood, and childhood shall be under the protection and care of the State.
 - 24 The reasoning of the Committee as well as comments and suggestions is available here (in Lithuanian): http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=1150256.
 - 25 Elections to the Seimas will be held on October 9, 2016.
 - 26 Amnesty International, *Lithuanian Parliament Passes Homophobic Law*, July 14, 2009, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2009/07/lithuanian-parliament-passes-homophobic-law-20090714/>. Human Rights Watch, *Lithuania: Reject Censorship Law*, June 24, 2009, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/06/24/lithuania-reject-censorship-law>.
 - 27 EP resolution on the Lithuanian Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effects of Public Information, September 17, 2009, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2009-0019&language=EN>.
 - 28 The law remains problematic since Article 4(16) describes as detrimental information "expressing contempt for family values, encouraging the concept of entry into marriage and creation of family values other than stipulated in the Constitution and the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania."
 - 29 Explanatory note of May 29, 2012, http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=425639&p_tr2=2.
 - 30 Parlamentarai nusigreze nuo baudu uz "seimos niekinima" [Parliamentarians turned away from fines for "family contempt"], <http://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/parlamentarai-nusigreze-nuo-baudu-uz-seimos-niekinima.htm>.
 - 31 Seimo nariai svarstys siulyma uzdrausti lyties keitima [Members of the Seimas will discuss the suggestion to ban gender reassignment]: <http://www.delfi.lt/sveikata/sveikatos-naujienos/seimo-nariai-svarstys-siulyma-uzdrausti-lyties-keitima.d?id=61461130>.
 - 32 G. E. Marcus et al., *With Malice Towards Some: How People Make Civil Liberties Judgments*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 225.
 - 33 Ibid.
 - 34 Neither the President, nor the PM, nor the speaker of the Seimas participated. However, a few days before the march, the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on its homepage published a declaration in support of the 2016 Baltic Pride parade, which was signed by twenty-two foreign embassies. Common Declaration in Support of the Baltic Pride 2016, <https://www.urm.lt/default/en/news/common-declaration-in-support-of-the-baltic-pride-2016>.
 - 35 Skirmantas Malinauskas: Penki didžiausi eityniui "Baltic pride" netiketumai [Skirmantas Malinauskas: Five Biggest Surprises of the Baltic Pride], <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/komentarai/penki-didziausi-baltic-pride-netiketumai-500-643829>.
 - 36 Similar numbers were reported in Romania, Bulgaria, and Latvia; the EU average was 21%. "Discrimination in the EU in 2015".
 - 37 *The World Values Survey* (Wave 3) showed, that in 1997, only 1% of Lithuanian respondents thought that homosexuality was "always justified" and 68% said that it was "never justified." World Values Survey, Wave 3, 1995–1999.
 - 38 Risse et al, eds., *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 10.
 - 39 Rachel A. Epstein and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Beyond Conditionality: International Institutions in Postcommunist Europe after Enlargement," *Journal of European Public Policy* 15, no. 6 (2008): 797.
 - 40 According to Thomas B. Stoddard, for a law to be "culture shifting" it has to fulfill the following four criteria: the prescribed change has to be broad and legitimate; there should be public awareness and good enforcement. Thomas B. Stoddard, "Bleeding Heart: Reflections on Using the Law to Make Social Change", *New York University Law Review* 72, no. 5 (1997): 967–991.
 - 41 Interview with the author (a field trip to Lithuania was funded by a stipend from the Swedish Institute's Baltic Sea Region Cooperation).

[illegible]

EXPERT CONCLUSIONS ON VERBAL EXTREMISM A DISPUTE OVER METHODS

by **Dmitry V. Dubrovskiy**

The evolution of legal linguistics in the Western European tradition was determined primarily by its multidisciplinary, crosscultural nature.¹ The evolution of such investigations in other countries is also distinguished by their critical nature, which is associated with the idea that the relationship between language and the law is interpretive and that a critical reading and reinterpretation of the language of the law is necessary as a mode of its existence.² In this sense, it is curious that authors of surveys see the general state of legal linguistics in Russia in diametrically opposed ways.

As Liliana Goteliani³ notes in her review, the evolution of Russian legal linguistics has not yet resulted in a “common theoretical basis for linguistic investigation in court that is shared by all experts”. In the author’s opinion, this problem cannot be solved quickly. It will take decades, but the results of this effort would increase “trust in investigation, both in court and in public opinion”.⁴ Indeed, many Russian researchers agree with this statement of the problem.

In his monograph *Vvedenie v sudebnuiu lingvistiku* [Introduction to forensic linguistics], Professor Aleksandrov points to the need “to come to grips with the nature of criminal process, the law, and evidence in their linguistic aspects”.⁵

Not all authors are so skeptical, however. For example, in 2006, E. I. Galiashina, assessing the status of forensic linguistic investigation in extremism cases, noted that

Russia has “elaborate and tested practices for linguistic analysis of extremist statements and written texts in the media”.⁶

This clearly reveals diametrically opposed notions of the status of the methodology applied in studies aiming to evaluate the extent of “extremism” in a particular text. It seems that the current status of the proposed approach to studying texts in order to identify “hostility and hate” demonstrates both the difficulty of establishing a general theoretical basis for forensic linguistics as a whole and the contradictions that arise in applying the numerous methodologies that exist in Russian science for studying “extremist” texts.

Methodologies for the study of “extremism” in a text

There are so many apparent contradictions that it seems fairly challenging to attempt a full description.⁷ Nevertheless, there are a number of significant issues in methodology that continually arise both in judicial debates and in scientific and applied scientific publications devoted to studying media for signs of “extremism.”

If speakers of a language can identify a certain appeal in a text expressed in a way that adequately understand, why do they need the help of an expert? The main argument seems to be that the text contains “hidden appeals” or other methods of “linguistic manipulation”.⁸ The reason why linguists are required in this instance is clear: if the language is understood by all

abstract

The practice of mandatory recourse to linguistic experts’ opinions in cases pertaining to racial, ethnic, and other types of hatred and hostility, has caused the vast development of different approaches to the analysis of the texts. During last ten years, numerous methods for identifying “verbal extremism” have been recommended. It has been suggested that the evolution of Russian legal linguistics has not yet resulted in a “common theoretical basis for linguistic investigation in court that is shared by all experts”. The current status of the proposed approach to studying texts in order to identify “hostility and hate” demonstrates both the difficulty of establishing a general theoretical basis for forensic linguistics as a whole and the contradictions that arise in applying the numerous methodologies that exist in Russian science for studying “extremist” texts.

KEYWORDS: Freedom of speech, counter-extremism, “verbal extremism”, linguistic expert’s opinion

parties in the process, then the only way to prove the need for a linguistics expert is the hypothetical presence of an “hidden” element that only language specialists can reveal.

In deliberations over whether forensic investigation is essential in hate speech cases, the main problem seems to be the limits of the linguistics expert’s competence and the scope of the investigation necessary to identify what is called “verbal extremism”:

When they assert that a linguistics expert examining a particular disputed text is not entitled to make it his objective to determine what the speaker wanted to say, but can only answer the question what he said, they are proceeding from the assumption of a fatal mismatch between the speaker’s intentions and the perlocutionary effects. In reality, this is not the case, and a linguist can count on success in investigating the speaker’s intentions, his speech tactics and strategies, and his communication hits and misses.⁹

The most debatable question is therefore what exactly a linguistic investigation determines: what was “said,” what is “concealed” behind the spoken words, or what is the potential meaning of what was said in a certain context. Different authors answer this question differently.

For one of the most respected specialists on this issue, L. Galiashina,

It is hardly possible to determine the presence or absence of a verbal breach of the law and its content or to properly classify a deed without a linguistic investigation of the text.¹⁰

In another of her works, she states this more categorically:

The elucidation and interpretation of the meaning of an oral statement and a written text require special linguistic knowledge, not only in cases when manipulative techniques for influencing an audience or for camouflaging xenophobic statements by means of subtle verbal acrobatics are used, but also for a reflective audience to identify propaganda and agitation, appeals to take particular actions, threats and incitements, and justifications or rationales for engaging in extremist activities.¹¹

Consequently,

it is hardly possible to determine the presence or absence of a verbal breach of the law and its content or to properly classify a deed without a linguistic investigation of the text.¹²

It is worth noting the reference to techniques of “speech manipulation” and “camouflage,” the detection of which, according to the author, is one of the fundamental objectives of linguistic expert investigation.

Galiashina follows M. Osadchii in this respect,

Extremist literature makes use of the hidden appeal, which is distinguished by the obvious lack of the main external sign of an appeal – the imperative form of a verb. A hidden appeal is information that incites actions and forms a desire to act or a feeling of the need to act in the target audience. A hidden appeal not infrequently provides a full-fledged program of actions that are being incited; i.e. the author programs the audience’s behavior, not infrequently using methods of speech manipulation of consciousness, acting on the reader’s or listener’s psyche or subconscious.¹³

As an example of this “indirect appeal” the author presents

material deemed extremist, “Samaya konstruktivnaia partiia” [The most constructive party].¹⁴ Analyzing this text, which the author of this article does not consider extremist despite its radicalism, Araeva and Osadchii conclude that it contains “hidden appeals” that incite the reader “to certain actions the latter becomes absorbed in the text and imperceptibly takes the author’s side”.¹⁵

The methodology for the study of “hidden appeals” is most clearly associated with the works of A. A. Leontiev,

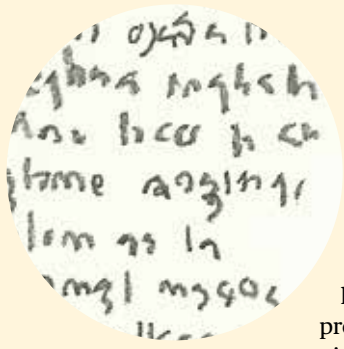
who suggested applying a number of psycholinguistic methodologies, including a reference to “semantic integration methodology” (per V. I. Batov)¹⁶ to diagnose xenophobia.

IN 2007, PROFESSOR Anatolii Baranov published a monograph devoted to forensic linguistic investigation.¹⁷ The author proposed a general text analysis system which he considers appropriate both for identifying signs of extremism and in defamation cases. The gist of Baranov’s method is to identify and analyze “verbal manipulation” tools in a text in which appeals play a fundamental role. Judgmentally motivated appeals perform a special function in the typology of appeals proposed by the author. According to Baranov, this kind of appeal can be constructed by:

- judging groups of people negatively or positively on the basis of their affiliation with a certain ethnic, national, or religious group;
- comparing one group with another;
- predicting certain actions with respect to a group labeled positively or negatively;
- offering additional motivations for given actions.¹⁸

In the late 2000s, Professor Mikhail Gorbanevskii, a disciple of Anatolii Baranov, and his school set up a Guild of Forensic

“WHAT WAS ‘SAID,’ WHAT IS ‘CONCEALED’ BEHIND THE SPOKEN WORDS, OR WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL MEANING OF WHAT WAS SAID IN A CERTAIN CONTEXT.”



Linguistics Experts (GFLE), which is often called on by law enforcement agencies to perform investigations in hate speech cases. Their original approach comprises a refusal to develop special text analysis methods at the request of

law enforcement agencies. The Guild adopted the position that adequate text analysis requires no special knowledge or methodology; it needs no more than a linguist with professional qualifications adequate to recognizing “extremism in a text”. This approach was concisely described in recommendations for experts and judges encountering “extremist” cases. The author suggests using lexical and semantic analysis to establish whether a text contains words and sentences that are associated with meanings in Russian of any extremist activity or variations thereof and semantic-stylistic and linguistic-stylistic analysis to identify value judgments, detect extremist lexical items, and identify the modality of the text and judgments (positive or negative).¹⁹ This methodology is essentially an incorporation into linguistic methodology of the rather vague definitions of extremism given in Federal Law N 144. In our view, this cannot help but lead to a high degree of uncertainty in the interpretation of materials by Guild members.

The Siberian researcher K. I. Brinev proposes a system for analyzing extremist appeals in which he suggests identifying undefined appeals that do not contain instructions to achieve specific goals. Generally replicating Baranov’s typology, the author proposes essentially classifying only the speaker’s “speech behavior,” which distinguishes his approach significantly from similar approaches by other authors.²⁰

ONE OF THE RECENT methodologies published and proposed as applicable to materials with a presumed “extremist bent” is the work of Sergei Kuznetsov and Sergei Olennikov.²¹ The author sees this methodology’s novelty in the fact that it highlights and accounts for the main feature of extremist cases: the propagandistic or agitational orientation of the unlawful actions.

A number of terms are proposed in this methodology. They include “conflictogenic text” to designate a text that will not be accused of extremism). The authors are nevertheless convinced that the methodology is aimed at understanding the specific features of the regulatory requirements of the law which, in abstract legal form, prohibit statements with certain conceptual and rhetorical attributes that influence an audience.²²

Other authors answer this question in similar fashion, such as the authors of the methodology developed by the Russian Federal Forensic Investigation Center. Regarding the main objective of an investigation, they suggest that the expert linguist must be a “master of methods for the semantic description of the meanings of linguistic units and techniques for the explication of *implicitly* expressed meanings”.²³

In similar fashion, in one of the recent works that consolidate experience in performing investigations with their methodological foundations, Podkatilina also points out that, “when studying a text for attributes of extremism, one must work with words

Court decisions published by the Russian Ministry of Justice

Federal List of Extremist Materials

Article 13 Under Article 13 of Federal Law 114 of July 25, 2002, “On Combatting Extremist Activities”, and paragraph 7 of the Regulation on the Federal Ministry of Justice, as confirmed by Presidential Decree 1313 of October 13, 2004, the Russian Ministry of Justice is charged with maintaining, publishing, and distributing on the Internet a federal list of extremist materials.

Informational materials are determined to be extremist by the federal court of their place of discovery or distribution, or at the location of the organisation realizing the production of such materials, on the basis of the prosecutor’s presentation or during the prosecution of a corresponding administrative, civil or criminal case.

The federal list of extremist materials is compiled on the basis of copies of final court decisions submitted to the Russian Ministry of Justice on the identification of extremist informational materials.

3828. Material published on the Internet on the social network site *Vkontakte* on a page under the pseudonym [XXX], with the URL [XXX]: an illustration depicting a girl with a machine pistol and a grenade in her hands and the legend “I am a Banderite and a Ukrainian! Death to the Muscovite occupiers!” (Decision of the Railways District Court of Yekaterinburg, Sverdlovsk Oblast, March 16, 2016).

3832. Video material: “Counterrevolution: Turning Russian, WMV”; “Slavs Awaken”; published on the Internet on the social network site *Vkontakte* (URL: [XXX]) (Decision of the Railways District Court of Yekaterinburg, Sverdlovsk Oblast, March 16, 2016).

3834. The book *Manifesto of Russian Patriotism* by V. E. Onishchuk (Moscow: Vityaz’-M, 2001; 160 pp.) (Decision of the Nagatinski District Court of Moscow, May 30, 2016).

3835. The journal *Rusich*, no. 1, “The Jewish Occupation of Russia” (no. 1, 1999, 208 pp., publisher: Vityaz’) (Decision of the Nagatinski District Court of Moscow, May 30, 2016).

3837. An image representing persons with the caption “Russia for the Churkas” [an ethnic slur], published on the Internet and freely accessible to an undefined number of persons on the site [XXX] (Decision of the Akhtubinsk District Court, Astrakhan Oblast, June 2, 2016).

3838. A work of poetry titled “Stop the Ritual!”, published in the collection *The Dawn is Near!* by the author [XXX] (Paris: Doloy Zlo, 2011; 152 pages) (Decision of the Kuibyshev District Court of St. Petersburg, July 6, 2015).

3864. A video clip, “The Truth” (Decision of the Zavodskoi District Court of Oryol, August 4, 2016).

Note: Here, published anonymously, are translated excerpts from the Federal List of Extremist Materials published by the Ministry of Justice, accessed September 19, 2016, <http://minjust.ru/ru/extremist-materials>.

a necessary aspect during an investigation is applying the knowledge of philology".²⁴

Since appeals are the primary linguistic form with which all kinds of "extremist texts" are most often associated, many works pertaining to expert activities are devoted to appeals. Baranov's work is a classic. He says that "to count all the opportunities to transmit the propositional semantics of appeals associated with the incitement of racial, ethnic, and religious discord does not seem possible."²⁵

Thus most authors of guidelines agree that "only linguists possess scientifically valid techniques for ascertaining a text's true meanings and the intentions of the parties to the conflict, and for detecting the 'undercurrents' and manipulative techniques used by the parties".²⁶

In other words, linguists present the case that knowledge of the unique features of how language functions gives them a capacity for an exclusive understanding of a text, which representatives of other humanities and social science disciplines lack. Moreover, this kind of expert knowledge is objective in nature, meeting the requirements for forensic investigations. In particular, Podkatilina insists,

"the apparent simplicity of the evaluation of presumably extremist texts and of making decisions without using the results of the application of special knowledge leads at times to the adoption of unjustified court rulings."²⁷

However, it seems that the use of special knowledge does not insure against such rulings at all.

ONE CANNOT SAY, however, that the authors of these methodologies do not see the complexities and contradictions in the use of linguistic knowledge in forensic investigation in hate speech cases. Many authors agree on the assessment of the basic errors and problems associated with scheduling and conducting an investigation. These problems include incorrect selection of experts, inaccurately posed questions, incorrect delegation of duties among the experts, the problem of an expert who is out of his depth, and finally the absence or weakness of scientific tools and their substitution by "general speculation and subjective judgments".²⁸ Other authors add the problems of expert independence, criticism of authority, defining extremism, and the extensive use of the term "social groups".²⁹ Nevertheless, this seems to be primarily a matter not of procedural or technical errors, but of a global contradiction between the interpretive nature of the humanities and the requirement of "objectivity" and "credibility" in a linguistic investigation.

In fact, some Russian linguists, such as M. Krongauz, are skeptical about the opportunities and prospects for linguists to

participate in antiextremist proceedings. Citing the 2009 scandal involving a warning to the newspaper *Vedomosti*, he wrote:

*Linguistic investigation involving cases of an accusation of extremism has largely discredited itself. ... It is quite obvious that if a statement incites and appeals, then it appeals to and incites the masses. That is, the masses are capable of figuring this out without a linguist's help.*³⁰

Continuing the skeptical line of thought begun by Krongauz, A. A. Smirnov noted in his voluminous article *Zametki o lingvicheskoi ekspertize*³¹ [Notes on linguistic expert investigation] that "the ambiguity and inconsistency of legislation results in a situation in which the court does not have enough common sense³² or general knowledge to classify a deed as extremist" As a result, the author notes the clear "absurdity of expertocracy" in which only a specialist can determine whether a sus-

pect committed a crime. Podkatilina objects, "An expert linguist cannot diagnose the unlawful nature of speech activity, inasmuch as this is within the exclusive purview of the legal practitioner."³³ This raises the question: *What exactly does an expert determine?*

A separate trend in the study and analysis of hate speech is exemplified by Nikolai Girenko's school of sociohumanistic expert investigation. Unfortunately, his tragic death in 2004 brought an end to the development of this approach.³⁴ In a small pamphlet, Girenko suggested that it was not so

much the formal aspect, the level of expression of a given text (i.e., what linguistics is about) that should be analyzed so much as the level of its content, i.e., the belief model, the identification of which is the essence of analysis: "Basically it is the semantic tenor [of a text] that will be primarily involved this model of propaganda."³⁵ It was proposed that the semantic tenor of texts is fundamental in determining the social danger of these kinds of actions. This school was greeted with hostility by all the linguist authors listed above and by psychologists, who pointed out that the methodological framework of socio-humanities research is not sufficiently specific or conceptually refined.³⁶

Authors whose methodologies ignore intertextual reality, primarily the possibility of irony, artistic provocation, religious diversity, or simply criticism, constitute a separate group of methodologies. A good example is Igor Ponkin, who, in his textbook on extremism, cites the term "sandfucker" from the animated series South Park or sacred texts of Krishna as examples of extremist text.³⁷ Ponkin essentially follows the logic which interprets any reference to the "negative" or the use of "negative lexical units" toward a particular group as a sign of extremism. Essentially following this same investigatory logic, the authors of another text assert that accusing the United Russia party of fascism is a genuine sign of extremism.³⁸

"OF COURSE, THERE IS THE QUESTION OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF A PARTICULAR TEXT AS LITERARY, AND EVEN THIS DOES NOT RESCUE THE TEXT FROM EXAMINATION FOR EXTREMISM."

To sum up, therefore, the methods in question have numerous problems, the main one apparently being linguists' inability to interpret the textual pragmatics that most often become the object of examination in courts, i.e., political and literary texts.³⁹

Texts with special pragmatics in forensic linguistic investigation

One of the first guidelines on the linguist's expert work in extremism cases contained an example of this kind of investigation, namely the interview of Malika Yandarbieva,⁴⁰ in which the author concludes that this text unquestionably qualifies as extremist based on an analysis using her proposed methodology. One can only concur with A. A. Smirnov's opinion that, "from the standpoint of linguistic pragmatics, this conclusion is untenable".⁴¹ Let us add that it is likewise untenable from the common sense viewpoint: the authors of the investigation suggested that the statements of the separatist Yandarbiev's widow be considered extremist solely because, in imparting her view of the world, she contrasted "we" (which included herself, Maskhadov, and Basaev as representatives of the Chechen people) and "they," a "generalized image of Russia that is seen negatively". Given the political context of the contrast between Chechen separatists and federal authorities, it would be extremely strange to expect a different view of the world from the widow of a separatist leader murdered by Russian special agents.

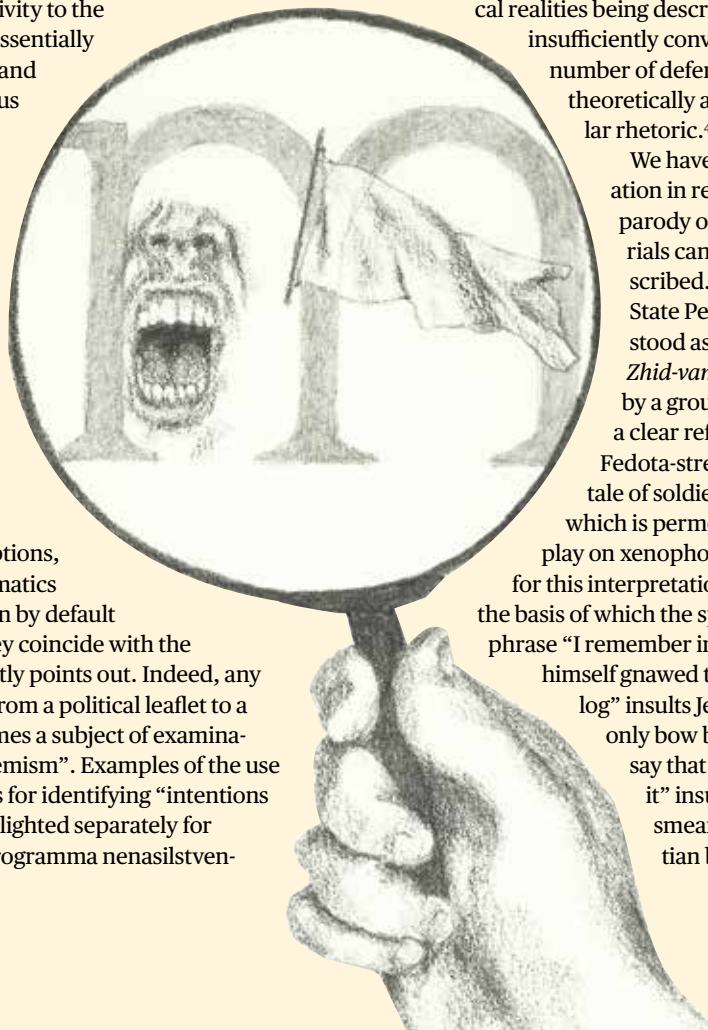
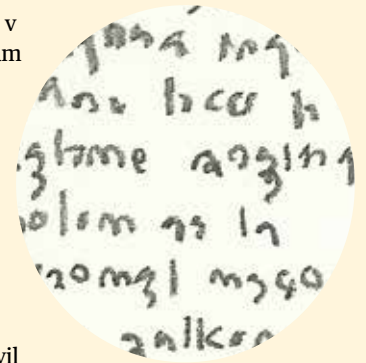
Therefore, in its very first use, the Guild's methodology demonstrated its insensitivity to the pragmatic objectives of a text, essentially to any text – political, religious and even literary. Notoriously famous is the attempt to ban quotation from William Shakespear's Hamlet monologue because of its direct appeal to violence.⁴² This led to what appears to be repeated abuse of the methodology for analysis of texts on different subjects, primarily political. The example of the text "Samaia konstruktivnaia partiia" [The most constructive party] has already been cited; it seems that none of the methodologies discussed above specifies exceptions, i.e. takes into account the pragmatics of the text, considering it proven by default that they are "true," i.e. that they coincide with the intention, as A. A. Smirnov rightly points out. Indeed, any text, from religious to literary, from a political leaflet to a political parody, not only becomes a subject of examination, but is also judged as "extremism". Examples of the use of psychological methodologies for identifying "intentions in the text" in question are highlighted separately for this reason. Limonov's text, "Programma nenasilstven-

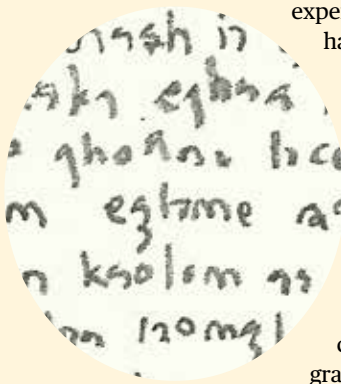
nogo grazhdanskogo soprotivlenia v politseiskom gosudarstve" [Program for nonviolent civil resistance in a police state"] is declared extremist on the basis, for example, of "destructive" demands "not to fill out tax returns".⁴³ Aside from the simple doubt that psychology has anything whatsoever to do with this analysis, it is indicative that this text expressly talks about nonviolence, pursuing peaceful civil protest, and indeed expresses suspicion of extremism, which would have to be ruled out because it appeal an appeal to illegitimate violence.

A separate challenge arises when the subject is a literary text. Researchers certainly do not doubt the possibility of analyzing a literary text for extremism; it is understood that such extremist literary works exist.⁴⁴

OF COURSE, THERE IS the question of the classification of a particular text as literary, and even this does not rescue the text from examination for extremism.⁴⁵ For example, Ivanenko, examining aspects of the image of the Jew in Gogol, concludes that "in that context scenes of the persecution of Jews are not an appeal to imitation, but a reflection of the spirit of the historical realities being described".⁴⁶ This argument seems insufficiently convincing, if only because large number of defenders of anti-Semitic texts will theoretically and practically resort to similar rhetoric.⁴⁷

We have already discussed the situation in relation to cases of conscious parody or provocation. Further materials can be added to those already described.⁴⁸ Specialists at Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University understood as extremist the parodic play *Zhid-vampir* [Vampire Jew] created by a group of Krasnoyarsk poets with a clear reference to Filatov's play "Pro Fedota-streltsa, udalogo molodtsa" [The tale of soldier fedot, a daring fellow"], which is permeated by irony and literary play on xenophobic myths. The foundation for this interpretation was a linguistic analysis, on the basis of which the specialists concluded that the phrase "I remember in ancient times horned Satan himself gnawed the Vampire Jew from a magic log" insults Jews. "Fine, go into the hut, only bow before the mushroom – they say that the Magdalene put her lips to it" insults Christians, while "Buryats smear the lips of idols with Christian blood" insults Buryats. In the





expert linguists' opinion, "The play has a light, absurdist tone, but it appears only toward the finale of the work".⁴⁹

Another more challenging task is apparently the analysis of works that present the world of rightwing radicals in literary form. Nesterov's book *Skinny: Rus probuzhdaetsia* [Skinheads: Russia awakes], which contains a nominally autobiographical story of neo-Nazi activity,

was declared extremist in 2010.⁵⁰ According to the experts' conclusion,⁵¹ "the book contains "statements containing negative judgments toward an ethnic group (any 'non-white race'); motivational statements containing a call to violent actions against 'non-white' people. The materials include hate speech. The materials contain appeals to engage in extremist activities".⁵²

IN FACT, HERE, as in the investigation of the Malika Yandarbieva interview, a quite surprising issue arises: what exactly were the experts examining? The fact is that a novel entirely devoted to the activities of Nazi skinheads cannot help but contain all the appeals that are typical of the xenophobic ideology of rightwing radicals. Similarly, in Saratov in 2010 there was an attempt to ban the release of the film *Rossia 88* [Russia 88], despite its obvious antifascist message, inasmuch as the film, shot in the mockumentary tradition, naturally makes use of the rhetoric of neo-Nazism to present the main hero.⁵³ S. A. Makhmudov, a professor in the Russian Language Department of Samara State Pedagogical University, who performed the investigation, detected appeals to racial hatred and Nazi propaganda in the dialogues of the main heroes. For example, analyzing "linguistic situation No. 47," the investigator concludes that "the viewer might come away with the notion that 'the skinheads' goals are noble". On the whole, analyzing the film using Baranov's methodology and references to his own work on linguistic analysis of literary text, Makhmudov concludes that the film has all possible appeals to racial and ethnic violence and violent change of the constitutional order.⁵⁴

The investigation of the text of Fedorovich's text "Faciam lie mei mernineris" [sic; *faciam ut mei memineris* means I'll make you remember me] is similar. The main actor in the text is the author's alter ego, who is presented as an "intellectual murderer". "Viktor enjoyed it most of all when almost every television program about skinheads showed a clip from the trailer for *Format 18*."⁵⁵

As in the case of Nesterov, Fedorovich's description of assaults on the "racially alien" are intermixed with the lyric hero's philosophical reflections in the style of social Darwinism. "Do

those who lost the struggle for survival deserve pity?" A. M. Plotnikova, who cites this article as an example, clearly sees this text as extremist, in contrast to *Vampire Jew*, although it is apparently a matter of the genre selected by the author. There is essentially no significant difference between Fedorovich's and Nesterov's texts.⁵⁶ Another example of a similar text is "Moia borba" [My struggle], a pretentious text similar in content, in which the main hero, who is hard to distinguish from the author, murders his various enemies – from the "racially alien" to human rights advocates – with various kinds of weapons.⁵⁷ One must say that the "extremism" in these texts is exclusively related to the main heroes' actions, and they of course are seen positively. The application of any formal methods of analysis leads to the classification of texts such as Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, the film *Rossia 88*, and others as extremist.

FINALLY, THE SAME problem arises with scientific texts. First of all, it turns out that, in many people's opinion, ascertaining whether a particular text is "scientific" does not make it ineligible for examination by law enforcement agencies.⁵⁸ One recent example of this kind was the examination of the article "Chechenskaia respublika" [Chechen republic] in volume 58 of the 2006 Bolshaia

Rossiiskaia entsiklopedia [Large Russian Encyclopedia].⁵⁹ Let us note that the content of this article leaves something to be desired from both the professional and the ethical viewpoint. The matter of how formally scientific texts should be prohibited at all as extremist remains unresolved.⁶⁰

Thus there seems to be a very serious problem related to the functioning of forensic linguistic investigation. The point is that the linguist's common sense should

eliminate scientific, political (primarily those critical of a political regime and its opponents), and literary (including parody and trolling) works from analysis. At the same time, using the methodologies listed above will lead to many such texts being interpreted as extremist on the basis of their formal attributes, since not only their general content, but also "appeals" and various rhetorical techniques will be reproduced in them with different goals – political or literary. In other words, all the approaches and methodologies discussed above ignore the pragmatics of the text, focusing at best on the text's formal aspects, and therefore they cannot reliably document the differences in "extremism" between a literary text, political leaflet, and a text devoted to the study of problems of hate speech and xenophobia.

On the other hand, if these kinds of texts are excluded from examination, what then are linguists supposed to do with texts that hypothetically incite hostility and discord? It appears that the basic problem lies not in insufficiently qualified or agenda-driven experts, which is fairly often a problem in cases of this type.⁶¹ The fact is that it is not for scientists to determine the social danger of a text at all. As indicated above, linguistic methodologies applied to various kinds of texts yield results that are not only contrary to common sense, but also directly contradictory.⁶²

**"THE FACT IS
THAT IT IS NOT FOR
SCIENTISTS TO
DETERMINE THE
SOCIAL DANGER
OF A TEXT AT ALL."**

In a choice between experts' hypersensitivity (or partiality) and common sense, it seems that common sense should win out. From the linguistic standpoint, it seems that the main argument must be this: sense, which is not equivalent to meaning, arises during a speech act and includes the context in which it is pronounced as a vital sense-forming element. From the viewpoint of John Searle's theory of speech acts, intent can be classified as the illocutionary goal of a statement, which is defined first and foremost by its pragmatic context.⁶³ The absence of pragmatic context external to the text and a focus exclusively on what was said in the analytical methodologies under discussion appears to make the problem of determining the true content insoluble and places the expert in the uncomfortable position of being either a "bard of common sense" or a "constructor of extremism". ❌

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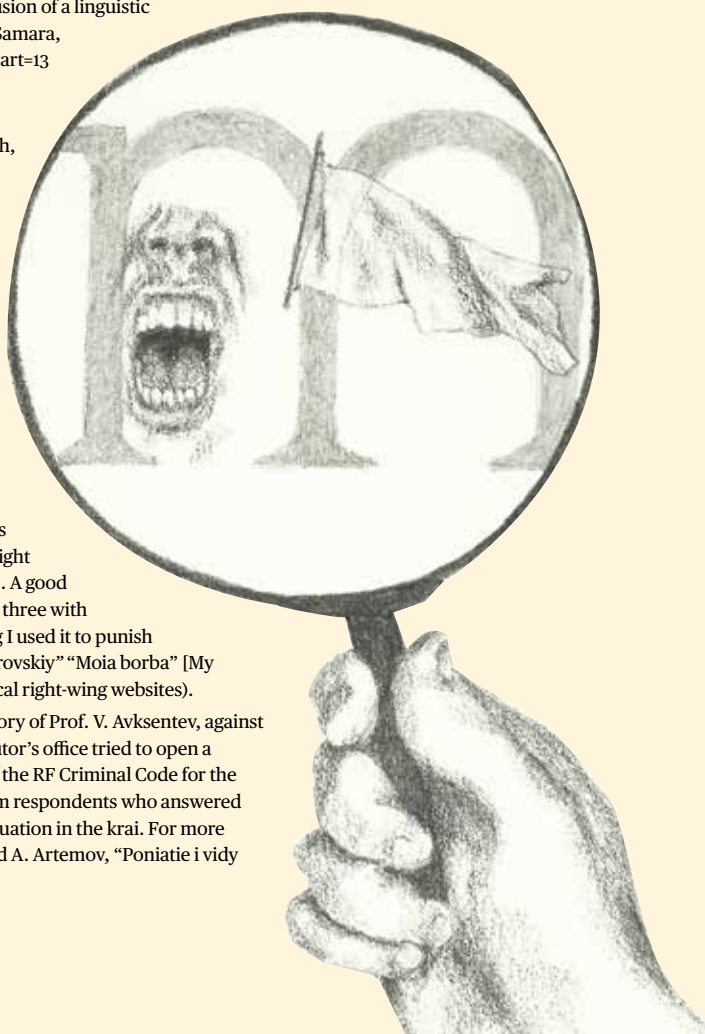
Acknowledgement: I collected data for this article while I was a Reagan-Fascell Fellow of the National Endowment for Democracy, and I thank the NED for generous support and assistance.

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- in Germany in the 1930s." For more detail, see D. V. Dubrovskiy, "Chto s nauchnoi tochki zrenia ponimaetsia..."
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- 53 The author of this article tried to prove this in the investigation; the claim by the Saratov Region Prosecutor's Office was withdrawn. For more detail, see the feature film *Russia 88*. Official website, <http://russia88.ru/main.mhtml?Part=6&PubID=84>. See also E. Kostyleva, "Teper v prokate. Posle goda iskov i eksperiz ya ekrany vyshel film Pavla Bardina Rossiaa 88" ["Now showing: after a year of claims and investigations Pavel Bardin's Film *Russia 88* is on screens], *Vedomosti* (2010) accessed March 5, 2010, <http://info.vedomosti.ru/friday/article/2010/03/05/15577>.
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- 55 A neo-Nazi studio that mostly produced propagandistic xenophobic videos. Martsinkevich, the leader of Format 18, was sentenced under article 282 of the RF Criminal Code.
- 56 Except that Fedorovich's text was not on the list of extremist materials.
- 57 As a curiosity, note that in the text quite a few actual people, including the author of this article were "killed": "Two days later I dropped in on a meeting "Food not bomb's" [sic]. The anti-fascists were somehow quite relaxed. I saw that some homeless person was stuffing his face and right next to him were two anti-fascists. A good target. Mask on the face. I shot all three with a 7.63 Walther. And in the evening I used it to punish another kind of antifascist – Dubrovskiy" "Moia borba" [My Struggle]. from materials on radical right-wing websites).
- 58 As an example one can cite the story of Prof. V. Avksentev, against whom the Stavropol Krai prosecutor's office tried to open a criminal case under article 282 of the RF Criminal Code for the truly xenophobic quotations from respondents who answered questions related to the ethnic situation in the krai. For more detail, see M. P. Kleimanov, A. and A. Artemov, "Poniatie i vidy kriminalnogo ekstremizma" [Concept and kinds of criminal extremism], *Vestnik Omskogo universiteta* 24, no. 3 (2010): 168–169.
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The Palace of Poetry is demolished.

PHOTO: DAVID BOSTANASHVILI

Aesthetics of repair in Tbilisi 2015.



GEORGIA: A MUCH-

This article outlines some afterthoughts about the project “Aesthetics of Repair in Contemporary Georgia”,¹ which I organized with the curator Marika Agu. In our visits to Tbilisi, we found a particular distress arising from the gap between the human desire to improve the current situation and the suffering caused by not being able to do so. To traverse this gap, the local people with whom we met had to oscillate between creativity and constraint, anxiety and possibility, repair and brokenness.

Our project delved therefore into the significance of material recombinations in this societal context, and how objects and dwellings are implicated in the transmission of affect.² We decided to reflect affective responses to brokenness and indigenous ways of solving problems through the manipulation of materials, their surfaces, and the addition of new elements to the assemblage, indexing the past through preservation and surviving efforts. The materialities and the social relations they are attempting to sustain are indeed working, albeit uncertainly within ever newer and more uncertain economic and social conditions.³

Georgian society appeared to us to be made up of contrasts and ill-organized forays into improvement, engaged in a never-ending process of renovation, which in turn has created specific frames of perception and skills in recombination. This is what Ssorin-Chaikov refers to as “deferred social order” or “development as forever” – as a display of work in progress,

disorder inscribes progress as an already stagnant yet “new” condition.⁴

It is at the level of the quotidian that one finds the clearest expression of acquired habits and expectations as well as important differences in their practice.⁵ We soon realized how difficult it is for art projects to endure, to be sustained, as if the endeavor were a marathon. This sense of temporariness paradoxically contrasts with the Soviet investment in timelessness, manifested in the belief that things might last forever.⁶ Yet Georgia’s recent history seems to be quite a mixture of continuities, breaks and reconfigurations. Martin Demant Frederiksen describes it as being affected by temporal disjunctures and short-circuits,⁷ while Katrine Bendtsen Gotfredsen⁸ presents it as a society led through antitheses and multiple nostalgias. She considers Georgian politics “evasive” – oscillating between presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, articulation and silence. As she points out, every time political realities change, interpretations of the past are turned into a battlefield, demanding a new understanding of history.

In “Aesthetics of Repair in Contemporary Georgia”, we draw on terms such as “scrappiness” to describe those arrangements that constitute finality without being finished, also *khaltura*, which expresses a state of unstable equilibria and low-key engagements, and *euroremont*, a practice that emerged from the desire to achieve social status by following what were seen as Western standards and values. Drawing on these terms, we have



PHOTOS: MIDDLE AND RIGHT: FRANCISCO MARTÍNEZ

Amalgamations of Tbilisi.

by **Francisco Martínez**

REPAIRED SOCIETY

put the emphasis on the radical processes of construction and deconstruction in which Georgia has been immersed, elaborating a kaleidoscopic depiction of what is left after twenty-five years of crisscrossing transitions.

This compelled us to ethnographically explore microworks of adaptation and a sense of distributed creativity – namely the way that people make use of what is around in order to cope with brokenness. Following this assumption, our exhibition and book illustrate how the construction of identity and the production of moral values can draw on aspects of craftsmanship and do-it-yourself explorations. Our project calls attention to these arts of combining and fixing up. In Georgia, the paradoxical interplay between innovation and tradition generates a particular indigenous curation and vernacular solutions. Every person seems to be a ruler, capable of actively making a world of his own, and at the same time a subject, at the mercy of circumstances beyond individual control.

THE FIRST SURPRISE for us was to discover that there has not been an exhibition of Georgian art in Estonia for forty-five years, which seems to clash with the assumed sympathy between the two societies. Also, while preparing the project, we repeatedly had to justify why we chose this country and the concept of repair for an exhibition of contemporary art. Too often the question “But is anything going on there?” was thrown at us; and it was irritating to hear advice to focus instead on the festive side of

the Caucasian culture or to reflect on political issues such as the border with the common “enemy” Russia.

So what is in fact going on in the Georgian art scene? Unexpectedly, we discovered powerful works of contemporary art and an emerging scene in the field. As we explained in the presentation of the artists’ talk in Tartu, when we arrived in Tbilisi we first used ethnographic methods, did archival research, met with artists and gallerists, and then outlined the concept of the exhibition. This combination of approaches allowed us to create different forms of engagement within the local context and to go beyond prejudices to address current social dynamics.

A key proposition behind this project was the idea that anthropology and art practice are increasingly in dialogue. By exploring the intersections and synergies between the two fields we cultivated new forms of experimentation and ways of seeing. After all, knowledge is conditional upon perception, in an aesthetic sense. Artists, curators and anthropologists are increasingly working across the boundaries of their respective disciplines to explore the generative potential of each other’s methods for engaging with communities and disseminating knowledge.⁹ For instance, when the practice of art becomes research, social ambiguities are made visible in a more direct and appealing way.

We were glad to discover that there are other projects also reflecting on the idiosyncratic material culture of the country. Looking back, we can even say that we were lucky to catch an art

To get rid of the past. Such a relief. And such a loss.

practice in emergence, in the sense that great efforts are being made to create a working art system, and international circulation of Georgian artists is increasing.

INDEED, DURING THE artists' talk that followed the opening of our exhibition in Tartu, Nino Sekhniashvili, Thea Gvetadze and Group Bouillon pointed to the new educational programmes at the Free University and the Center of Contemporary Arts of Tbilisi. They also mentioned the consolidation of galleries such as Nectar and the Popiashvili-Gvaberidze window project, as well as new residences and art programmes such as Artisterium and the Tbilisi Triennial.

They concluded that there is still work to be done in order to raise interest in contemporary art among collectors and to involve state institutions and local museums, but the Georgian art scene is already in a state of consolidation: first and foremost because of the emergence of a new generation of artists who are creating their own art history by reappropriations and approximations, combining multiple scales and imaginaries, and accessing global referents more freely, as the gallerist and dean of the school of Visual Arts and Design Irena Popiashvili observes. The art critic Lali Pertenava also shares this vision, adding that they can no longer be called "post-Soviet" (some of the artists mentioned by Pertenava are: Nadia Tsulukidze, Tamuna Chabashvili, Tamara Bochorishvili, Giorgi Khaniashvili, and Merab Gugunashvili).

The new generation is not repairing anything; rather, they are starting from zero. They are constructing a new art scene through approximations. They are almost there, almost skilled enough for that, approximately reaching the point, making it in a way, but not totally, not to the end. They want to be global, and soon there won't be any difference between a 21st-century artist in America, Egypt, or Georgia ... The problem is the lack of institutional support and spaces in which to exhibit. Today's 21st-century Georgian artists have completely broken with local traditions. First and foremost, they choose their cultural and visual references through the Internet. Their visual education happens via the Internet, accessing the information beyond our borders and discovering other ways of doing things. For them, everything is available at once, on the screen, with no time evolution as explained in art history, nor following the traditional canons of good and bad. We are talking about a clear break, not exactly generational, but more educational and practice-based. Some older colleagues see disrespect in this. Not me. The generation of the 21st century simply reappropriates what is there.¹⁰

Two of the recent shows organised at the Popiashvili-Gvaberidze Window

Project have reflected on these issues. In *Approximate*, they presented Georgian artists under the age of forty whose work is unknown to the general public. The title was taken from the artwork of Nino Sekhniashvili, also included in our exhibition. Nino documents the building of a DIY house created by a *bricoleur* architect,¹¹ who with limited skills made use of available materials. As Popiashvili states, this work is "about approximation, lack of professionalism, lack of knowledge, and the audacity of ignorance that can be encountered at every level of our society".¹² Then, in their show *(De)contextualization*, the Popiashvili-Gvaberidze Window Project cast back the useless role the equipment, furniture, and light fixtures of science labs are facing today in many research institutions.

Other examples of how repair reveals a hoard of significant meanings can be found in the ongoing "renovation" of Tbilisi Old Town, in which very little remains of historic buildings, and façades are rebuilt in an ersatz way. Paradoxically, UNESCO worked to list Tbilisi's Old Town as a World Heritage Site in 2000, but soon suspended the project due to the local authorities' lack of will. City officials were afraid that preservation would hinder the pastiche architecture in the form of cheap Turkish tiles, aluminum-framed windows and new balconies.¹³ As Angela Wheeler¹⁴ has shown, the remaking of Tbilisi marks a dramatic break with the past, since 'beautification' often meant excision of Soviet elements from the urban landscape, to be substituted by faux-historic confections. Wheeler also notes some side effects, such as the replacement of architectures that emphasized communality with new forms more amenable to private consumption and individual ownership, and therefore foreign investment.

This too is Georgia, affected by an ambivalent Westernization, which creates disrupted mosaics of contemporaneity and untemporaneity.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE is the Kamikaze Loggia project. For the Georgian Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale, curator Joanna Warsza and artist Gio Sumbadze added a parasitic extension on the roof of the Arsenale reflecting on the vernacular architecture of the city. However, as Warsza points out in our book, repair was not something the Georgian government wanted to represent the country abroad, so they missed the chance to keep the Kamikaze Loggia in Venice.

I still very much regret the fact that the Georgian government didn't agree to keep this pavilion as an official representation of their country for future editions...

financially speaking it would have been an amazing deal. Renting 60 sq. meters of the roof is far cheaper than paying for a white cube. Unfortunately, it looked too shabby and precarious to the Georgian authorities, evoking a possible notion of repair, if you will. And repair is not something the countries want

"THE NEW GENERATION IS NOT REPAIRING ANYTHING; RATHER, THEY ARE STARTING FROM ZERO. THEY ARE CONSTRUCTING A NEW ART SCENE THROUGH APPROXIMATIONS."

to represent themselves with in Venice... Authorities perform their own Euroremont in terms of representation.¹⁵

We got a similarly cold response from the officials of the Georgian Embassy in Estonia, who decided to ignore our project and rather concentrate their resources on reproducing the self-exoticizing folkloric side of their country.¹⁶

Practices of repair provide valuable information regarding social dynamics, effects of change and cultural appreciation, bringing to light the local system of values and standards. The combination of traditional skills and current needs defines the aesthetic and semantic density in Tbilisi. As the architect David Bostanashvili argues, there is a lack of urban planning in the Georgian capital and several buildings that were important parts of the cultural heritage have been demolished in recent years. He gave an example of this tendency with the documentation of *Palace of Poetry*,¹⁷ an ensemble of pavilions hand-carved by his father and destroyed a few years later by the invisible hand of the free market.

Unfortunately, demolition has become a common practice in the center of the Georgian capital. There has been little municipal control, and for many private owners it is cheaper to demolish than to renovate old buildings. Every new loss looks like a guilty negligence to my eyes, like a treasure sinking in the depths of the ocean.

The exhibition “Aesthetics of Repair in Contemporary Georgia” also shows Thea Gvetadze’s artwork *Esophageal Foreign Bodies*,¹⁸ a ready-made by the artist’s father – a doctor who collected obscure items from people’s throats during his career. We can also refer to the scatological performance of Group Bouillon in Tartu: all six members cut each other’s hair not only as an act of solidarity, but also as a way to get rid of bad energy, start from scratch, and escape civil pessimism. Full of tension and visually powerful, this act helped the audience understand basic aspects of the human condition such as rituals, the abject, sacrifice, dis-possession, and despair.

The work *Pirimze* by Sophia Tabatadze¹⁹ provides insights into the culture of repair in Tbilisi, as the central Pirimze building served anyone with anything broken for decades: shoes, clothes, watches, jewelry, electronic devices, etc. The artist’s work comprises a documentary, book, and installation – a replica of the artisan’s booth with the original tools and accessories. Sadly for many, in 2007 the old modernist building (built in 1971) was replaced with a new “Pirimze Plaza”, which now houses standardized, anonymous office spaces that are unaffordable to the previous tenants.

As outlined by Bostanashvili, the visual stimuli and chaotic opportunity inherent in the architecture of post-Soviet Tbilisi has produced a very particular semiotic system. Layers of history are revealed in tiny details. To outline certain microworlds is likened to a struggle that makes traces visible. This suggests a particular understanding of the aesthetic as concerned with the relationship between material change and social change, and how it affects our experience.²⁰



Top: *Esophageal Foreign Bodies*, by Thea Gvetadze, middle: *Pirimze*, by Sophia Tabatadze, bottom: *Untitled Archaeology*, by Levan Mindiashvili.

PHOTOS: JOHAN HUMEIRIND

If we consider the materiality of the city as something more than a backdrop, we discover a condensation of power relations and temporalities.²¹ In this vein, the artist Levan Mindiashvili explores the effects of “thrown-away-ness” and reuse in compositions which carry a particular material sensitivity and experience of duration. The semantic distinction of materials and their private/public associations is also exemplified in our exhibition by Giorgi Okropiridze’s assemblages.²² The artist fictionalizes everyday life into art by creating unexpected contrasts between materials, structures and surfaces that are familiar from daily use.

Another outcome of our project is a volume published under the same title as the exhibition. The book includes a foreword, an introduction, and ten short essays. Besides the interviews

with Warsza and Popiashvili, and Pertenava's insights, the compilation includes a text by Paul Salopek, a *National Geographic* reporter, who recently journeyed across the Southern Caucasus. In his memory, Azerbaijan slips away and Georgia is remembered because of its human textures, shapes and scale. For Paul Salopek, Georgia is a handmade society:

The republic of Georgia was a primitivist painting.... The country people were crookedly built, too: swollen-handed and weathered. The women wore gumboots and strata of faded sweaters. The men favored old army camouflage: purely functional clothing. Which is to say: Craggy little Georgia is poor, and has many obvious problems, but it is also an exceptionally beautiful place, and comforting in its human textures, shapes, and scale: a handmade society.²³

The book also features a playful essay by Rene Mäe and Juuli Nava, who explore the pleasurable aspects of breakdown in different forms of mobility. As they write, "post-tourists" hunt for breakdowns and repairs in the city, while a "traditional" tourist would use the "hop on-hop off" bus line. In her contribution, the researcher Costanza Curro observes that hospitality is understood in Georgia as an element of national identity, yet she adds that generational change is actively reworking traditions and rituals in this patriarchal society.

Marcos Ferreira focuses on the nuances of the post-Soviet *poiesis* by accounting for the afterlives of Stalin in two museums of Georgia and in the Dry Bridge flea market of Tbilisi. As he shows, Stalin has become a bestselling commodity in the country, used by locals in their survival struggles despite the ideological stance of this polemical figure.

What sticks out at the Gori museum is the lobby where synthetic Stalin memorabilia is exhibited and sold: small-size Stalin busts, 40 lari; Stalin mugs, 10 lari; Stalin snow globes, 15 lari... Stalin becomes more oddity than father figure, more commodity than hero, whereby the cult of personality is transmuted into a material and symbolic resource for local communities.²⁴

Through an artistic intervention (sitting in a café for seven hours a day for five days in a row without a laptop or phone), the anthropologist Francisco Martínez²⁵ reflects on the daydreaming and rudderlessness that seems to attend everyday life in Tbilisi. He then includes microethnographies that show how hard it is to find or establish the middle ground in Georgian society – not surprisingly, people constantly compare the way things appear to be with the way they feel things ought to be.

In today's Tbilisi, everyone is surviving as best they can without much hope of any positive change, the ethnologist Aimar Ventsel²⁶ remarks. In his chapter, he shows how civil disengagement has

turned into a personal strategy towards the repeated failures of the Georgian state to protect the citizens' wellbeing. Alternative spaces are carved between the lines and on the margin of official discourses and most often characterized by both resistance and ignorance.²⁷ These failures also trigger various kinds of official activities and the idea that the state is not strong enough.²⁸

All this shows that is Georgia is not only still struggling to come to terms with its past; it is still striving to build up a functioning state and economy. Hence, the distinctiveness of the current dynamics rests not just on the influential legacies of socialism, but also on the personal experiences and expectations of these years.²⁹ As Frederiksen demonstrates in his ethnography about unemployed young men in Georgia,³⁰ widespread feelings of marginality and frustration are due more to present stagnation and negative expectations for the future than to questions about problematic pasts.

Once the exhibition was over, in June 2016, I revisited Tbilisi to present our project publicly and return some of the artworks. When I asked for spontaneous feedback from the managers of an art residency where I brought Tabatadze's *Pirimze*, they replied that "*remont* was already well sold by Joanna Warsza in Kamikaze Loggia". Also, they assessed that in our project we have been too positive about the work of the new generation. Legitimate criticism, even if the aggressive tone they used was out of place ("after nine months in Georgia you could not come up with anything else?"). On the one hand, they complained that foreign curators do not know much about the local art scene and manifested pessimism themselves about the current situation; on the other, they showed arrogance towards an international project that involved a dozen local artists, gallerists, and researchers. Sadly, they reproduced the typical proud attitude of "we locals know better" and dismissed the work we had done to mobilize people, raise funding, and involve institutions.

OUR PROJECT WAS inspired by Warsza's *Kamikaze Loggia*, yet goes beyond the post-socialist frame of *remont/euroremont* practices. Indeed, we found that to a certain extent, people were tired of the transition narrative in Georgia. Accordingly, we decided to put the focus on intimate and existentialist aspects of repair, the ambiguity and ordinariness of marginality, and how these practices are a way of handling loss in Georgia.

As our project shows, there is a connection between aesthetics and morality, between the way that we perceive the world and how we want to dwell in it. Aesthetics therefore appear as more than a rhetorical battlefield: a space of struggle to make something visible and participate in society ("the distribution of the sensible", as Rancière calls it).³¹

Repairing is both cross-cultural and culturally relative; it has similarities across the world and differences based on tradition and affordances. In this sense, the specificity of repair is not that it happens but rather that it highlights the values attached and its aesthetics and moral implications.³²

**"PEOPLE
CONSTANTLY
COMPARE THE WAY
THINGS APPEAR TO
BE WITH THE WAY
THEY FEEL THINGS
OUGHT TO BE."**

For the public presentation of the project in the Nectar/Atelier gallery, Nino Sekhniashvili and Group Bouillon shared a few impressions about their visit to Estonia, Pertenava summarized her essay, and I described the whole process from the conception of the main ideas to future steps of this “platform”: For instance, collaborating with the Nectar gallery in organizing an exhibition of contemporary Estonian artists in Tbilisi.

During the discussion, Irena Popiashvili observed that it is important to organize transnational projects. Indeed, she was particularly interested in the feedback this kind of exhibition received in Estonia. I stressed that we got very positive comments from artists and art critics (e.g. Liisa Kaljula's and Angela Wheeler's reviews), yet we were expecting more coverage from the media and better attendance. As for the reasons, I argued that the idiosyncrasy of Tartu and the fact that we did not rely on clichés about Georgia did not help. We might also have failed in not making the exhibition more accessible to the public.

Popiashvili noted that the number of visitors depends highly on the reputation of the museum and criticized the simplistic understanding of the arts that the Georgian government upholds – reduced to a tool that might attract tourists. On the other hand, the artist Nadia Tsulukidze suggested that perhaps this project was not meant to reach a wide audience, since all exhibitions of contemporary art have to create their own audiences. She added that the main achievement of this project was that it emphasized the “contemporary” and “the new” as much as “Georgianness”. Finally, this discussion made me realize that our project not only involved multiple scales and circulations; it also invited the audience to think about the various crossings, encounters, and friendships that happened during the process. ❌

Francisco Martínez, PhD, is an anthropologist based in Estonia.

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PHOTO: MARIO KLEIN

The rappers Edo Maajka and Frenkie (top left and right) are well-known musicians in Bosnia. Serbian rapper Marčelo (above) in Mostar 2015, when he participated in the program Perspektiva.

BROTHERS AFTER ARMS

BALKAN RAPPERS AS POST-WAR PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS

by Dragana Cvetanović

The patterns for studying the wars and societies of the Balkans have been developed mainly from the institutional perspective. However, when examining social changes in the region, discussing identity questions, or analyzing political situations, we have to examine the grassroots level –the people and their power to incite social change. This article seeks to contribute to our understanding of the action that emerges organically from the population itself, a subject that, thus far, has primarily been studied from the perspective of social movement and civil society studies, but has received far less attention in the fields of linguistics and cultural studies. This article analyzes how rap artists contribute to societal, political, and cultural healing and find ways of understanding everyday life in transitional society.

Fans and the growing number of hip-hop scholars define hip-hop as a diverse cultural field with its own ideologies, community activism, and consumerism expressed through both lyrics and artistic engagement. Even when hip-hop entered the public sphere of worldwide cultural discourses, one of its main features, live practice, seen in “face-to-face dynamics”,¹ remained alive through modes of rap activism in communities. This article sets out to analyze these modes of *rap activism through live practices and performances*. Jacqueline Urla² sees rappers as retaining strong ties to their communities in maintaining their identity as both entertainers and community spokespersons. Jeffrey Decker³ argues that “nation-conscious rappers” constitute a form of organic intellectualism. I would go one step fur-

ther and argue that Balkan rappers who are socially and politically engaged have the potential to make a genuine sociopolitical impact because of the emancipatory interest reflected in their music and lyrics, as well as in videos, public speeches, films, books, and video discussion programs. All these actions shape the civil society by confronting the unwillingness to deal with postwar sentiments and the intensifying nationalism among the postwar generation and the younger generation now succeeding it. In cultures where political and social communication is still colored by nationalism and taboos, rap speaks up.⁴

THE PUBLIC INTELLECTUALISM of the three Balkan rappers portrayed in this article is displayed, first, in the lyrical message of three songs that make up the *Crème de la crème* trilogy, and second, in three separate narratives on the rappers’ activism outside music. The lyrical and artistic orientation of the three rappers has been directed from the start of their careers towards engaged, transnational rap music, which is largely appreciated,

but also criticized when audiences understand it as patronizing. To map out the various forms of the three rappers’ public engagement, I will examine texts from the interviews I have conducted, as well as from interviews in mainstream and social media, and the artists’ videos and films, both self-made and professionally produced.

This article is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the relevant literature on public intellectualism and engaged music, which is contextualized in the second section with regard to

abstract

This paper analyzes how the Serbian rapper Marčelo and the Bosnian rappers Edo Maajka and Frenkie have – from their first steps in hip-hop culture – tried to build a common understanding of postwar sentiments and to diagnose newborn societies in the Balkans. I argue that Balkan hip-hop is a form of cultural activism that mobilizes people for social change. Through their transnational projects, lyrics, and participation in the public sphere, these rappers have become postwar public intellectuals who aim to provoke social change and have contributed to how these societies have moved on after violent conflict.

KEYWORDS: hip-hop, public intellectualism, former Yugoslavia, discourse studies, identity.

Balkan rap. The third section examines the impact of lyrical and non-musical activism. The conclusion reviews postwar public intellectualism and rappers' activism as a way of answering the rappers' personal calling and filling a generational need.

Public intellectualism and rap music in the Balkans

Public or organic intellectualism has been attributed to popular music in the academic research on the subject by authors including Abrams, Lipsits, Delgado, and Lusane.⁵ In particular, theorists such as Mijatović and Steinberg⁶ have shown how popular music becomes a facet of social movements. Dalibor Mišina⁷ has discussed various engaged music forms, especially new wave, in the former Yugoslavia.⁸ Intellectualism found in popular culture is "public" by nature, since musicians and artists are public figures. Antonio Gramsci⁹ coined the term "organic intellectuals" in contradistinction to "traditional" intellectuals. While the traditional intellectual legitimizes the current system, the organic one is born spontaneously from a social group in order to raise its self-awareness and to ensure its greater cohesion. Mišina and Mijatović have also suggested that musical engagement and the artist's responsibility to society have their origins in the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of *littérature engagée*.¹⁰ Steinberg¹¹ argues that rock is a salient vehicle for political expression when politicized popular culture is combined with the development of a distinctive urban rock subculture. In Abrams' research, the rappers of the "hardcore genre insist that their role as artists and poets is inseparable from their role as insightful inquirers into reality and teachers of truth". Abrams finds support in Edward Said's clarification that "today everyone who works in any field connected either with the production or distribution of knowledge is an intellectual in Gramsci's sense".¹² Another concept coined by Lusane¹³ is "ghetto revolutionaries". Zygmunt Bauman¹⁴ argues that intellectuals have a contemporary role as "interpreters" in the conversation across discourses rather than as tradition "legislators" who arbitrate on their respective values.¹⁵

For the Balkan rap artists and activists Edo Maajka, Frenkie, and Marčelo, intellectualism arises in their comprehension that their societies have lost opportunities but retain a huge potential.¹⁶ Through their lyrics and their activities outside of music, these rappers are "involved in the generation and circulation of ideas reflecting the needs of that community".¹⁷ All three, in their thirties, are well-established artists in the region, have fans outside Bosnia and Serbia, and share mutually intelligible languages.¹⁸ They are part of a regional rap generation consisting of rappers making various styles of rap music, including socially engaged styles, but it is their activities outside of music that give them yet another artistic and personal dimension. Most of the rappers who started

their careers in the 1990s were by definition in a position to make socially engaged rhymes, since they were the first generation that was growing up under the extreme conditions of wars, state transitions, and the criminalization of society. Rappers were aware of the risk of becoming enemies of young, authoritarian states. Nineteen-nineties rap music from the region triumphed, however, in capturing the rebellious character of its time and the arising local hip-hop culture. The subsequent phase of postwar rap encompassed the more profound problems of a transnational nature, such as reconciliation, neonationalism and the post-conflict sentiments, that turned out to be even harder to solve than the war itself. With the rap scenes well established by this time, part of the audience was willing to judge the engaged rappers' activism as moralizing and stepping into more intellectual spheres.¹⁹

A few other artists from the region could be considered to fit the same identification category of public intellectuals, such as the Croatian band Elemental and its female MC, Remi. Rap artist activism is largely a generational phenomenon, since the environment confronted this generation with especially problematic issues. In stating that "I'm unhappy because my generation did nothing to make things better in my country," and "I will continue with rapping until things are changed",²⁰ Edo Maajka expressed his strong discontent primarily in generational terms. His statement is an explanation of why he writes the lyrics he does and how he sees his own actions behind the lyrics. The notion of public pedagogy, introduced by Alexandra D'Urso,²¹ conceptualizes Edo's and his friends' social activism outside rapping, which is aimed at opening a dialogue and striving for more understanding among youth under the strong pressure of turbulent times.

HIP-HOP FROM the region of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia has its roots in the still shared Yugoslav context, into which hip-hop culture was introduced from two directions in the early 1980s. New wave, postpunk musicians who recognized the innovative character of rap started incorporating its features into their music,²² while at the same time party music connoisseurs, disco and funk dancers, and DJs embraced hip-hop simultaneously with the rest of Western Europe. Under the influence of American acts such as Public Enemy, Run DMC, The Beastie Boys and other artists on the Def Jam label, a more articulated local scene (or scenes) began to appear, especially in Croatia and Serbia. During the

1990s, local hip-hop and rap were still an exclusive subculture led by local young enthusiasts, motivated by and cooperating with local radio shows. The program "Geto" on Radio Politika in Belgrade was launched in 1992; "Black-out Project" on Radio 101 in Zagreb started in 1993, and "FM Jam" started in the Bosnian town of Tuzla in 1999.²³ These radio shows had a huge influence on the development of the local rap scenes by playing new demos and encouraging newcomers. Rap fans followed artists across the new borders, although it was

"DURING THE 1990S, LOCAL HIP-HOP AND RAP WERE STILL AN EXCLUSIVE SUBCULTURE LED BY LOCAL YOUNG ENTHUSIASTS, MOTIVATED BY AND COOPERATING WITH LOCAL RADIO SHOWS."

not easy to get the desired material on cassettes or other media. The first collaboration between Croatian and Serbian MCs took place in 1997, when Phat Phillie from Zagreb and Reksona from Belgrade got together to organize rap gigs in their respective cities.

Yugoslav and later regional (that is, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian) scenes went through the typical phases of local versions of hip-hop: establishing artistic legitimacies by rapping in English, imitating authentic African American rappers, and “breaking your own language into rap language” while relying on local resources to make local rap.²⁴ During the 1990s, when most European rap scenes were on the rapidly progressive path of self-identification, so too were the Balkan scenes, although they were affected by the turbulent events. The break-up of Yugoslavia, the economic transition from socialism to capitalism, wars, criminalization, economic sanctions against Serbia, and the country’s isolation created an existential framework in which young rappers building local hip-hop culture could feel themselves closer to the original, ghettoized African-American and other racial minorities in American cities. Rap with a sociopolitical message thus became more the norm than an exception in the Balkan rap of the 1990s. And since hip-hop lyrics are usually rooted in the idea of systematic struggle against racial and social inequality,²⁵ generational struggles against former-socialists-turned-nationalists in the authoritarian regimes of young Balkan states fit into hip-hop’s ideological mission.²⁶ Yet Balkan hip-hop was at first a jealously kept secret among privileged kids, accessible thanks to their language proficiency and easier positions, and only later trickled down to lower-class youngsters, whose social positions were more restrictive and thus more similar to those of African-American inner city rappers, but whose musical tastes tended more towards the genre of turbo-folk (especially in Serbia).

Social activism and engaging music

Yugoslav popular music was largely encouraged by the country’s ideology of socialist humanism and by the authorities, whose approach was “if rock music could not be suppressed, perhaps it could be put to work for socialism”.²⁷ However, the chief legacy that Yugoslav rock bequeathed to the engaged rap of today was its progressive²⁸ or committed nature.²⁹ In particular, rock music of the mid- to late 1970s is considered to be about substance rather than style. Moreover, it was actively engaged with the sociocultural and political realities of Yugoslav society, albeit from a youth-centered point of view.³⁰ As rock music’s sociocultural significance has declined, engaged rap has in many respects taken a position that is observant, oppositional, modern, and even prophetic. The voice of rappers matters especially to people between 15 and 30 years old, a group whose voice was lost during the transition from the youth-appreciating socialism of the former Yugoslavia to the confused, youth-neglecting, neo-liberal persuasions of present-day societies.³¹

Activism is often connected to social movements, and its core is often said to be youth, or, as Andreana Clay³² states in her book *The Hip-Hop Generation Fights Back*, “Social movement representations of youth suggest that young people have always been at the center of political activism and social change.” Accord-

ing to her, adolescents’ identity in social movement activism became most central to racial struggles in the USA since “youth of color organize in light of the ‘burden’ of the sixties.” In other words, she raises the question how the hip-hop generation in the USA participates in processes of social change. The question of activism can also be reformulated as the question of music’s engagement in society, and of ties between popular culture and popular protest. In Eyerman and Jamison’s approach,³³ music is capable of engaging in society in three ways: through organization, legitimization, and performing participation. Organization refers to infrastructural conditions that make the public sphere possible.³⁴ Legitimation means how musicians become “truth bearers” for the movements they represent, since “cultural forms are not just resources of entertainment, but also of cognition and mobilization.” Finally, performing participation, the freeing of art and culture from preexisting forms of power, is part of the process by which a critical public is produced. Music engages with our system of values, both aesthetic and political. The authors propose a theory of social change in which the cultural and political are merged with the mobilization of tradition, meaning that cultural tradition can be remobilized as a form of collective memory through which groups can construct collective identities and a new type of cognitive praxis. In addition, “the revolutionary quest for liberation ... remains the core meaning of rock music.”³⁵ According to Street,³⁶ understanding music’s place in political participation means asking how it seeks to move those who hear and perform it.

Some of the questions posed in the 1960s appear to be relevant to postwar Balkan rap youth too. A discussion led by Black Power activists on the importance of “street dialect” or “the language of the people” arose in the USA in the late 1960s. As the roots of authenticity and collective identity, *street talk* and urban street life became the ground upon which the Black Power movement advanced. The language provided the fundamental structures of feeling³⁷ through which black experience, and thus black culture, was said to form. Two decades after the violent conflict in the former Yugoslavia, it appears to be impossible to articulate personal and economical losses and the deep traumas of destruction, war, killings, and rape. In this vacuum, rappers like Edo Maajka, Frenkie, and Marčelo emerged as authoritative figures of the people, voicing their feelings and thoughts about postdemocracy through rap lyrics and correlate with the superficial appearance of democracy. According to Zolo,³⁸ when the reality is predemocratic, where the citizen is a passive bystander, witnessing politics only as a spectacle, the question is how to give citizens the vestiges of political participation, how to mobilize them? According to Frenkie, “the more people listen to this music, the more they think about these problems. The more they talk about them, the more a critical mass grows. I understand (activism) as an obligation, it doesn’t make sense to write about other stuff at this time.”³⁹

In the following section I describe activist rappers’ actions. My data exists in various discursive forms, including interviews conducted by me (excerpts of longer artistic interviews), media interviews, and texts from social media. To analyze the artistic

interviews I conducted, I employ the conceptual apparatus of ethnographic methodology,⁴⁰ and for the rest of the data I rely on critical media analysis⁴¹ and on sociolinguistic and discursive methodology.⁴²

Brothers after arms

The title of this article alludes to the phrase “brothers in arms”,⁴³ which exists in several languages. I see Balkan rappers as friends or brothers⁴⁴ who, after a period of separation, find each other in the same historical and generational moment in their new countries. They promote the idea of brotherhood, for example, with a *sample* in the song “Crème de la Crème Begins”.⁴⁵ The song narrates in retrospect how the musical friendship and collaboration between the three rappers began. The sample is from the legendary Croatian female singer Josipa Lisac’s song “Prijatelji” [Friends] of 1969. On top of the intro of this classic, the rappers repeat the title of their rap song, “Crème de la Crème Begins”.⁴⁶

Sometime, yes, I remember my two old friends,
Sometimes a tear reaches the rose,
I’ve loved them both, they were my friends.
And then a day came and we went our separate ways
sadly
Without a word, we just went.
I’ve loved them so, they were my friends.

In this rap, the Bosnian artist Frenkie (Adnan Hamidović, born 1982) and with his countrymen Edo Maajka (Edin Osmić, born 1976) and DJ Soul are on their way to Belgrade, Serbia, to “get on the mic” with the Serbian rhymers Marčelo (Marko Šelić, born 1983). This is the first time that Bosnian rappers are about to cross the border after the war. Frenkie raps: “I have to admit, I’m a bit frightened, first time in Belgrade since the war, fuck it, hope I’ll survive, a couple of beers will make it fine.” The song “Crème de la Crème Begins” from Frenkie’s album *Troyanac* (2012) is the last one in a trilogy of rap songs with similar titles: “Crème de la Crème” (2003), “Crème de la Crème 2” (2005), “Crème de la Crème Begins” (2012).⁴⁷ After a few introductory lines, it becomes clear that this song is a retrospective of the evolution of the whole trilogy.

The next to take the mic is the Serb, Marčelo, who describes the beginning of this collaboration from his perspective: in the early 2000s, he was going through a relationship crisis. When he got an invitation from the Bosnian recording company FM Jam to do a collaboration with the Bosnians in Tuzla, he was at first reluctant to go, but since he was already numbed by heartache, he decided to erase his sorrows with a risky and unknown venture:

They want me to be the first one
there after the war, please, give
me a break, people, you see that

my girl is cheating on me, but since I don’t wanna live
anyhow, I’d better meet with Jihad than do nothing, I’ll
go and see for myself.

Through his playful rhymes he also remembers the stories told by his father about life in the former Yugoslavia, and about Bosnians, who were known as “good guys who liked to drink, who were true friends, and who had always a good time”. In the Bosnian city of Tuzla, close to the border with Serbia, he realizes all these stories told by his father were still true. The only difference between his and his father’s experience is the intervening war.

The rap trilogy “Crème de la Crème” started with the song published on Marčelo’s first album, *De facto*, in 2003.⁴⁸ The idea of a joint project across the new borders seemed quite daring at the time, both in hip-hop circles and in the broader postconflict and post-Yugoslav cultural region. Even today, these three rappers, together with some Croatian artists, continue their collaboration, both within and outside rap, with the intention of discussing societal perspectives among youth. The choice of the samples introducing the songs is intended to give new life to their shared cultural legacy. The song reestablished their lost communication through rap lyrics. The sample for the first song, by the most symbolic Yugoslav band, the ethnorock band *Bijelo Dugme* [White Button], is “Sve će to, mila moja, prekriti ružmarin, snjegovi i šaš” [All of that, my dear, will be covered by rosemary, snow and reed] from 1979. This tune, originally a love song, is given a universal, nostalgic function, with the following line used as a sample: “Everything’s in vain, everything’s against us, but it could have been better”. The line needs no deeper interpretation: the conflict and the war are seen as destructive and pointless. Only the second song of the trilogy lacks a sampled introduction.

AS LYRICISTS, Frenkie, Marčelo, and Edo Maajka are often seen as the generationally and culturally distanced alternative voices of the younger generations, pointing at the aching problems of today’s youth. Their actions are an embodiment of one of the oldest definitions of the culture, that given by Jeff Chang,⁴⁹ who has said that hip-hop and rap lyrics, as a socially engaged art form, allow many people to take part in the discussion on injustices and inequities in societies. Their lyrics often invoke invigorating reactions in media and social media: Marčelo’s song about youth violence encouraged people to express their opinions; Frenkie’s

tolerance song inspired discussion and filmmaking; and Edo Maajka’s pacifist personal experiences triggered a frightening silence about anti-Semitism.

The broad exposure in the media was probably the reason why Marčelo and Edo Maajka were chosen for a video project on Balkan youth. During 2015 and 2016, the Balkan Service of Radio Free Europe in collaboration with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) filmed and produced reportages

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Covers. Frenkie's *Troyanac*, Marčelo's *De Facto* and Edo Maačka's *Slušaj mater* (Listen to your mother).

on youth in various cities in the region, discussing such issues as nationalities, divided cities, abortion, and women's rights. Each topic is discussed in four episodes from various perspectives. The first segment deals with the invisible division between Mostar's Muslim and Croat sides, with the Serbian rapper and writer Marčelo moderating. In the episode, when he meets all the participants involved making in the film, he explains why he is there, introducing a unique narrative on activism:

So, why am I here tonight? Since I'm from Serbia, one might think that I'm here because I represent a neutral side. I'm not neutral. Neutrality sounds like you're not interested. As if you don't have anything to do with it, so you are there like some judge who has to say who is wrong and who is right. I am convinced that all of us should be interested in how are our neighborhoods are doing, because it is of concern to all our countries. Once one unpleasant man told me that I don't have a clear picture of what is happening in the Balkans in spite of all my travelling, because people come to the concerts or to literature events to have fun and they are in a good mood and you don't see the real picture. That upset me and made me think even harder about how all these places that I've seen through my concerts and literary events function outside of those situations. That is what brings me to you here tonight: I'm not going to judge who is right or wrong, since the idea is not to discuss, but to let each other be heard, or at least to try to hear how you think. Anyone who wants, and I hope that many will do so, will be able to tell us their opinion.⁵⁰

A joint lyrical project of Balkan rappers in the postconflict context that started in early 2002 led to various public projects of social engagement. The following section discusses Frenkie's supranational activism through filmmaking and speaking at international conferences, Marčelo's interview activism⁵¹ to raise social awareness, and Edo Maačka's engagement in the form of lived practice⁵² or living biographies.⁵³

Local and supranational activism by Frenkie

Frenkie (Adnan Hamidović, born 1982 in Bijeljina) is a Bosnian rapper with a defined sociopolitical interest. He was active in the "Bosnian spring" protests of 2014 in Tuzla where he now lives.⁵⁴ Recently he has been known for his work on reconciliation among youth in post-Yugoslav spaces, especially in his native, divided Bosnia, through his influential music. Besides collaborating closely with Edo Maačka and appearing frequently on Marčelo's albums and shows, he is one of the initiators of yet another project, which started with a song called "Pismo Milanu" [A letter to Milan]. In the short film *Pismo* [Letter] by the young female director Ada Sokolović, he tells how the song "Pismo Milanu" provoked strong reactions and led to further projects by two friends. Frenkie's Serbian friend Milan Colić, an experienced peace activist from southern Serbia, asked Frenkie, who is a Bosnian Muslim, to write a song for Orthodox Christian Serbs. The reactions to this song resulted in the production of two short films, including *Granica* [Border], in which Frenkie and Milan discuss nationalism and attitudes toward different nationalities with young Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and Bosnian Serbs.

The song "Pismo Milanu" is delicate in its sentiments and personal touches:

We have all committed crimes, but then what, you did the same thing, stole and burned, during many years we lived next to each other, but we cannot speak to each other. That is why, Milan, I'm writing you this letter, for you to see where we stand and that many people do not think alike. My people will be angry with me, but this is my decision, my intention is peaceful and that makes me feel calm. I would not accept their rules even today, time will tell if I was a fighter or a traitor, I've been waiting long enough, keeping it in me, and now I've decided to shake hands first. Let's stop lying and cheating, I know that you are afraid when you walk through Sarajevo, you see words written in the Arabic alphabet, you hear the ezan from the mosque tower, I'm afraid too when I see Wahhabis.

Expressing themselves they give a voice to all fans. They become mediators.

Every line of the song makes an outsider wonder whether the situation described is true after twenty years of peace. Why is everyone frightened of saying their name in certain places, why are there frightened people on the streets of the neighboring town, why is a lyricist afraid of saying these lines openly? Is the war really over? “You can say I’m sorry to the others, although your people will spit on you, or we can live like this for another twenty years,” Frenkie says; “I am sorry and let’s shake hands.”

AS A RESULT OF these projects, Frenkie has been invited into the international arena, to the Hague Talks conference (“Setting Peace and Justice in Motion”), where he talked in 2014 about his own experiences and about youth and music in Bosnia.⁵⁵ He uses his own life as an example of facing the civil war in Bosnia and his experience of living in exile in Germany, but suggests that there are realistic paths to reconciliation in Bosnia. He mentions how a German school excursion to the Dachau concentration camp made some of his classmates, who had started experimenting with far right and neo-Nazi ideas, rethink their political opinions. Besides their opinions, they also changed their shoes and hair styles! Frenkie’s concern is that Bosnian young people are far more radical in their nationalism than their parents’ generation, who actually witnessed or took part in the war. This view is supported by his activist friend Milan. Frenkie concludes that the main problem with his country is that there are no such school excursions, for example, as his trip to Dachau. He suggested that kids from Banja Luka (in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina) should be taken to Srebrenica, where 8000 Muslims were killed by Serbs in the war, or that kids from Sarajevo, which is mostly populated by Muslims today, should be taken to Kazani, a cave outside Sarajevo where Serb and Croat inhabitants of Sarajevo were killed. In the rapper’s opinion, these themes he raps about in his music are “tough stuff”, but he sees it at his duty to react and to stand up for what is right and to “give a little back”. By “giving back” he means repaying hip-hop music for having taught him critical thinking and activism.

Now I’m in the position where I have a bit of influence, so I try to be constructive and positive with that. One punch line that has been leading my rapping is “Mi smo ti koji su čekali”, “We were the ones waiting.”

Frenkie has openly used his personal experience to initiate discussion. His own family left Eastern Bosnia when the war started. Documentary pictures of the paramilitary troops who show up in Frenkie’s school yard make a striking backdrop to the war story of the then ten-year-old Adnan. This method of transferring personal experiences and tribulations into public knowledge is known as “living biography”.⁵⁶ How a personal biography is constructed into the public sphere is an issue not only of self-identification, but also of group identification.

Marčelo’s engagement for civil society

Marčelo was born Marko Šelić in the Southern Serbian town of Paraćin in 1983. A talented student of languages, he started with rap music because it was yet another textual form through which he could express himself. Now, as an established rapper, novelist, and activist, he explains his engagement in society:

Engaged art is generally about humans, about spotting injustice and setting it under a spotlight. This kind of work against discrimination, violence, and a fight for human rights exists in “organized” societies, and in “unorganized” ones even more. If engaged art is seen as a sort of corrective for the ruling regime, then it can also be considered as an ideological opposition.⁵⁷

How then does Marčelo engage in the public sphere? From the beginning of his musical and writing career, he has had a recognizable voice, though one that was “too intellectual” for some audiences.⁵⁸ His single “Pegla” [Iron] from his album published in 2014 made a significant impact by raising a discussion on youth violence, and led to an increase in the rapper’s public activity and a notable number of interviews.⁵⁹

The song “Pegla” [Iron] is about a boy named Darko who is harassed in school but saved by an older boy. Later, when Darko is 17 and joins a gang as part of his newly acquired bully identity, he decides to stab one unknown boy who he thinks looks effeminate. Darko’s character is given the attributes of a Serbian young man who believes in God, Kosovo, and his people. After stabbing and eventually killing this boy, Darko, whose gang nickname is Iron, realizes that he has killed the person who once was ready to stand up for him – the boy that had defended him when they were kids. The song places the listener in a scene with bloody bodies and a confused protagonist. The glorification of the bully and criminal lifestyle has become deeply entrenched in Serbian society since the 1990s. Young people’s sense of reality and human values seems to be blurred. Marčelo’s song started a debate on criminal lifestyles that spread throughout the entire region. This lyrically powerful song has mobilized people of different ages and from different groups in society. The timing was also essential, since many cases of youth violence had taken place shortly before the song was published.

Marčelo describes the problem:

You are considered a traitor to the nation if you say something against someone who is considered to be patriotic. That division into patriots and traitors is one of the main tools of demagoguery left from the Milošević era. It has survived and it is now more acute than ever before. Anybody can be silenced with an accusation of being a traitor. And I would really like to

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meet someone who likes Serbia more than I do. There is a general atmosphere where you are not allowed to say that something is wrong in the society because that is interpreted to mean that some foreign institution is paying you to do so. You can't even raise your voice against a murder either. The song "Iron" is about murder. But the discussion about it tends to go in the wrong direction – we start talking about family values versus gay values. This song is not about that, it is about whether you can murder another human being because you don't happen to like some things about him. And since we are not understanding that point, and because you have to explain that you don't think anything bad about your own country if you stand up for someone's right to live, then I think that we definitely need to build some things from the beginning, even if that sounds like anthropological rewinding of time. Sometimes you just need to do that.⁶⁰

Marčelo is striving for a better society, civil society. He demands that people listen, hear, and understand. And maybe even act. According to Michael Edwards,⁶¹ "the image of civil society as a desirable social order or self-image of modernity is defined in normative terms, such as tolerance, non-discrimination, non-violence, trust and cooperation, freedom and democracy." Edwards notes that social engagement with a focus on the development of civil society is about personal and social transformations: united, these represent a potentially revolutionary force for change in the public sphere, not just in private lives. This type of ideology is also recognizable in the initial ideologies of hip-hop, seen in young people performing their social realities in particular times and spaces.⁶²

Marčelo's first album, *De facto* from 2003,⁶³ was the first to be promoted in the neighboring countries after the wars. Marčelo went to perform in Bosnia and was one of the first artists to cross the new borders. To him, Bosnian people were the heroes from the stories his father told him:

My dad used to travel constantly through the former Yugoslavia and has lots of friends everywhere. Luckily my family was never poisoned by the negative energy during the '90s and I remember that my father often asked how the war was possible. When I travel to Bosnia, between my story and my father's story there is a war. And when I go there, I see everything as in the story from my childhood. My Bosnian friends had the same story when they came here, as did my Croatian friends from the band Elemental. Once we stood behind the messages in our lyrics, with pure hearts and some personal experience, we still believe in that. There are some things we have succeeded in moving forward, and one of them is the amount of joint musical projects we have had since 2003. I have the feeling that people are even travelling more – breaking the boundaries is the best thing. It is the way the story breathes. Diplomatic meetings may or may not

be happening; it is nice to see people shaking hands, but they have been shaking hands even after the war. That does not mean anything if people themselves do not start moving across borders and feel free.⁶⁴

By understanding how youth are socially located in the present, and by informing his own social and political ideas, Marčelo aims to mobilize young people who did not have such strong cultural idols as rock musicians were in Yugoslavia. Popular culture has been recognized to have a significant role in youth activism, influencing the way young people organize themselves, what tools they use, and the role models with which they identify. According to Stuart Hall,⁶⁵ youth activism provides a site for youth to engage with and utilize images of urban youth, previous social movements, and discourses of activism in order to understand and construct their own experiences.

Edo Maajka's pacifist engagement

Edo Maajka (Edin Osmić, born 1978) left his eastern Bosnian home town of Brčko when the war broke out and moved to Croatia, where he remained Bosnian to the locals even after becoming one of the most celebrated artists in Croatia. With his first album, *Slušaj mater* [Listen to your mother] from 2002, his verbal talent was soon recognized all over the Balkans. He is known for his witty, funny, and intelligent lyrics that bring his message to life through fast-flowing text. His public persona is ruled by typical Bosnian humor and self-deprecating irony, and he is often described as the biggest rap star in the region. The intensity of his lyrics is brought about by the juxtaposition of humorous and ultrarealistic lines. Probably the most incisive description of Edo Maajka as an artist would be that he is persistent in his various forms of public pedagogy, trying to open dialogue and achieve understanding among his generation, and even more so among the younger generation, on the importance of reconciliation. He has often stated that he needed to overcome the complex feelings of his early adolescence as a refugee. The example of Edo's activism that I will examine here deviates from the previous cases, since I want to analyze discourses in which Edo's private life and writings were both the object of and trigger for his action.

IN THE SUMMER OF 2014, Edo Maajka was involved in an unexpected public discussion which exposed personal life and his pacifist ideas beyond his rapping. When the conflict in Gaza started once again in 2014, somebody remembered Edo Maajka and his jocular exclamation before his marriage to an Israeli-born woman in 2011 that he could change his religion (i.e., convert to Judaism) for love. Edo Maajka now lives in Tel Aviv with his Jewish wife Lillah and their infant daughter. A great deal of hatred exploded onto Edo's Facebook page after he posted a status update inviting "his Palestinian and Israeli friends to throw away hatred and accept peace". The authors of the verbal attacks saw the rap artist as a traitor, not because he married a woman of the wrong religion, but because as a Bosniak he did not support the sufferings of the mostly Muslim Palestinian people. After one month

of silence in the face of these negative utterances, Edo Maajka decided to send a message to all his “Facebook friends” saying that the insults towards him and his family are due to the fact that he is married to a Jew. The magnitude of the anti-Semitism, however, surprised him.

Surprisingly, Edo’s message, which “deserved to be published on the main pages of the all main dailies in Bosnia and Herzegovina”,⁶⁶ was given no attention whatsoever by the media. Only two portals reported directly on the artist’s post, but the socio-cultural discussion was obscured. Here is what Edo Maajka, a citizen both of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of Croatia, wanted to say to his haters:

While I was married to a Croatian woman, there was some dissing, but this now is pure hatred and complete exaggeration. People who generally hate Croats, Serbs, Bosniaks, Jews, Palestinians, or any other ethnic, religious or racial group, are not my friends, and to me they are closer to fascism. There are people like this everywhere, but I thought this was rare among Bosniaks. All of these comments after the articles related to me at my portal speak a very heavy truth to all of us. I have been literally disowned as a son who has done something wrong, because I’ve married a woman of another religion and nation, and Jews have been declared a shame and they’ve been dehumanized in every sentence. I am proud of being a Bosnian, proud of having both a Croatian and a Bosnian passport, and I love my family, in spite of you hating it. I love all people, and I do not see them according to their nation or religion. The majority of people thought they thought this way too, but they do not. Yours, Edo Maajka.

Although a couple of columnists and bloggers wrote about the artist’s social media post, too many voices that would normally have defended a multicultural and liberal Bosnia were silent, and thus no larger discussion on tolerance or anti-Semitism ensued. This silence spoke the language of the society Edo Maajka tried to improve throughout his artistic career. Moreover, this episode brought one of his songs from the past to the spotlight. The song “On je mlađi” [He is the younger one] is about a young Croat, Ivan Marušić, whose Serb girlfriend Milana is expecting his child. When Ivan decides to present Milana to his parents, a tragedy unfolds. His father, a veteran of the Croatian homeland war, is devastated when he realizes his grandchild will be, to him, half enemy. Before his father blows himself up with a Serbian-made bomb, Ivan declares that he loves his girlfriend more than his father loved Croatian generals, president, country, war acts, and the court in the Hague. When the young couple leaves, the bomb explodes. “He is younger, he does not understand why he should hate Serbs, how should he explain that he loved her, Milan’s daughter, Serb girl?”

Even if the discourse of rap activism sometimes appears naïve, especially to those not familiar with the local realities, it is important to acknowledge that the issues of nationalism, hate,

violence, and fear are all part of Balkan reality. And when all institutional solutions for a better future have been tried, people eventually turn to themselves for ways to make a change. Living biography and the public pedagogy of a famous rap artist may have a strong influence on young people, helping them to articulate their own opinions.

Conclusion

The existence of the discursive public sphere, as discussed by Habermas,⁶⁷ should enable citizens to talk about common concerns in conditions of freedom, equality, and nonviolent interaction. Through microscopic public spheres one can open a discussion and take part in public conversation, possibly reaching a consensus by the force of rational argument. Hoping and acting in favor of social change, Balkan rappers are rapping, writing novels, drama, and columns, and widely discussing their thoughts in public events. “Major social change can only come about when sufficient public debate has sorted through the issues and a community emerges to support it”, according to Edwards.⁶⁸ Even if such major social change is not achieved by the Balkan rappers’ public intellectualism or pedagogy discussed in this article, someone needs to start and lead the discussion. Rappers in their thirties, at the halfway mark of their lives, can appear to the young people as an example of the voices supporting more tolerant, intellectual, and human approaches to postconflict realities. Frenkie’s search for the critical mass corresponds to Edwards’ metaphor: “Like rocks in the stream, the sharpness of different perspectives can be softened over time as they knock against each other.”

Rap lyrics and the public discussion led by rap artists might be regarded as the micro public sphere encompassing younger generations: rappers are turning their attention to young people, who are balancing between the experiences and sentiments of the war generations and present societies, encountering cultural and economic transition and a disrupted system of social values. The division of society into “patriots” and “traitors” marks the difference between the public sphere and totalitarianism. In the public sphere, all ideas and opinions are valid until proven otherwise.⁶⁹ In totalitarianism, debate is replaced by an inquiry into the motives of the individuals involved, the same tactic used in contemporary societies to silence new manifestations of dissent.

As seen in the lyrics of “Iron”, a cruel and persistent reality continues to inform and motivate the struggle for change. Through personified textual and social engagement, Frenkie, Edo, and Marčelo are expected to continue to rap towards the ideals of civil society, pointing out the problems of people halfway through their expected lifetimes. Rap lyrics and rap activism may take on the role of the public sphere where civil society becomes an arena for debate and deliberation, or as Edwards⁷⁰ puts it, a place where societal differences, social problems, public policy, government action, and matters of community and cultural identity are developed and debated. And where intellectualism in general is given another chance. ✖

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- 4 The Former Yugoslav countries have not yet mentally emerged from the 1990s, according to the historian Latinka Perović. The war was replaced with variable hopes that EU integration would fix the problems of the successor countries. However, the new countries do not recognize the new reality that these nations can remain multiethnic with an orientation towards a modernization that respects all human and minority rights. Dragan Štavljanin, "Latinka Perović za RSE: Vraćamo se u 19. vek", August 5, 2016, accessed September 9, 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/latinka-perovic-za-rse-vracamo-se-u-19-vek/27900716.html>.
- 5 Nathan D. Abrams, "Antonio's B-Boys: Rap, Rappers and Gramsci's Intellectuals," *Popular Music and Society* 19 (1995): 18; Fernando Pedro Delgado, "Chicano Ideology Revisited: Rap Music and the (Re)articulation of Chicanismo", *Western Journal of Communication* 62, no. 2 (1998): 18; George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1990); Clarence Lusane, "Rhapsodic Aspirations: Rap, Place and Power Politics", *The Black Scholar* 23, no. 2 (1993): 14.
- 6 Brana Mijatović, "Throwing Stones at the System: Rock Music in Serbia during the 1990s", *Music and Politics* 2 (2008): 18; Marc W. Steinberg, "When Politics Goes Pop: On the Intersections of Popular and Political Culture and the Case of Serbian Student Protests", *Social Movement Studies* 3, no. 1 (2004): 26.
- 7 Dalibor Mišina, "'(What's so Funny 'bout) Peace, Love and Understanding': Rock Culture and the Rebuilding of Civic Identity in the Postconflict Balkans", *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 20, no. 3 (2013): 21; Dalibor Mišina, "Anarchy All Over Bašćaršija: Yugoslavia's New Socialist Culture and the New Primitives Poetics of the Local", *Journal of Historical Sociology* 26 (2013): 30; Dalibor Mišina, *Shake, Rattle and Roll: Yugoslav Rock Music and the Poetics of Social Critique* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
- 8 Some Yugoslav new wave musicians who showed interest in rhythm music were the most eager to introduce hip-hop elements into their music and to encourage others to start "reciting" music. See Goran Musić and Predrag Vukčević, "Diesel Power: Serbian Hip-hop from the Pleasure of the Privileged to Mass Youth Culture" in *Hip-hop at Europe's Edge: Music, Agency, and Social Change*, ed. Miłosz Miszczynski and Adriana Hebig (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017 [forthcoming]).
- 9 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 5–7.
- 10 Yugoslav rock was inspired at the time by the British punk ethos. Moreover, Sartre's idea of engaged literature is related to the engaged Yugoslav music of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Mišina notes that engaged rap musicians in the Balkans are considered to be continuing the "communicative arena" work of rock musicians of the 1970s and 1980s in Yugoslavia.
- 11 Steinberg, "When Politics Go Pop", 3–4.
- 12 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 7.
- 13 Lusane, "Rhapsodic Aspirations", 37.
- 14 Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-modernity and Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987).
- 15 Foucault points out that "the intellectual's role is no longer to place himself somewhat ahead and to the side in order to express the stifled truth of collectivity. He will therefore work in alignment with others in specific, local, institutional struggles". Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze", in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* by Michel Foucault, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 206–208.
- 16 Social constructivism focuses on the ways activist and social movement organizations produce, disseminate and transform collective cognitions (Steinberg, "When Politics Goes Pop").
- 17 Lipsitz, *Time Passages*.
- 18 BCMS is an acronym used for the successor languages of Serbo-Croatian (Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian). The concept of "our language" (naš jezik, naški) used for BCMS, especially in Bosnia, indicates how mutually intelligible these languages are.
- 19 This raises important question of authenticity in Balkan transnational rap, since the criteria of authenticity (McLeod) are that authentic hip-hop must involve: staying true to yourself, being black, being underground, being hard, being from the streets not suburbs, being "old-school", not mainstream. Kembrew McLeod, "Authenticity within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation", *Journal of Communications* 49, no. 4 (1999): 26.
- 20 Personal interview in Malmö, Sweden, November 23, 2013.
- 21 Alexandra D'Urso, *Life Stories and Sociological Imagination: Music, Private Lives and Public Identity in France and Sweden* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).
- 22 After being attracted by the "hard beats and guitar samples of early Def Jam recordings and rap's subversive image" (Musić and Vukčević 2017 [forthcoming]), avant-garde musicians of the 1980s propagated hip-hop. In what appears to be the first Yugoslav rap lyrics, "Hop Ap Du Ap" (1983), Dejan Kostić of the Belgrade-based band Du Du Ap raps: "In every republic, in every city, in Belgrade, Zagreb and Novi Sad, people say hop, people say up, people say dir li dir li up." Musić and Vukčević, "Diesel Power".
- 23 As early as the 1980s, a few radio shows, such as Elektrofunk on Radio 101 in Zagreb, hosted by DJ Slavin Balen, and Ritam Srca on Studio B in Belgrade, hosted by Sloba Konjović, were influential in bringing new musical trends, mostly from London.
- 24 Rap is originally an African-American form since its creation is tied to African-American culture; Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip-hop* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Mickey Hess, "Hip-hop Realness and the White Performer," *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 22:5 (2005): 372–389, accessed September 9, 2016, doi: 10.1080/07393180500342878. However, many writers want to emphasize culture's hybridity; J. Flores, "Puerto rocks: New York Ricans stake their claim" in *Droppin' science: Critical essays on rap music and hip-hop culture*, ed. W. E. Perkins (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 105; N. Guevara (1996). "Women writin' rappin' breakin'" in *Droppin' science: Critical essays on rap music and hip-hop culture*. The authenticity negotiation in white American hip-hop occurs over three phases: immersion, imitation, and inversion (Hess, "Hip-hop Realness", 375). Although European hip-hop follows these three phases, the inversion phase presupposes different actions depending on a certain sociopolitical location. Whiteness in Balkan hip-hop and rap is a subject rarely negotiated, if ever. I agree here with Richard Dyer, who writes that white identity gets erased in white discourse as it becomes the default racial position. Although Balkan rappers need to negotiate their whiteness in relation to the blackness of the authentic culture, they need not to revise their own position as white rappers, since their audience and consumers are white; Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997).
- 25 Hess, "Hip-hop Realness".

- 26 The question of authenticity remains important in mundane hip-hop research. To rephrase Musić and Vukčević's question: "Who is the local equivalent of the 'young black male' that Chuck D or Ice Cube rapped about? What should the rap community stand for and against whom should it fight?"
- 27 Sabrina Ramet, "Rock: The Music of Revolution (and Conformity)," in *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994).
- 28 Ante Perković, *Sedma republika: Pop kultura u YU raspadu* (Zagreb: Novi Liber, 2011).
- 29 Mišina, "What's So Funny".
- 30 Mišina, "What's So Funny", 306.
- 31 When the first rap acts appeared, they were directly compared with new wave artists of the 1970s and 80s, according to MC Remi in the 2015 documentary film *Stani na put*.
- 32 Andreana Clay, *The Hip-hop Generation Fights Back: Youth, Activism, and Post-Civil Rights Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 3–4.
- 33 Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- 34 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).
- 35 Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, 141.
- 36 John Street, *Music and Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 74.
- 37 Raymond Williams uses the term "structure of feeling" to designate the emotional bonding generated by values and practices shared by a specific group, class, or culture. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1984 [1961]).
- 38 Danilo Zolo, *Democracy and Complexity: A Realistic Approach* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1992).
- 39 Daria Sito-Sucic, "Balkan Rappers Speak Out on Peace and Justice", *Reuters*, November 24, 2006, accessed April, 30, 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2006/11/24/lifestyle-life-balkans-hiphop-dc-idUKL2329247820061124>.
- 40 James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
- 41 Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), 32–35.
- 42 Steven Clayman and John Heritage, *The News Interview: Journalists and Public Figures On the Air*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction* (London: Sage, 2006).
- 43 In music, the phrase was popularized by the 1985 song and the album *Brothers in Arms* by Dire Straits. A similar idea of brotherhood is also introduced in the 2010 sports documentary film by Michael Tolajian, *Once Brothers*, about two Yugoslav NBA basketball players, Vlade Divac and Dražen Petrović, whose friendship was divided by the war and its ideologies.
- 44 In the chorus of the joint song "Suze" [Tears] from 2003 by Marčelo and Edo Maajka, the metaphor of brotherhood is used: "niko neće znati što je na brata pucao brat" ("no one will know why brother was shooting at brother").
- 45 Samples are snippets of previously recorded songs that are incorporated into new sounds and contexts. Andreana Clay argues that youth activism is similar to the process of sampling, since the activists draw upon earlier social movement tools, images and texts, geographic landscapes, popular constructions of urban youth, hip-hop culture, and their own personal experiences in a bricolage approach to mobilizing other young people (Andreana Clay, *The Hip-hop Generation Fights Back*, 187).
- 46 "Crème de la Crème", published on Marčelo's album *De facto* (2003); "Crème de la Crème 2", published on Frenkie's album *Odličan* CD, Menart Records, Croatia, (2005); "Crème de la Crème Begins", published on Frenkie's album *Trojanac* (2012); Frenkie, *Odličan* CD, 2005.
- 47 Frenkie, Trojanac, FM Jam Records, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Menart Records, Croatia, 2012.
- 48 As it might appear from the song "Crème de la Crème Begins", the trilogy started while Marčelo was working with Edo Maajka on the song "Suze" [Tears], which can be considered the first real trans-national rap collaboration. Both "Suze" and "Crème de la Crème" were published on Marčelo's debut album *De facto* (2003).
- 49 Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: The History of the Hip-hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005).
- 50 <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/media/video/perspektiva-cetvrti-epizoda-mostar/26874502.html?z=17402&zp=1>, accessed April 14, 2015.
- 51 Interview activism is defined as the act of engaging in interviews with the goal of furthering awareness about particular causes or issues; D'Urso, *Life Stories*, 79.
- 52 Dimitriadis, *Performing Identity*.
- 53 D'Urso, *Life Stories*.
- 54 In February 2014, a series of demonstrations followed by riots spread from the Bosnian town of Tuzla (where Frenkie lives) to other cities in Bosnia, expressing social discontent and the hope of overthrowing the government. Some media gave these events the name "Bosnian Spring". Frenkie was active in writing on the events and giving interviews, and his songs "Gori" [It's burning] and "Hajmo ih rušiti" [Let's put them down] became anthems of the protest.
- 55 The Hague in the Netherlands is mostly associated among people in the Balkans with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).
- 56 "Samo stranka posao daje", interview by Neven Džodan, *Blic*, December 12, 2014, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/519171/Marcelo-Samo-stranka-posao-daje>.
- 57 Personal interview with Marčelo and his crew in Belgrade, March 12, 2012.
- 58 For a detailed discussion of these rap lyrics, see Dragana Cvetanović, "Petturien vai patriootien räppi?" [Traitor or patriot rap?], *Idäntutkimus* 1 (2014): 12.
- 59 Iva Martinović, "Još nas dele na patriote i izdajnike," *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, November 17, 2013, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/marcelo-jos-nas-dele-na-patriote-i-izdajnike/25170571.html>.
- 60 Michael Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 46–47.
- 62 Dimitriadis, *Performing Identity*.
- 63 Marčelo, *De Facto*, Bassivity Music, Belgrade, 2003.
- 64 Martinović, "Još nas dele".
- 65 Stuart Hall, "What is Black in Black Popular Culture?" *Social Justice* 20, no. 1–2 (1993): 104–15.
- 66 Predrag Lucić, "Hajka na Maajku", *Buka Magazin*, August 13, 2014, accessed August 13, 2014, <http://www.6yka.com/novost/61916/predrag-lucic-hajka-na-maajku>.
- 67 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*.
- 68 Edwards, *Civil Society*.
- 69 Edwards, *Civil Society*.
- 70 Edwards, *Civil Society*, 64.



UNDERSTANDING THE CLASHES

BETWEEN HISTORIANS & ROMA ACITIVISTS

by **David Gaunt**

“As I say, it’s a pity you’re not a historian. You could have separated the truth from the lies and written it down.”¹

“History does not belong only to its narrators, professional or amateur. While some of us debate what history is or was, others take it into their own hands.”²

A few years back I was bouncing in a white mini-bus along a dirt road in rural Ukraine. Also in the bus were Swedish, French, and Romanian historians mixed in with representatives of Romani organisations from Sweden and Romania. The mission, which I was leading, was to locate massgraves of Romani victims of the Nazi genocide during World War II. I had put this group together and they were my responsibility. Things had gone reasonably well on the first day in the field, at least as far as I could tell. We had located two sites and even managed to interview some elderly people who as children had witnessed shootings. I began believing that the mission might end up successful in another respect: that I could get historians to cooperate with Roma activists who had begun using history as part of their nationalist and unification politics. Had I been a little less pleased with myself I might have noticed signs that this hope of cooperation would not be realized, indeed was ill-founded.

Bringing together Romani representatives and genocide scholars had been possible through two intellectual trajectories. One approach emerged from the growing insight among historians that memory, previously shunned, could enrich and deepen historical narrative based on archival sources. A shift from “history to memory” has been praised as a “welcome critique of compromised teleological notions of history”. Memory is not to be seen as “simply anti-historical, relativistic, or subjective”.³ Saul Friedländer has been a pioneer of seriously integrating all sorts of memory into the study of Nazi Germany.⁴ In recent years Columbia University’s Historical Dialogues, Justice, and Memory Network has revealed the multidisciplinary breadth of memory research on issues of contended history, politicized history and socio-historical injustices. Even I integrate memory into my research on the Armenian and Assyrian genocide in the Ottoman Empire.⁵ Another, completely different, trend grew out of the Roma side, reacting to the fact that scholars who were not Roma dominated Romani studies, with an increasing demand to participate in research on all levels. The slogan “Nothing about us without us”, long expressed only informally, has now been formalized by leading Roma human rights activists.⁶ The insistence on coparticipation implies a learning process on both sides that has proven difficult.

Without a doubt, there was a genocide of Roma perpetrated in

Germany and German-occupied areas of Europe during World War II. Very few of the Roma and the related group Sinti survived the war and most of the German and Austrian Roma were sent to Auschwitz. The memory of this genocide is now subject to a political use. In order to unify the myriad of different ethnic, linguistic, regional, and cultural groups, Roma nationalists are expanding the genocide to include countries and territories outside Nazi German control and to include non-Germans, such as Czechs and Romanians, among the perpetrators. The thrust is to make the Roma genocide and persecution more or less universal throughout all of Europe based on a “racist” perception. Many of the Roma and pro-Roma activists identify the Roma population as “racially black” because of dark skin color and adopt anti-white, anti-racist, anti-colonial, or postcolonial interpretations.

THE FOLLOWING IS a story of and reflection upon the dilemmas scholars can run into when they encounter the conflict between political activists and what can be proven by evidence. This is particularly the case when historians and activists clash over the political recognition of genocide. Professional historians tend to look on the use of history by activists with displeasure. Often the latter’s narrative is marked by the use of legends, tales, and memories, sprinkled with disregard for known facts. The activists meanwhile, tend to think the historians’ conservative insistence on archival documentation is narrow and ungenerous, ignores memory, and underestimates the extent of the catastrophe. The dispute with historians revolves around what the anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot terms “Silencing the past”, that is, the facts that history is produced in a series of unequal power relationships and that the voices of some groups are in the end simply excluded from the making of history.⁷ This is certainly true in the case of the Roma in very few countries do they have a public voice, and where they do, it is weak. What complicates the case of the Roma is that a long-standing memory that could challenge the historians’ writings does not yet exist, but is part of a still on-going political activist campaign to build a recognized memory for all of Europe’s Roma on the basis of the experience of genocide, which in turn can be integrated into a narrative of perpetual victimization since the arrival of the Roma in Europe. The foremost thinker behind the victimization narrative is Ian Hancock, a professor of linguistics at the University

of Texas with Hungarian-British Romani ancestry. He is also the leading figure in the battle, which is detailed in this article, to get the Romani genocide politically recognized as part of the Holocaust.⁸

A distinction made by the philosopher Avishai Margalit may be useful. He distinguishes between common memory and shared memory.⁹ A common memory means that all people who have experienced an event as individuals later remember that episode more or

abstract

This paper deals with the dilemmas scholars can run into when they encounter the conflict between political activists and what can be proven by evidence. The dispute with historians revolves around what the anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot terms “Silencing the past”. This is certainly true in the case of the Roma and genocide. What complicates the case is that a long-standing memory is part of a still ongoing political activist campaign to build a recognized memory for all of Europe’s Roma.

KEYWORDS: Genocide, Roma, memory studies, historical truth.



PHOTO: PHIREN AMENCA

Phiren Amenca was part of the project 'Roma Genocide – Part of European History', coordinated by the Roma Youth Center in Macedonia, which was aimed at preserving the memory of the Roma victims of Nazism and strengthening remembrance and awareness about the Roma Genocide.

less in the same way. This is the case with the Jewish Holocaust. However, in the case of the Roma, what is being produced since the 1970s is a shared memory. A shared memory is a consciously constructed and distributed retrospective view of the past rather than an aggregate of individual remembrance. Sharing involves persons who lack direct experience – such as the descendants of survivors or members of Roma groups who for various reasons were not caught up in the genocide. Communication between individuals is necessary to build a shared memory out of certain individuals' fragmentary experiences. The concept of shared memory also involves learning through the dissemination of knowledge about the past. Thus several Roma associations establish a shared memory through publications, media products, exhibitions, and conferences dealing with genocide. In the following I will have occasion to speak of "Roma activists": these are a heterogeneous mix of intellectuals, NGO representatives, human rights advocates, and those working for the unification of the diverse Roma and Traveler populations into a "nation".¹⁰ They also include pro-Roma activists of non-Roma origin.

During the above-mentioned expedition I found myself caught up in the grey conflict zone between the competing front-lines of history and memory, with a feeling that neither shared memories nor academic histories could be seen as fully objective. My moral responsibility was to the Roma as victims of

large-scale massacres, deportations and genocide. But I also had a strong ethical relationship and responsibility to my fellow historians and their methods. The rest of this article deals with my attempt to deconstruct my problem in order to see if I can find some sort of middle position. I do not claim to have solved this dilemma, but rather to explore it.

Back in Ukraine

I should have noticed the quarrel going on in the front of the bus, but I didn't. After all it was a typical situation. Several Roma activists were insisting on two issues that a Romanian historian refused to confirm. The quarrel was about the role played by the Romanian government officials and army in the fate of tens of thousands of Romanian Roma who had been forced into southern Ukraine. Incriminating Romanian authorities in the murder of these Roma is part of a wider effort to make the genocide universal in Europe. In addition the activists claimed that the number of Roma estimated deaths must have been very much greater than documents showed. This the historian rejected vehemently.

Already at the first site on our excursion, the Romanian historian (a non-Roma), who is one of the few academics to write a monograph on the history of the Roma in any country, showed resistance to the idea of the expedition. This site

Most activists tend to stress what supports their cause. It is problematic.

was a field on the outskirts of a small town near the Ukraine-Belarus border. In the middle of the field was a large indentation, not a hole, not a pit, but just an indentation of a few feet. According to German documents this was a place where a group of wandering Roma had been shot during the world war. They had been buried just where the indentation now was. The French historian knew that in the nearest farmhouse an old bedridden man lived who as a child had witnessed the shooting. So we all went to the little house to hear what the old man had to tell. All crammed into the doorway and the small chamber where the old man lay in his narrow bed. It was quite crowded as one of the activists even had a video camera to record the interview.

But the Romanian historian remained outside sitting on a log, and when I went outside to get some fresh air, he cornered me. He began to lecture me on how useless witness testimonies were, how listening to the old man would be a waste of time, and concluding with a rant on how impossible Roma activists could be. Through this long tirade he hindered me from going back into the house. That was alright, I thought, since the video recording would inform me. I also thought maybe by listening to him and in dialogue, I could get him to see the importance of working together and climb down from his elevated position.

At the Pedagogical University in Kiev we hold our seminar in the office of the rector. We speak of hitherto unused archive materials, deal with other types of sources, and speak finally about the possibility of further cooperation. The French historian vows that his organization in Paris will work together to search for testimonies and documents on the Roma part of the Holocaust. He is being diplomatic, not wanting to start an open quarrel. However, this promised cooperation never materializes, and after a few months we will read on the organization's website that they were making their own investigations of the Romani genocide without informing others. Later efforts by the Romani representatives to get into contact with the French unit will be met with silence. As the meeting is breaking up, the Romanian button-holes me and speaks very close to my face so that no one else can hear. Pointing at the Roma participants, he whispers, "I will never work together with these people. Never. Never. Never."

SO, MY SUBLIME GOAL of creating a joint historian-activist cooperative research team was dead on arrival. If Agatha Christie had been writing this story I imagine that the Romanian historian would have been found dead in the university basement and the French historian pushed in front of a tram. And all the other participants in the expedition would be suspects.

But this was not a crime novel, it was an attempt to find dialogue. After this fiasco, my position was as fuzzy as it was real. I had dreamt of bringing academics and activists together

and had failed despite a good beginning. The conflict over how to interpret historical events was simply unbridgeable. What should I do? My ethics told me to go with the other professional historians, abandoning contacts with the activists. I had been a professional historian for forty years, I had been in and out of countless archives, I believed that there were unquestionable facts. However, my morals said that I should stay and aid the activists, who obviously needed some form of dialogue to get their story more in line with the knowledge that historical research has established. As the other historians march out, I stay behind with the Roma activists. I felt as if I was the embodiment of Peter Burke's observation

about memory work: "neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer. In both cases we are learning to take account of conscious or unconscious selection, interpretation and distortion. In both cases this selection, interpretation and distortion is socially conditioned."¹¹ But I must figure out what makes the activists of historical injustice question the known facts, for that is not a matter of selection. Rather

it seems a socially conditioned flight from reality in which the search for the truth at the present moment has no intrinsic value.

The activist syndrome: internal competition gone wild

The conflict over facts between historians and activists is not something that only concerns Romani history. It is endemic to many situations in which recognizing and rectifying historic injustices is part of a political campaign. Here I deal with the Roma, but the same conflict can be found when dealing with the genocide of Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire.

There are several factors that frame the historians' conflict with Roma nationalists. One is that the Roma are a stateless nation with no central authority. They are a minority spread over a large number of countries and separated by borders, legal structures, dialects and historical experiences.¹² Although since the 1990s the name "Roma" has been the politically correct term, even among the people themselves this name has not found total acceptance and older assumed derogatory names like Gypsies or Tsiganes still survive as self-identifications. Indeed the politically correct term adopted by European institutions itself adds to the confusion by bringing together ethnic Roma from countries with unrelated groups like the Irish Travellers, and the Swiss Yenisch and even Dutch caravan dwellers.¹³ For many years, at least since the 1970s, an international unification movement has attempted to find common ground in historical injustices – origins in India, slavery in Romania, poverty everywhere, and in modern times, genocide and the destruction of culture.¹⁴ Thus, dissemination of knowledge about the genocide and commemoration of the victims have become part and parcel of a political movement managed by a self-appointed elite. They emphasize Romani vic-

**"THE EFFORT TO
USE THE GENOCIDE
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PHOTO: ARTUR CONKA, OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION

The firing wall where prisoners were executed. On August 2, 2014, hundreds of Roma people gathered at commemorative events in Crakow and Auschwitz.

timhood in order to gain greater attention for the contemporary situation of Roma.

Lacking a state, the Roma representatives lack the resources that contribute to creating a single historical orthodoxy recognized as legitimate by all. In most countries the Roma have little influence over the schools and textbooks, national museums, TV, radio, and other major media – all of which are essential for creating, disseminating, and repeating any official version of the past. Instead, the creation of a Romani historical narrative depends on the efforts of a range of intellectuals, traditional tribal leaders, and various nationalist associations who compete with each other to create a shared memory. This memory remains unstable as competition leads the narrative in new directions. Right now for example there is much effort placed on discovering the extent of Romani resistance to the Nazis.

Inability to establish a stable and clear identity among the Roma means that nationalists attribute great value to creating shared memory. Questions of identity merge with questions of memory. In the view of Wulf Kansteiner, focusing on identity “highlights the political and psychological use-value of collective memories.”¹⁵ This use value is quite obvious in the Roma nationalist memory work. The genocide of Romani peoples plays a central role in the international Romani movement. In its earliest form, in 1971, what was to become the International Romani Union adopted a national hymn, called “Gelem, Gelem”. One of the stanzas goes: “I once had a large family, but the black legions murdered them all.” The term “black legions” is taken as a reference to German soldiers. When World War II ended, nearly all of the Roma and the related group, the Sinti, in Germany, Austria, what is now the Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, and Estonia were dead. In Hungary, Romania, Bosnia, France, Belgium, the

Netherlands, and the Soviet Union, some (but not all) of the Roma had been destroyed. Most of the murdered of Roma from Italy, Hungary, and Slovakia were killed after Germany occupied those countries, towards the end of the war. In some of the latter countries only the “nomadic” Roma were affected, and settled Roma were spared. There are no known massacres of Roma in Slovakia, Finland, Italy, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Macedonia, although other forms of harassment, foremost hard labor camps, were implemented. There is little doubt that Nazis targeted the Roma and Sinti on racial grounds, and the German parliament has recognized the genocide; in Berlin a monument to Romani victims was inaugurated in 2012. Romani Rose, the leader of the German Sinti group, was instrumental in gaining recognition and financial compensation for the Romani victims from the German state. However, he keeps a somewhat low profile internationally.¹⁶

THE EFFORT TO USE the genocide as a unifying, all-encompassing shared memory has proved problematic. The impact of persecution and genocide varied from country to country, ranging from total annihilation to relatively mild labor camps. In several southern Balkan countries with a sizeable Roma population many have no family memories of massacres or genocide, while other families in Germany, Austria, and Poland are deeply traumatized. Making this geographically limited genocide grow into a memory shared by Roma all over the world has taken considerable time and effort. Making the limited genocide grow to be an event with universal meaning has influenced how the narrative is told. The first country-by-country archive-based research came up with an estimate of about 200,000 Romani victims of Nazi persecution during the world war. The scholars involved

Sufferings can't be compared. They are always tragic.

admitted that considering the lack of good statistics it was necessary to make uncertain estimates in order to come up with a total figure. The sole exact figure known is that 20,933 Roma were held prisoner in Auschwitz-Birkenau's so-called Zigeunerlager (which existed from March 1943 to August 1944) and that 12,800 died there of whom 4,000 were murdered in gas chambers on the night of August 2. In competition for leadership Roma and pro-Roma activists began to inflate the number of victims, usually arguing that a great number of Roma had been murdered in Eastern European forests without being documented. In 1972, the number of victims was set at 219,700 in a book written by the British pro-Roma activist and linguist Donald Kenrick and the Traveller activist Grattan Puxon. After that, Kenrick revised the figure to 196,000 deaths because the first number had included some double counting.¹⁷ Since then, the numbers have grown by leaps and bounds with Ian Hancock ending up citing figures beginning at 750,000 and leading up to 1,500,000 murdered Roma.¹⁸ Hancock, probably the foremost high-profile international Romani activist, stated in a US congressional hearing that between 75 and 85 percent of European Roma were "systematically murdered" – these inflated figures were not supported up by any documentation.

When professional historians have tackled the issue of numbers based on archival records, the figures have been much lower – the lowest estimate is 96,000, which still classifies the killings as genocide. Attempts to estimate the size of Europe's Roma population just before World War II began based on available statistics (and including compensation for the well-known under-registration of vulnerable minorities) come up with figures less than one million – for instance the genocide scholar Henry Huttenbach advanced a total figure for Europe of 885,000 Roma in 1939.¹⁹ A different calculation by historians resulted in a total Roma population in Europe in 1939 of 872,300, of whom 213,550 were killed during the world war.²⁰ In general, historians use the figure of just above 200,000, while most activists have settled on the figure of 500,000. Both figures can be considered symbolic figures. The authors of a recent publication of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance admit that figure of half a million is based "neither on extensive research nor international comparative study".²¹

The widely differing and increasingly unrealistic numbers of victims cause difficulties. They confuse those who want to know about the genocide. It could even be the case that lowering the numbers of victims would be seen as a relief, as that would mean that more Roma survived. However, the logic of the politics of genocide recognition appears to demand ever increasing numbers of martyrs. In a politicized context, a hierarchy of pain and suffering emerges in which a high number of victims is used as a way of drawing attention and sympathy. The inflated figures for Romani victims are often only vague comments that massacres have been discovered which were not known previously or that the number of Roma killed in the forests and not reported must have been at least equal to (if not more than) those whose murders were documented. These are guesses that come out of the competition between Romani nationalists. This legitimacy

is easiest won through emphasizing the degree of victimhood. At the same time, these flights from what can be documented open for genocide denialists to enter a confusing numbersgame (which no one can win), arguing that the volume of victims even exceeds the size of the original population. However, the attacks of the denialists concerning the number of victims, seems to increase the internal prestige of the Romani activists proposing the highest numbers. Also, disputing the lower numbers arrived at by professional historians seems to increase the status and self-confidence of the activists. This is particularly the case with Ian Hancock.²²

ROMA NATIONALISTS do several radical things that turn the factual event of the World War II genocide into a mythical legend. They Europeanize the victimhood so that the perpetrators are not just German Nazis but also equally guilty Romanians, Czechs, Hungarians, and Croats. They inflate the number of victims. In rivalry for attention with other victims, particularly the Jews, they tend to mimic the successes of more well-recognized victims. They demand a place at the commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz on January 26; there is insistence on applying not just the word genocide but also Holocaust, they imitate established practices of erecting memorials and plaques at sites of massacre, and so on. All this, I believe, goes back to the stateless condition of the Roma which encourages the emergence of status rivalry for leadership among Romani nationalists.

Competition between victim groups

In the four decades up to 1980, only about seventy articles or books had been published on the massmurder of Roma and Sinti. Very little of this was based on research and even the amount of autobiographic material was small.²³ With all probability the American Television miniseries "Holocaust", broadcast throughout the world in 1978, had a great impact, particularly in Germany, increasing consciousness of the Holocaust. And this also became an impetus for learning about the Nazi treatment of the Romani. General awareness of the historical importance of the Holocaust, the brutality of decolonization and the breakthrough of human rights issues coalesced and reinforced one another in the 1970s. In the context of the Roma this new situation meant that they could propose that what had happened to them in World War II was a genocide and even a part of what had been increasingly termed the Holocaust. The term Holocaust existed and was used in popular media. But its meaning was confined to the extermination of Europe's Jewish population. The Romani claim to be an equally victimized group and part of the Holocaust was met head-on with opposition.²⁴

The debate about the wider applicability of the term Holocaust grew out of the planning committee discussions leading up to the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington. That museum opened in 1993 after preparations dating back to 1978. Conflict arose over whether the institution would focus solely on the Jewish Holocaust or whether other genocides could be included, such as those committed against the Armenians and the Roma.

These genocides and some others came to be known as the “other Holocaust”. On the one side were those who argued the “uniqueness of the Jewish Holocaust” and maintained that its integrity would be impaired by being placed beside other genocides. Some believed that comparing a whole series of genocides would reveal racial and ethnic annihilation to be something more or less normal throughout history. One extreme researcher went so far as to accuse all who wrote about the other genocides as having a hidden agenda of reducing German feelings of responsibility for the Jewish Holocaust.²⁵ On the other side, those who pushed for inclusion of the Romani genocide argued that the Holocaust was one and the same historic phenomenon and encompassed the eradication of many groups whom the Nazi leaders considered unfit to live, among them the Gypsies.²⁶

Michael Rothberg describes the struggles between the various victim groups over genocide recognition as a product of zero-sum reasoning, battles with only total winners or losers. The Jewish activists, who already dominated the narrative of the Holocaust, acted as if they believed that if other genocides were acknowledged, then their own trauma would automatically get less attention. It was as if knowledge of genocide was a matter of great scarcity and could not encompass other cases. For the other victim groups, with their purported “forgotten” or “hidden” genocides this meant that they needed to fight bitterly for any attention what so ever. The debates between victim groups concerned the injustice of not having each group's own narrative of victimhood recognized. In this competition the reading of research had low priority, and was deemed unimportant and uninteresting, and the political campaign for genocide recognition became ever more polemical and distanced itself from the pursuit of historical accuracy.²⁷

Although the “other” Holocaust debates were very frustrating and bitter conflicts, they did have the positive effect of increasing the general and scholarly awareness of the other genocides. And it became widely accepted by the early 1990s that the Roma had been the victims of genocide during World War II. Placing the Roma in a long history of persecution gave the impression that Roma identity had been formed by continuous victimhood and racial hatred.²⁸

Mimicry of established narratives

Foremost among the earliest descriptions of the Romani genocide is *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* written by two pro-Roma authors: Grattan Puxon, a British Traveller-Gypsy activist, and Donald Kenrick, a prominent linguist. Both were part of the Romani political movement in Britain and later the international unification movement.²⁹ Their work was part of the on-going Romani campaign aimed at proving genocide in order to get compensation for the victims from the West German government.

Jewish victims had for a long time received compensation, but at that time Roma met with many legal-semantic hurdles. Puxon was the secretary of the First Roma International Conference. Kenrick was a British expert on the Romani language. The book came about as part of a research project studying nationalism and racism at the University of Sussex. The project's aim was to “investigate how persecutions and exterminations come about; how the impulse to persecute or exterminate is generated, how it spreads, and under what conditions it is likely to express itself in action.”³⁰ There were other non-Roma roots to this research since source material had been donated by the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute. The institute had found this evidence when inter-

viewing eyewitnesses to the massmurder of Jews.

The research project was headed by Norman Cohn, at that time a well-known historian of the persecution of Jews. Originally, Kenrick and Puxon intended only to describe the era of Nazi persecution, but they soon realized that this could not be understood without a long background chapter on harassment and persecution based upon prejudices deeply rooted in European society. This pioneer work created a narrative that for a long time dominated the story of the Romani genocide. Tracing the background of the Nazi genocide far into the

Middle Ages, this interpretation insists that the World War II repression was novel only in the details. There was no qualitative difference introduced by the Nazis. One can liken this narrative to the 19th-century sorrowful version of the history of the Jews in Europe as a long series of persecutions and massacres.³¹ At that time the notions of genocide and Holocaust had not yet become widely known, so Kenrick and Puxon did not use those terms in the book.³²

The permanent persecution narrative was influenced by project leader Cohn's view of the long history of anti-Semitic persecution, also dating back to the Middle Ages.³³ He traces the roots of modern totalitarian terror and genocide far back to medieval utopians with millenarian dreams. Many of these radical groups killed their opponents. Cohn maintained that in times of rapid social change, older xenophobic ideas like anti-Semitism (and in parallel anti-Gypsyism) resurfaced after lying dormant. Cohn's view was imprinted onto Kenrick's and Puxon's macro-narrative. Their story, like Cohn's, starts with the Middle Ages and concentrates on the activities of the police and of racially oriented academics in the centuries leading up to the genocide.

Up to this point we have dealt with representations of genocide that have been made by individuals who, even when academics, are not professional historians. As Rothberg indicates, the politics of genocide recognition overshadows an interest in uncovering historical truth. From here focus will shift to what professional historians have done with the Roma genocide. Frank Ankersmit postulates that historians have a special feel-

**“YEHUDA BAUER,
THE MAJOR ISRAELI
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HOLOCAUST.”**



Phiren Amencia supported local commemorations that took place August 2, 2014, in Bátorfyerénye and Bicsérd in Hungary.

ing that there is a truth in history that can be attained through the dispassionate study of documents through the time-proven methodology of source criticism. From the point of view of the historian, this search for truth (always complicated) is potentially counter productive for a culture, such as that of the Roma that reinforces traumatic loss through the commemoration of genocide and its link to present-day anti-Gypsyism. It can even undermine the narrative of reliving the trauma by questioning the very innocence of the victims, the perfidy of the perpetrators, and the moral faults of the bystanders. He also states that traumatic experience is simply too terrible to be “admitted to consciousness” because it exceeds our (I suppose he means the historian’s) capacity to make sense of that sort of experience.³⁴ Something similar has been said by a professor of drama, Robert Skloot, who accuses historians of being biased in their reliance on archives and documents because “it restricts a fuller understanding of the events and conditions being researched and it excludes other ways of knowing and understanding human experience.”³⁵ Yet another position on the relationship between the historian and the “community of memory” is taken by Giorgios Antoniou. He sees the potential of a role for the historian as a “mediator between the past and current society.” Traditionally, historians in their mediating role transform the “facts” although they have no “lived experiences of the event”. Anontiou postulates there is a “grey zone between historiography and public/collective memory.”³⁶

There are thus at least three diverse ways of looking at the position of historians in relation to memory. Expressed by Ankersmit, historians place themselves at a distance from memory

and actively challenge memory, thus demythologizing it. He sees this as a strength of historical practice. A second stance, taken by Skloot, holds that historians must transcend their dependence on written documentation in order to give a description of lived experience. He sees this as weakness of historians and social scientists compared to aesthetic representations. Antoniou takes the middle stance that there can be – in certain contexts – some mediation between professional history and collective memory work.

It took many years before academic discussions and research on the Roma genocide started in the 1980s. A breakthrough came simultaneously with political decisions, namely the acts of recognition in 1982 by the West German chancellors Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl to apologize to the Roma for their wartime suffering. The German parliament held hearings with survivors. Ultimately in 1989 the lower house of the parliament acknowledged that the murder of Roma was motivated on racial grounds – thus placing the relatives of these victims on the same legal level for compensation as the Jewish victims.

TWO APPROACHES DOMINATE research about the fate of the Roma peoples during World War II. One is a strong undercurrent of seeking new documentation and exploring new territories in the hope of corroborating what is known only through witness testimony. This is in keeping with Ankersmit’s reasoning. The other approach is just as strong and creates considerable surface waves. This concerns the intellectual puzzlement of striving to find some sort of meaning in the annihilation of the Roma and Sinti. A struggle formed over how to actually apply the terms

“genocide” and “Holocaust”. “Genocide” at least has a legal definition through the United Nations Convention of 1948. “Holocaust”, however, can probably never be defined and is open for interpretation. This ambivalence resulted in high-pitched debates about the boundary between Holocaust and non-Holocaust, between genocide and non-genocide. Much of this 1980s and 1990s debate appears in hindsight as hair-splitting and an intellectual dead end in which the discussants slipped in and out of their professional roles.

Established Holocaust scholars initially responded negatively to Romani claims that the genocide was comparable with any other, and that the treatment of Roma lay closest to that of the Jews. The philosopher Emil Fackenheim, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, argued that the Jewish Holocaust was beyond being called genocide and completely unique. He set up a number of criteria by which the Jewish Holocaust differed from all other mass-murder. He reasons as follows: the Holocaust was not a war and the victims were powerless non-combatants; the Holocaust could not be seen as a war crime since it served no military purpose and it actually hindered the German war effort; the Holocaust was not a case of racism, but rather longstanding anti-Semitism that was grafted onto Nazi concepts of race. Fackenheim also claimed that the Holocaust was not even genocide, as the Jews were murdered because the Nazis considered them inhuman vermin who should not be allowed to exist. Also according to him, the Holocaust is not just part of German history, but of all European anti-semitism. The Jews were no mere scapegoats in the Holocaust. Finally, the Holocaust survived the German defeat, and Jews continue to live in grave peril.³⁷ Confronting Fackenheim’s criteria of uniqueness became an agenda for Romani activists who demanded recognition of their genocide as one part of a larger Holocaust. Another Romani counter-argument was that anti-Semitism had a parallel in anti-Gypsyism. Thus much effort was put into describing how German anti-Gypsy discourse and praxis, despite de-Nazification, continued unabated in post-war Germany.³⁸

Yehuda Bauer, the major Israeli Holocaust scholar, rejected the claim that what had happened to the Roma could be termed Holocaust. He did allow that it might be considered genocide, in his view a less total form of massmurder. He added that he believed that the Roma were targeted not because they were considered an alien “race”, but because they were considered “antisocial”. They were not a threat to the Nazis, merely an “irritant”. Thus the actions against the Roma were not systematic, as the implementation contained many exceptions.³⁹ In confrontation with Bauer’s position, the Roma were thus forced to prove that their group had been murdered because the Nazis considered them a “race” to be exterminated. His main opponent in this particular debate was Sybil Milton, a consultant with the USHMM, who countered that the Holocaust was hugely complex and involved the extermination

of not just the Jews but also the mentally handicapped, homosexuals, Soviet prisoners of war, and especially the Roma. She argued that the killing of these other groups was part and parcel of actions motivated by the Nazi desire to keep the German “race” pure of “alien” or “defective” blood.⁴⁰

By the mid-1990s, two camps developed ways of perceiving the Jewish Holocaust. One side was adamant that it was unique and could not be compared with any other historical genocide. The other side argued against the concept of uniqueness and maintained that it was indeed comparable and was just the most extreme form of a more general historical phenomenon. At the same time, strong trends in identity politics tried to latch onto the Holocaust concept for partisan political reasons. Most of these campaigns did serve indirectly to reduce the Holocaust’s Jewish character, and this in turn incited Jewish activists to an even greater extent to emphasize its uniqueness.⁴¹

The Roma discover history

The gap between historians and activists is much larger than I thought. The Roma are far from attaining a collective memory based on remembrance and commemoration of genocide. Indeed, they are still in a phase of struggling to establish a shared memory. Developing a historical narrative based on documents rather than legend and sagas is a European phenomenon that starts in Renaissance Italy and was improved on in nineteenth century Germany and France. The sourcebased historical-critical methodology had its professional breakthrough in the twentieth century although in many places it has not yet arrived. In the universal and evolutionary vision of J. G. A. Pocock there are several stages that peoples need to go through before they replace a narrative based solely on memory with one based on what he calls objective history.⁴² The Roma are still struggling to unify their diverse narratives and traditions: they have not yet

felt the impulse to begin to replace these traditions and memories with “objective” history.

Until recently it was possible for observers to make a credible point out of what they saw as a lack of interest for history among Roma. A few even be considered this lack of interest an advantage that had helped them survive. The literary critic Katie Trumpener perceives them as a “people without history” and the writer Isabel Fonseca

praises a Gypsy “art of forgetting” that she considers to be the outcome of a unique mixture of fatalism with the spirit of seizing the day.⁴³ The Polish Roma social scientist Andrzej Mirga, at the OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, recalls that in his childhood the “memory of the war was virtually nonexistent”. Only his mother would occasionally tell stories of the roundups of Roma to be sent to Auschwitz. Such family recollections and the school history lessons, in his opinion, never “lead to an understanding of what Nazism and the war were for the Roma, and why the Roma were murdered and persecuted.” The individual

“SHARED MEMORY IS NOT PROFESSIONAL HISTORY. SHARED MEMORY SERVES AS A BACKDROP FOR CONTEMPORARY INTERESTS.”

memory was “not generalized in the form of reflection on the fate of the Roma.”⁴⁴ But even a cursory glance at Roma socioeconomic conditions and listening to their plaintive songs and poems, shows that the happy-go-lucky portrait is far from the truth, or only part of it. Since the late 1980s several Romani witnesses have published their stories.⁴⁵

THE SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGIST Alaina Lemon believes that the apparent lack of historical consciousness among Roma stems from not having access to media. Roma are seldom able to broadcast their version and they lack voices in the educational systems that reproduce such memories. The communist-ruled states of Eastern Europe, which contained many Romani survivors, forbade memorials that singled out any particular ethnic group as victims (including the Jews). “The problem then is not that Roma deny history, but that no infrastructure magnifies their memories as broadly collective” in the sense of Benedict Anderson’s concept of “Imagined community.”⁴⁶

In general, the collective remembrance of any historical trauma is aimed at making a contemporary political impact. Often the goal is to remind the world of a group’s past and present vulnerability. Bulgarian historian and philosopher Tzvetan Todorov, identifies this use as being “an instrument that informs our capacity to analyze the present.”⁴⁷ In the case of the Roma, the goal is to improve living conditions through mobilization around social work, education reform, or the removal of discriminatory laws and practices. The Polish sociologist Sławomir Kapralski has proposed that another reason for Romani organizations to emphasize the genocide is that the shared memory of it (however slight in some countries) has the potential to unite the diverse peoples they aspire to represent. It becomes a chronotope of Roma identification, and commemoration tends towards “ritualized practice” aimed at making genocide an identity-building factor.⁴⁸

The campaign to create a shared memory of genocide is part of the Roma unification movement. Commemoration did not seriously begin until after new, strident ethno-political organizations emerged in the late 1970s and the 1980s. Particularly important were developments in Germany, where Romani Rose led large public demonstrations at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp memorial in 1979 and followed this with a hunger strike at Dachau in 1980.⁴⁹ The background was Roma frustration over rejected claims for compensation for persecution perpetrated by the Nazi regime. German courts ruled that Roma were not entitled to compensation because the arrests were for “asociality” and “criminality” under vagrancy laws enacted by the Weimar Republic, and not on racial grounds. Applications of Romani survivors had been dismissed throughout the postwar period. But the new Romani leaders, as a rule better educated than the survivors, insisted that there was continuity in their social and cultural discrimination from the Nazi era to the Federal Republic of Germany. They portrayed the lack of compensation as the tip of an iceberg of contemporary anti-Gypsy discrimination. The demand was for recognition of the Roma as a minority group deserving civil rights, and as a victim group deserving financial compensation.⁵⁰

A negative aspect of the use of the history of the Romani genocide is that the evidence brought forward focused almost exclusively on Nazi policy, ideology, and actions in order to show Nazi guilt. Thus the activist narrative selected a very specific part of Romani history, namely forms of legal persecution and discrimination. As Eve Rosenhaft points out, these narratives become “in fact histories of anti-Gypsyism” and, however unintentionally, tend to deny the Roma any subjectivity and importance as agents. The Roma are thus stamped by their own leaders as “victims in perpetuity.”⁵¹ This may be a consequence of the children of survivors reacting with political activism and ethnic pride against the background of what they perceive as the passivity and lack of ethnic pride among the survivor generation, as expressed in unwillingness to speak about their wartime experiences. Only recently have some Roma activists begun to question the negative effects of the victimization narrative.⁵²

Lost on the way to a shared memory?

Roma leaders are consciously disseminating the memory of persecution and massacres during World War II. The goal has been to create feelings of community through shared memory. The Roma have valorized massmurder into the most extreme crime against human rights, namely genocide. Furthermore, they insist on its introduction into the unique framework of the Holocaust. Because of the complex nature of the Nazi genocide, for many Roma there is no continuous memory; for some, not even a weak memory. As already mentioned, many countries with a large Roma population like Slovakia, Bulgaria and Greece had no experience of genocide and some others like Hungary and Romania were only partially affected. Thus the effort to make a shared collective memory begins with a memory, preserved only by certain groups of Roma, that must be consciously revived or restored or redistributed to other Roma who lack family memory of the events.

Shared memory is not professional history. Shared memory serves as a backdrop for contemporary interests. As Trouillot says, “the past does not exist independently of the present.” Most professional historians would refute this statement. The past does exist without the present, but the phenomenon of the “past” is connected with the phenomenon of the “present”. For activists working in a political framework, the past is subordinated to the needs of the present. Or, to turn Trouillot’s phrase upside down: the past is dependent on the present. There are memory makers, who manipulate and mediate representations of the past, and memory consumers, who can either receive, ignore, or transform these manifestations.⁵³ The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs invented the term “collective memory” nearly one hundred years ago.⁵⁴ He considered this special sort of memory to be the product of state agencies who design to bind people through shared interpretations of the past that are broadcast through the resources of the nation.

Jan Assmann, a German theoretician of collective memory, has a concept of “cultural memory” that is perhaps useful in some contexts. A cultural memory is made up of that “body of re-usable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in

each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image.”⁵⁵ Such a memory is connected with a centralized state which transmits texts, rites, images, buildings, monuments, and so on that remind citizens of the historical events of the collective. The state sees to it that representations of the past are stored in archives and libraries.

Halbwach’s and Assmann’s notions have little bearing on the activities of representatives of stateless nationalities. A state can control and stabilize its remembrance narrative; in a stateless community like the Roma, no central authority is in control and the narrative becomes always work-in-progress. The Roma lack the cultural resources that transcend generations. This forces Roma leaders to concentrate on contemporary issues. It is logical to put the trauma of what has happened within the range of memory of some of the families of those now living – both of the makers of memory and the consumers of memory. Thus the general history of the Roma activists usually limits itself to Hitler’s regime. Emphasis is on a few selected representations and episodes. Many of the consumers of this narrative have no personal link to the retold events.⁵⁶

Returning to my idea of creating a dialogue between professional historians and Roma representatives, I realize that the ambition was misplaced. The conflict was not one over denial of genocide. Both the historians and the activists were agreed that a genocide had taken place, but they argued over the extent of the genocide, the degree to which it could be made pan-European, the degree to which it could be compared with the Jewish Holocaust, and other big issues.

It is possible that the historians and the activists were using different conceptions of time. For the historian, each epoch in the past has unique characteristics. These slices of time are not a priori linked to the present, at least not without critical investigation. An important trait is to avoid anachronistic interpretations that is applying concepts that were not typical of the epoch concerned. For the activists – and here Roma leaders are not alone – time is not cut up into clearly distinct slices. Instead, the past is useful as a way to discuss present conditions. Thus past and present merge. Commemorations of the genocide make the past “relived” and integrate past and present. The potential dialogue was ill-conceived because the two sides had opposed concepts of time. ❌

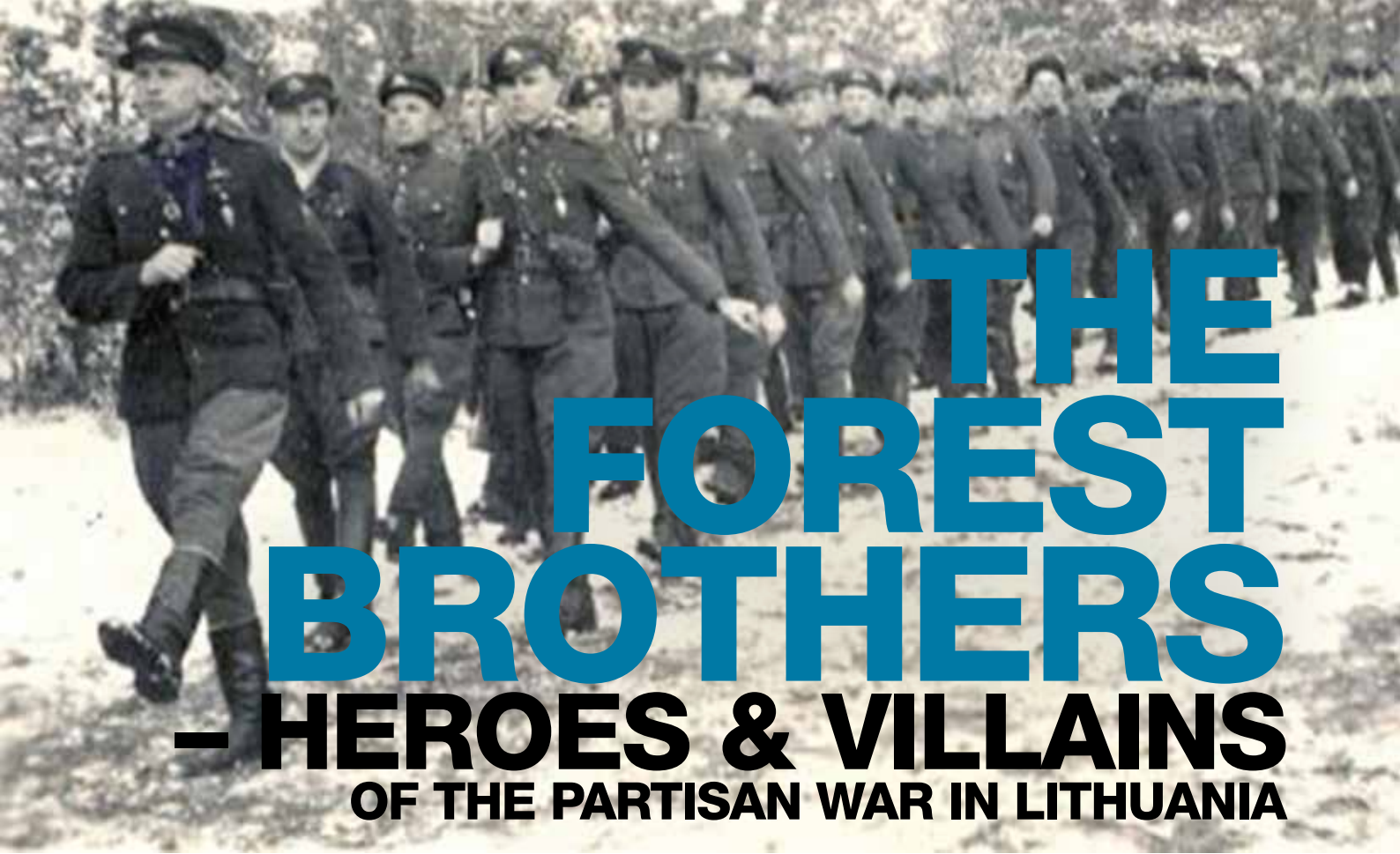
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THE FOREST BROTHERS – HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE PARTISAN WAR IN LITHUANIA

PHOTO: GENOCIDE AND RESISTANCE CENTRE OF LITHUANIA

by **Påhl Ruin**

Recent developments in the region with altered tensions between Russia and its neighbors have made it more difficult for Lithuania to come to terms with its Soviet history. The description of the Lithuanian partisans is a telling example of this situation.

In front of the Ministry of Defense in Vilnius there is a monument to Jonas Žemaitis, the country's president in 1949–1954. But he was never president during his lifetime; he was a partisan warrior executed in Moscow in 1954. It was not until 2009 that the Lithuanian parliament declared him the fourth president of the nation.

The partisan war started in 1944 when the Soviet Union reoccupied Lithuania. Žemaitis joined the partisans from the beginning and rose through the ranks to become general and leader of the forces – called the Forest Brothers – in 1949. The fighting continued until 1953, but in the absence of support from the West, the battle could not be won. Even when he realized that the fight was over, he stated: “I still believe that the struggle I have led will bring its results.”

Eventually he was right: Lithuania regained its independence in 1991. And it is beyond doubt that the protesters in the freedom movement of 1988–1991 took some of their strength and determination from the Forest Brothers – even if the knowledge of what actually happened during those dramatic nine years of partisan fighting was meager. During the decades of Soviet occupation, tales were told in families and between friends, but it was forbidden to talk openly about the partisan struggle.

The numbers are still uncertain, but estimates suggest that around 50,000 people took up arms in the fight and that at least another 50,000 were active helpers. In proportion to the population – one in twenty Lithuanians were active in the struggle in one way or another – the partisan war in Lithuania was one of the most extensive and longest in modern European history. It is comparable with the partisan struggle in Western Ukraine, but much larger in scale than those in Latvia and Estonia, which involved fewer troops and did not last as long.

THE SCOPE of the partisan war in Lithuania was also impressive in terms of the range of action taken. During the initial years, actual fighting was at the forefront of the struggle, but as time passed, the “information war” became just as important. The Forest Brothers needed to tell their own population – as well as the outside world – their side of the story, while the Soviet authorities were describing the virtues of socialism and the collectivization of the country's farmland. Wellhidden underground or in other hideouts, the partisans printed over 70 different publications – then risked their lives to have them disseminated to as many readers as possible. They wrote about the history of the nation, about culture, and about morals and social responsibilities. And they printed poetry, song and excerpts from the Bible.

But they eventually ended up on the losing side in this “information war”. When the last printing press was confiscated and the fighting was over, the Soviet authorities stepped up their propaganda campaign, describing all partisans as bandits and

The resistance was heroic. But the price was high. Too high?



Kazimieraitis brigade, Dainava military district. The district commander Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas pinning an award on Sofija Budėnaitė-Ramunė.



Kazimieraitis brigade, Dainava military district. From left: Jonas Budėnas- Klebonas, his sister Sofija Budėnaitė-Ramunė, Jonas Jakubavičius-Rugys, and Teofilis Valickas-Balys. April, 1948.

murderers. Research has shown that in 1959–1960 alone, this misinformation was circulated in 452 articles in the Lithuanian press, in 30 radio programs, in seven films, and in several books. So when a new protest movement for a free Lithuania arose in the 1980s, some 35 years after the Forest Brothers, the active protesters might well have been aware of the heroic aspects of the partisan war – but among ordinary Lithuanians, the Forest Brothers were looked upon with great suspicion.

The journalist Elena Tervidyte wrote some of the first articles about the Forest Brothers when it became possible to do so in 1989. In school she had not learned anything about them; they were briefly described as “nationalists that the system took care of”. Her father had told her a little about their struggle. And now, at last, she had the chance to hear the stories from surviving partisans themselves.

“They were extremely grateful that they would finally get to describe what had happened,” she told me during an interview. “And the interest from the public was huge; people stood in line outside our premises to get the newspaper. But the topic was still sensitive: Some of the former partisans did not dare to talk to me. Even well into the 1990s, some were still afraid to talk. Many died before they could tell their stories.”

At that time Elena Tervidyte already realized that reporting on the partisan war would be difficult, since the repeated claims by the Soviet authorities about the partisans committing crimes were not all blatant lies: some of them were indeed guilty of atrocious acts. She remembers a story about her cousin who had joined the partisans for six months in 1944. He was caught and sent to Siberia and in her family they whispered that he was guilty of abuses against civilians.

“At the time of our renewed independence the description of the Forest Brothers was a bit naive and one-eyed. I contrib-

uted to it myself, but I am prepared to defend it today because we needed to withstand the current picture that they were all bandits and fascists. Over time it has become possible to provide a more nuanced picture; today I would write my articles differently.”

MORE THAN 25 YEARS have passed since Elena Tervidyte wrote her deliberately biased stories and a lot has indeed happened in that time: articles, books, and documentaries have been published including some highlighting the darker sides of the partisans’ struggle to liberate Lithuania. Such aspects have always been sensitive topics, but discussion of them was accepted more and more – until around eight years ago.

The Russian-Georgian war in 2008 was the first clear indication that Russia could become a threat to its neighbors once again. At about the same time, the “information war” orchestrated from Moscow increased, followed a few years later by the annexation of Crimea and the intrusion into eastern Ukraine in 2014.

A new geopolitical situation in Lithuania has led to a growing need to focus on the purely heroic nature of the parti-

san war, for at least two reasons: first, when people connected to the regime in Moscow are talking about how easy it would be to invade the Baltic countries, it’s important to manifest unity around the heroic fighters who stood up for Lithuania after the last Russian invasion. And second, with the information war in high gear, any discussion of the criminal acts committed by the Forest Brothers will be used by Moscow in some way in their renewed campaign to distort the description of post-war Lithuanian history.

The Swedish filmmaker Jonas Öhman, who has lived many years in Lithuania, has followed this topic since the 1990s. And he sees the trend: “The Russian aggression has definitely had an impact. The ideal picture of the heroic partisan is now in

“A NEW GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION IN LITHUANIA HAS LED TO A GROWING NEED TO FOCUS ON THE PURELY HEROIC NATURE OF THE PARTISAN WAR.”

There were many female partisans. Although we hear little about them.



Partisans of Tauras military district at the grave of a perished comrade-in-arms in 1949.



The historian Mindaugas Počius in front of the former KGB building in Vilnius, where the names of murdered partisans and other enemies of the Soviet state are engraved.

the forefront, while the more problematic aspects of their actions are downplayed.”

Öhman is the director of the acclaimed film “The Invisible Front” from 2014, probably the most thorough documentary on the Forest Brothers up to now. The title refers to the fact that the war was largely unknown in the rest of the Soviet Union as well as in the outside world.

The focus of the film is on the heroic struggle, but the filmmakers included an important interview with an elderly Lithuanian whose father was murdered by the partisans. The father had been the chairman of the Soviet Land Distribution Committee in his region. According to the son he was proud of his work, redistributing land from the rich to the landless. One night a group of partisans knocked on the door, interrogated his father while beating him – and eventually shot him. “At that moment”, the son says, looking into the camera with darkening eyes, “I decided that I would join the Soviet Security forces. And I would avenge my parents.”

In the next scene, another elderly Lithuanian from the same village is interviewed. His father was also murdered, but by the Soviet Security forces for having helped the partisans. Together with his siblings and his mother, the son found his father hanging from a tree with his head down in an anthill, his face no longer recognizable.

Although this example of Soviet cruelty follows immediately after the example of the partisans executing a civilian countryman, some critics objected to the decision of the film makers to include the previous example. They saw it as a way of defaming the whole partisan movement.

Mindaugas Počius, an historian at the Lithuanian Institute of History, has done extensive research on the criminal acts committed by the partisans. In his dissertation, with the telling title “Far Side of the Moon”, he concludes that at least 9,000 civilians were designated as collaborators and executed by the Forest Brothers. “We will never know the exact number of civilians killed, but the archives and the diaries of the partisans, give us a lot of information. In the courts martial organized by the partisans

the evidence against the defendants tried as KGB informers was sometimes strong, sometimes weak. It is beyond doubt that totally innocent people were also killed,” says Mindaugas Počius when we meet for an interview. “People who worked openly in the Soviet structures, such as heads of collective farms or leading administrators, were also considered enemies of a free Lithuania. Many of them were killed as well.”

BUT WHAT SHOCKED him the most was the killing of children.

“Some partisans used what must be described as terrorist measures when they killed the families of the defendants. I know for sure that at least 300 children were murdered that way.”

In the English introduction to his book, he writes that “the number of civilians killed by resistance fighters is unduly high and shows a certain anomaly, i.e. such frequent application of death sentences cannot be justified by self-defense or military necessity; much blood was spilled without any reason and sense.” During the interview, Mindaugas Počius is eager to underline that he is a patriot, that he is proud of the sacrifice that the Forest Brothers made for their country. “I don’t differ from other Lithuanians in the view that the vast majority of the Forest Brothers were true heroes and models for future generations. But one should be able to say that and, at the same time, also highlight that some of them committed crimes. It is painful when I am accused of spreading Russian propaganda. People say that I support the old Soviet narrative of the partisans. That is definitely not true.”

Has it become even more difficult to conduct your kind of research, given the intensifying Russian propaganda war?

“Yes, it has become harder. Moscow takes every chance to highlight critical statements about Lithuania during the Soviet period, exaggerating the facts and adding false propaganda. This was not the case ten years ago.”

Mindaugas Počius’ s book came out 2009. The 500 copies immediately sold out. But no new editions were printed; the subject was too sensitive. And worst of all: critics of his findings con-

vinced the prosecutor general to launch an investigation against Počius for slander of the partisans. “The prosecutor general sent his own expert into the archives, and he concluded that I had been right. Despite this support from a fellow academic, I have never been invited anywhere to give lectures about my research. But I know of scholars at universities who do use my findings in their teaching.”

Počius concludes that it is increasingly difficult to question the prevailing romantic narrative. “A majority of Lithuanians in leading positions require such a heroic description; they believe that it is important for the country to unify around a common proud history. As a historian I cannot adhere to such a description. My task is to describe all the nuances. I want to dig into aspects that are overlooked in superficial research.”

I ask him to show me around the Museum of Terror and Genocide in Vilnius, the main Lithuanian museum depicting the partisan struggle. How accurate are the descriptions there?

“Not very accurate,” is his short answer after we passed through the main exhibition halls. “The partisans are only described as heroes and victims, nothing else. The museum does not show the complexity of the issue. There is no information about the courts martial that the partisans set up. Even if more research needs to be done to uncover more of what really happened at these trials, I think the audience should be informed of their existence.

“It’s very controversial to say this, but the one-sided description of the partisans’ fight is similar to the way in which today’s Russia describes the Soviet Union’s heroic struggle against Nazism. In both cases, there are deficiencies in the description of reality. It makes me irritated and even more motivated to highlight the darker sides of the Lithuanian partisans as well.”

There is another aspect of the partisan war, which is as sensitive as the killings of civilians: Before the war began, during the German occupation of Lithuania from 1941 to 1944, some of the future Forest Brothers took part in the Holocaust. The exact number is not known; it may have been somewhere between 2 and 5 percent of them. Some of these future partisans had administrative duties in the German murder apparatus; others actually joined the firing squads.

Mindaugas Počius points to a worn black-and-white photo of

the partisan Juozas Krikštaponis sitting on a rock in the forest with his rifle at his side. “It has been proven that he was part of a Lithuanian police battalion which killed thousands of Jews in Belarus. But nothing of this is mentioned in the text below. His portrait should be taken away from here.”

The responsibility for the museum lies with the Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania, where Teresė Birutė Burauskaitė is the director. I met her for an interview and asked about Krikštaponis. She responded: “Is his picture really there? That is a surprise, thanks for telling me. He was a partisan for only three months before he was killed. Given what he did in Belarus, he should not be portrayed in the museum. We should not describe him as a hero; he is a murderer. We have known that for several years.

So why is it still there then?

“We are planning a big renovation of the museum and there are many things that should be updated or changed. But we have not had the resources to do it yet.” (When I return to the museum a couple of weeks later, the photo of Krikštaponis is no longer there).

Burauskaitė herself has been active in bringing to light the partisans that took active part in the Holocaust. Recently she convinced the President to revoke a hero’s medal that the partisan Pranas Končius-Adomas was awarded posthumously back in 2000. Since then it has become known that he was guilty of killing Lithuanian Jews.

“An award had been granted to a person who does not deserve it,” she says. “It is important to give publicity to these cases. It strengthens our credibility when we underline that the vast majority of the partisans had nothing to do with the Holocaust, contrary to what the Russian propaganda says.”

Burauskaitė agrees with Mindaugas Počius that the prevailing romantic narrative of the partisans is out of date. “It has been like the movements of a pendulum. In Soviet times the pendulum swung all the way in one direction, depicting the partisans exclusively as criminals, and then it swung in the opposite direction, describing them all as flawless heroes. I had hoped that we by now would be able to find the truth somewhere between those two extremes.”

The Forest Brothers of Lithuania 1944–1953

- The Soviet forces, both security forces of the NKVD and the Red Army, killed between 20,000 and 30,000 partisans between 1944 and 1953. Half of them were killed during the first two years. Mutilated bodies were displayed openly on squares and in schoolyards so as to intimidate others to prevent them joining or helping the Forest Brothers.
- Many partisans who knew that they would be caught committed suicide. But before doing so they mutilated themselves so that the Soviet forces would not recognize them and hurt their families.
- By 1945, 30,000 people had joined the military struggle and the partisans controlled the majority of villages in Lithuania. Soviet officials were afraid to go into many parts of the country without military protection. When the fighting was most intense, there were 70,000 Soviet troops on Lithuanian soil. Besides using military means, the Soviet authorities also carried out mass arrests and deported thousands of families suspected of supporting the partisan movement.
- As more farmers were sent to Siberia, it became more difficult

As the head of the main research center on the subject, could you not have done more to make the pendulum swing back closer to the middle? In the books and pamphlets that you produce, very little or nothing is said about the darker sides of the Forest Brothers. Why?

Birutė Burauskaitė sighs before answering: “We try, but we meet resistance from influential conservative forces. There are several organisations active in protecting the memory of the partisans and they contact us immediately when we highlight less favorable aspects. I often get letters from these people. And they have powerful friends among politicians and high officials. These people try to influence what the historians publish. With an election coming up this fall, it’s even harder to push the issue of a more balanced picture of our modern history.”

She explains that the issue is very emotional for many people. In some cases the wounds are still open. “There are people alive who have witnessed atrocities on both sides; as children they saw their parents being killed either by Soviet forces or by partisans. Even some partisans are still alive. When we publish information about the war, we have to be correct beyond doubt about every little fact. We have had several examples of people telling us that their relatives were innocent victims, murdered by the partisans. But when we looked into these cases, we have found that the victims actually were Soviet activists.”

Mindaugas Počius writes that terrorist acts were committed by partisans and more than 300 children were killed. Do you support his research?

“Yes, I do. What he has done is very important. Since his research came out, new information on the killing of families have surfaced, supporting his thesis. We get to know more and more about this period with every year that passes. But time works against us; eyewitnesses are dying.

“We recently found new documents in the woods describing

the trials that the partisans organized. The documents were in bad condition but we managed to restore them. Among other things, they show that partisans evidently carried out trials against other partisans who had committed crimes against civilians. So this issue was sensitive among the partisans too.”

Maybe the time isn’t ripe yet to give a full and balanced picture of this historical period?

“Yes, that is probably true. You have to remember that investigations into what really happened during these years didn’t start until some 10–15 years ago. First we had to figure out what kind of support the state could offer to people who were victims of the Soviet period, including victims of partisan crimes.”

Among the general public, knowledge about this period varies.

Many of the younger generation are fairly ignorant and uninterested, concludes the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania. The older generation on the other hand was fed for decades with the Soviet description of the partisans as criminals. Despite the fact that the opposite message has been spread for over 25 years, old beliefs persist, says a friend who has been talking about it with his elderly

father: “Intellectually, my father realizes that the Soviet description is false and he can talk of the partisans as heroes. But deep down his suspicions linger on: Maybe most of them were bandits after all? he asks himself. So possibly we still need some time of depicting the Forest Brothers in a rosy and romantic way, to balance the picture.” ✕

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“CRITICS OF HIS FINDINGS CONVINCED THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL TO LAUNCH AN INVESTIGATION AGAINST POČIUS FOR SLANDER OF THE PARTISANS.”

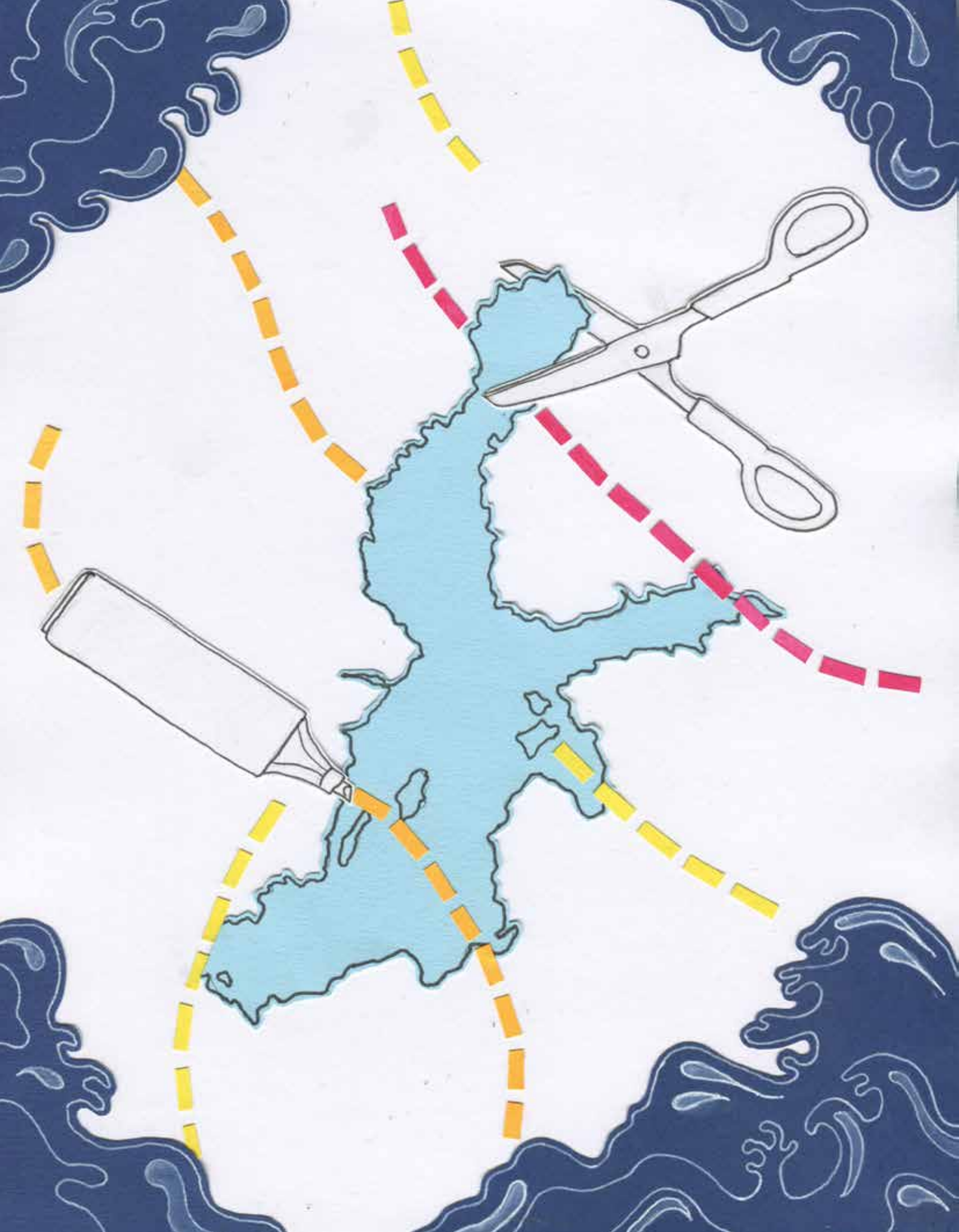
for the partisans to find people who could give them food and shelter. Since the remaining farms were collectivized and controlled by Soviet authorities, the partisans were forced to engage in theft and robbery to survive — which led to the killings of countrymen working on collective farms.

- Farmers made up the bulk of the Forest brothers. The military officers who joined became leaders of larger units, while the smaller units were led by peasants, teachers, or even high school students who had not even had time to do military service. Partisan women made major contributions as nurses

and disseminators of information. Some of them also took up arms.

- The partisan war had an element of civil war. More than 17,000 Lithuanians joined the Soviet side in the fighting, killing at least 20 percent of the partisans. Some were forced

to join the Soviet forces, others believed in the communist cause and joined voluntarily. Many were uneducated people, paid by the Soviets with money and alcohol, who often committed the most brutal acts. These people were recruited into auxiliary Soviet battalions and were called destroyers (*stribai*).



The case of the Baltic Sea area

SPATIAL POLITICS & FUZZY REGIONALISM

By **Norbert Götz**

Historical atlases are an illustrative remedy against geographical essentialism. Shifting political borders as an outcome of power struggles, and the reframing of bounded space resulting from the establishment of new hierarchies of meaning, make geography a moving target in history. Europe has been a container for varying sets of sub-regions at different points in time, showing that history involves a permanent renegotiation of space. Basic divisions include those of classical antiquity, the divide between South and North, and the Cold War distinction of Western and Eastern Europe (a view with predecessors among the eighteenth century “inventors” of Eastern Europe).¹ The currently prevalent distinctions between Western, Northern, Central, Southern, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe represents one of many possible ways to rescale Europe into meaningful units larger than the nation-state, but smaller than the continent.² Other suggestions refer to the correlating notions of northeastern Europe and the Baltic Sea region, an entity that reappeared on mental maps with the fall of the Iron Curtain.³ While none of the areas mentioned is unhistorical, and while borders are often a matter of contention, they all represent significant perceptions of spatio-cultural coherence.

However, geography may also be fragmented. Colonial empires are non-contiguous geographical conglomerations, their cohesion arising

from bonds that bridge unattached areas. They may live on as “transterritorial” regions, such as a Commonwealth or la Francophonie.⁴ Concepts like “Scandia major” or “Greater Norden” have clustered the Nordic states together with “exclaves” like the Netherlands, Canada, Japan, and other remote countries that see themselves bound by common values and a similar conduct of foreign affairs.⁵ Another example of relational patchiness is the so-called Western European and Others Group in the United Nations. It is considered a distinct regional electoral group, although it encompasses countries like Australia and Canada.⁶ As applied to politics, space and region are flexible concepts that may stretch our geographical imagination and even take the edge off a language of “othering”.

Scholarly approaches likewise reveal great differences in understanding regions. They are seen as territorial representations of given natural or cultural traits, or as political or heuristic

tools that enable researchers to analyze network patterns and imagined communities on other scales than that of the nation-state.⁷ Studies assuming regional substance, when looked at in their mutually contradictory diversity, corroborate constructivist epistemology. However, constructivist approaches do not preclude the essentializing tendencies of a “regionalism as prescription”.⁸ Constructivism has been an inspiration for region-building projects

abstract

This article engages with political region building by examining the diverging conceptions of the Baltic Sea region since the 1970s. It maps the fuzzy geography arising from the enmeshment of territory with a multitude of frameworks for regional action. After 1989, the region became the object of interregional and neighborhood policies established by the European Union, with shifting territorial delimitations according to various internal and geopolitical needs of the day. Drawing on functional, relational, and administrative perspectives, it is shown how spatial definitions surrounding the Baltic Sea region have varied over the past fifty years, revealing those transnational connections that have been valued as worthwhile political investments.

KEYWORDS: Northeastern Europe; EU; macro-region; international organizations; region-building; marine environment; neighborhood policy

in which present-day academics assume “the role of Herder, Fichte, Mazzini, and the like, in the new era” of multilevel governance.⁹ Hence, Ole Wæver, a major proponent of constructivism in the study of international relations, maintained in the late 1990s that the Baltic Sea region had by that time been “talked into existence”, something that he believed correlated with the establishment of a regional identity.¹⁰ The assumption that there is a region *per se*, rather than a multitude of territorial designs adjusted to distinct relational patterns, functions, and administrative customization, is not substantially altered when based on the notion of historical contingency rather than on certain objectified features. Neither is it changed by the awareness that a region, despite being spatial, need not refer to a clearly delineated space, and that the Baltic Sea region is determined by the connectivity of its nodal area rather than by any distinct perimeter.¹¹ Therefore, while a constructivist approach constitutes a necessary step towards the critical study of regions, it alone is not sufficient. Constructivism becomes a critical force only when exercised from a rigid academic standpoint without prescriptive investment in the region-building enterprise itself.

The present study concurs with the observation that ontological confusion prevails about what the Baltic Sea region is, and that boundaries significant to the region have been inadequately studied, but it does not content itself with an examination of recent EU policy.¹² Rather, it shows how fuzzy geography may, in fact, become enmeshed in human agency. It does this by investigating diverging territorial framings of the Baltic Sea region in a variety of international organizations and policy programs since the 1970s, arguing that spatial definitions surrounding the Baltic Sea region have incorporated intersecting administrative, functional, and relational perspectives of many sorts over the past fifty years. These scripts are revealing beyond the region itself and are gauges of the models of transnational collaboration envisioned by the political projects to which they have been attached.

Interreg: spatial planning visions of the 1990s

The history of the Baltic Sea region in European Territorial Cooperation (ETC; better known as the EU Interreg programs) shows how the definition of a geographical entity can vary considerably, even within the same program structure. This scheme is a key instrument of the so-called cohesion policy. Thus, the current Interreg Baltic Sea Region Program for the period 2014 to 2020 states as its overall objective the strengthening of “the integrated territorial development and cooperation for a more innovative, better accessible and sustainable Baltic Sea region”.¹³

In principle, the program includes the EU members Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden; the partner countries

Belarus and Norway; and the Northeast of Germany and the northwestern Federal District of Russia.¹⁴ However, an overall integrated development has become an increasingly intricate matter due to political tension with Russia, first in connection with the conflict in Georgia, and more recently, following the country’s annexation of the Crimea and participation in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.¹⁵ The Russian government failed to sign an economic agreement with the EU in connection with the previous Interreg program and, as a consequence organizations based in Russia did not become eligible for funding (although various forms of involvement were practiced).¹⁶ For the current program, it is unclear if and when financial agreements with Russia – and now Belarus as well – might be signed. On its website, the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Program encourages applicants to associate Russian or Belarusian partners, adding the reservation that funding for them needs to be sought from alternative sources.¹⁷ The discrepancy between a larger official area of EU-sponsored regional cooperation and a more restricted *de facto* area renders the meaning of the “Baltic Sea region” ambiguous as a space of cross border cooperation. Interreg maps have also usually cut off the eastern parts of the Russian territory that was formally included.

Moreover, the Interreg III B and IV B programs for the Baltic Sea region – in force from 2000 to 2006 and from 2007 to 2013, respectively – had a different territorial outreach than the current one, only covering the western and central parts of Belarus and the westernmost districts of Russia.¹⁸ Even then, however, the European Commission took into account a request of the governments of Finland and Sweden that cooperation with Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea area be among the priorities of the Baltic Sea program.¹⁹

THE FIRST INTERREG PROGRAM specifically designed for the Baltic Sea region – II C, in force between 1997 and 1999 – still represented a markedly different understanding of the region. While involving the same eleven countries that reappeared in subsequent programs, only the territory of Finland and the three Baltic republics was regarded as entirely belonging to the Baltic Sea region. As is still the case with Germany and Russia, the major powers in the area, only the littoral zones and selected hinterland areas from the five other countries were understood as forming part of the region at that time.

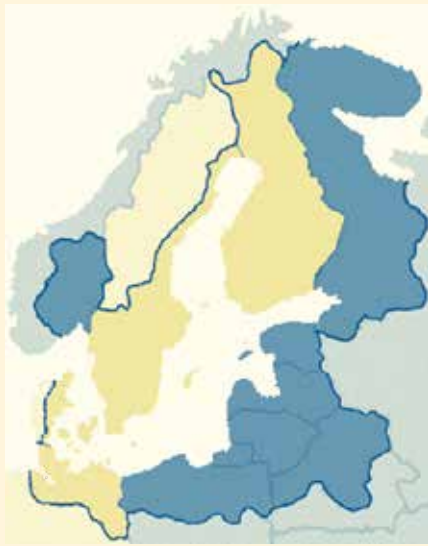
The consecutive reframing and resizing of the Baltic Sea region in the definitions of the same EU program structure il-

lustrate that the determination of this space is subject to considerations of expediency and policy-making. Its borders are fluid and subject to negotiation and evolution. While such adaptability may be a strength in political terms, it entails – as Figure 1 illustrates – a great deal of contingency.

The Baltic Sea region of the later Interreg programs corresponds approximately to the area that the VA-

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Figure 1: The spatial evolution of EU Interreg programs for the Baltic Sea region



Interreg II C, 1997–1999, encompassing mainly coastal areas.



Interreg III B / IV B, encompassing mainly nation-states.



Interreg V B, 2014–2020, including Belarus and northwestern Russia at large.

SAB network for spatial planning and development adopted in the early 1990s. VASAB stands for Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea. Apart from the fact that VASAB has always included the whole of Belarus, the only differences between it and the Interreg programs concern countries understood as not entirely belonging to the Baltic Sea region, namely Germany and Russia. VASAB does not encompass Bremen and the Regierungsbezirk Lüneburg in Germany; its geographical extent in Russia is the one adopted by the Interreg III B and IV B programs, not the present extension that, if applied, would include the whole of northwestern Russia.²⁰ Despite minor deviations, the VASAB understanding of the Baltic Sea region has generally prefigured that of the European Territorial Cooperation scheme. In this particular sense, VASAB has achieved its goal of contributing to “a strong identity enabling the BSR [Baltic Sea region] to play an important role within Europe and the world”.²¹

Nevertheless, the assumption of territorial integration, in the sense of intellectual and infrastructural reciprocity, and a corresponding orientation for action among the concerned parties encounters difficulties. This is illustrated by the fact that an area that has been branded the NEBI area, where NEBI stood for North European and Baltic Sea Integration, largely coincides with the VASAB territory and the later Interreg programs, although excluding Belarus and parts of Poland. A *NEBI Yearbook* was published parallel to the EU eastern enlargement negotiations in the years 1998–2003. The creators of the acronym apologized for adding to the European “alphabet soup”, but maintained that they knew of no viable alternative. According to them, “North European” was frequently understood as a synonym for Scandinavia, and people in the Barents area – the northern parts of Scandinavia and Russia – “would have little pa-

tience with a book placing their region under the heading ‘Baltic Sea Integration’”.²²

Although a definition very similar to that of NEBI continued to be used for the Baltic Sea region by the Baltic Development Forum’s periodical *State of the Region Report*,²³ the terminological explanation of “NEBI” reveals that experts in the field regard the area currently defined by the European Union as the Baltic Sea region as being at odds with the inhabitants’ identities. A recent study of mental maps among groups of high school students in Sweden, on the Åland islands, and in Estonia suggests that, on a deeper level, the issue is that as yet a Baltic Sea identity has barely evolved beyond the circle of an activist elite.²⁴

Helcom: functional delimitations of the 1970s and their update

Despite the shifting notions of the Baltic Sea region and its questionable conflation with the Barents Sea area, the region is not subject to unmitigated arbitrariness. The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea entails provisions for enclosed or semi-enclosed seas like the Baltic Sea. It mentions “bordering states” and requests their cooperation in regard to the management of living resources, marine environment, and scientific research policy.²⁵ Although there is no consensus on exactly where the Baltic Sea begins, and whether the Danish Straits and the Kattegat – the sea between Jutland and Sweden – belong to it, this disagreement has no effect on which the adjoining countries are, and a general agreement prevails that the Baltic Sea itself is the key constituent of the eponymous region.²⁶ Therefore, a minimalistic regional understanding of the Baltic Sea region comprises the Baltic Sea itself with its coastline and islands. This concept corresponds roughly with

the domain of the two bodies of Baltic Sea cooperation that date back to the time of the Cold War, the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC) and the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (better known as the Helsinki Commission, or HELCOM). Multilateral collaboration became possible in the area after the signing of the Treaty Concerning the Basis of Relations Between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic in 1972.²⁷

IBSFC was established by a provision of the Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources in the Baltic Sea and the Belts, signed 1973 in Gdansk by the sovereign states bordering the Baltic Sea. The title of the convention simultaneously discriminates between and conjoins the Baltic Sea and the Danish straits (the natural channels between Jutland, the islands of Funen and Zealand, and Sweden), whereas the straits are subsumed under the Baltic Sea in the name of the commission. The northern demarcation of the Belts, “bounded in the west by a line as from Hasenore Head to Griben Point, from Korshage to Spodsbjerg and from Gilbjerg Head to the Kullen,” adopted the delimitation of the 1959 North-East Atlantic Fisheries Convention and, in essence, an interwar Scandinavian definition of the southern boundary of the Kattegat.²⁸

THE WARSAW-BASED IBSFC was made responsible for the protection and rational exploitation of living marine resources in the Baltic Sea, although, according to its critics, it has regularly allowed non-sustainable catches of fish. Its composition has changed several times due to the European Community representing its member states since 1984, the EU enlargements of 1995 and 2004, and the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Soviet Union (the latter being succeeded by four states with a Baltic Sea coast). However, only sovereign states adjoining the Baltic Sea, and the EC/EU as a supranational aggregate of some of these states, have ever been members of the commission. After its 2004 enlargement, the EU considered the IBSFC redundant, and the organization was subsequently dissolved, its task being left to bilateral negotiations between the EU and Russia.²⁹ A new framework agreement for this purpose, with a geographical delimitation identical to that of the Gdansk Convention, has been in place since 2009.³⁰ While the agreement has not yet entered into force, it is being provisionally applied.³¹

The other Baltic Sea organization that dates back to the time of the Cold War and remains active is HELCOM, a discussion forum and monitoring body that was established pursuant to a convention signed in 1974 in the Finnish capital. This convention took effect in 1980 and is regarded as a political milestone of international ecopolitics because it dealt with the various sources of marine pollution in a single document and influenced the development of the UN Law of the Sea.³² The convention framed its subject matter “as an integral part of the peaceful cooperation and mutual understanding between all European

States”, alluding to the simultaneously ongoing process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). In addition, it referred to the Gdansk Convention on fishery and living resources, and expressed a general desire “to develop further regional co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area”. It defined the relevant territory for its purpose as “the Baltic Sea proper with the Gulf of Bothnia, the Gulf of Finland and the entrance to the Baltic Sea bounded by the parallel of the Skaw [Skagen] in the Skagerrak at 57°44.8'N” (i.e., the northern border of the Kattegat).³³

WHILE A HOLISTIC perspective in combination with a general will for collaboration resulted in joint capacities to tackle problems of natural resources and the environment, the application of a macro-regional scale, encompassing the entire Baltic Sea and requiring scientific-technical solutions, has also diverted attention from the need for local measures, public engagement, and even ecological concerns.³⁴

The two institutions that were agreed upon in the 1970s represent the least common denominator of spatial format which, by extension, included all the Baltic Sea coastal states. The minimal cooperation that followed in areas of evident common interests like the management of fishing resources and environmental protection, was probably the maximum that could be achieved at the time.³⁵ These states were not identical with those of today, since the Soviet Union and the GDR still existed. Norway has never been part of the cooperative agreement based on these purely marine-functional conventions – not even after 1989. The Cold War, the period during which the Iron Curtain split the Baltic Sea into a northwest and a southeast half, is thus helpful in defining a functionally determined core of the Baltic Sea region. However, such a definition is not more than a topographical identification of the Baltic Sea, although it has been suggested that “the Baltic Sea itself” (rather than its adversarial history) may constitute an embryo of identity.³⁶ In any case, a shortcoming of the Marine Environment Protection Convention of 1974 was that relevant functional relationships like the inflow of inland waters and land-based pollution could be taken into account only indirectly, that is, when they had already entered the sea.³⁷

For this reason, the HELCOM convention was revised in 1992 to include inland waters connected to the Baltic Sea, thus referring to the whole drainage basin with a total of 132 rivers.³⁸ This space is not dissimilar to the VASAB, NEBI, or current Interreg definitions of the Baltic Sea region. The most profound difference is that Norway remains external to the region. Berlin and Hamburg are also not part of the area, and the Russian territory is more limited, excluding the area with waterways that feed into the Barents Sea. Only on a close inspection can Norway be said to be included because a few of the country’s creeks flow eastward towards the Baltic Sea. Likewise, some minor waters from Ukraine, the Czech Repub-

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lic, and Slovakia feed into the Baltic Sea. Such marginal phenomena have not caused these countries to become members of HELCOM. Belarus is also not a member of the Commission, although significant portions of the country are connected to the Baltic Sea through the rivers Daugava, Neman, and Vistula, and although the cities of Brest and Grodno were included in a list of HELCOM “hot spots” as early as 1992 in connection with the reform of the organization.³⁹ The governments of Belarus and Ukraine currently have observer status in HELCOM.

The revision of the Helsinki Convention in 1992, which entered into force in 2000, occasioned a minor adjustment in the definition of the entrance of the Baltic Sea, which is now set at 57° 44' 43" N latitude. While the move is quantitatively negligible, amounting to little more than a kilometer difference, it is qualitatively significant as it entails a shift from a man-made landmark, the Skaw lighthouse, to the geological formation of the Skaw headland as a point of reference. The understanding of the Baltic Sea, including the Kattegat, has thereby acquired a solely natural determination.

A DEFINITION OF the Baltic Sea region by its catchment area is particularly relevant for the pursuit of ecological issues, but it is also applicable in unexpected political areas. The Baltic University Programme (BUP), coordinated at Uppsala, Sweden, since 1991, has a twofold agenda in the fields of education, research, cooperation with societal actors, and information for society at large. The program is meant to support sustainable development (including economic, social, and ecological aspects) on the one hand, and the development of democracy and democratic cultures on the other. The tying of a general issue such as democracy to a concrete ecological concern in a geographical scope defined by the flow of water is probably best explained by the conjuncture of democracy promotion and environmental protection at the top of the list of official Swedish political priorities. This link is especially strong in the field of development aid, and, in fact, the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) was the initial funder of BUP in the 1990s. While the BUP statutes define the Baltic Sea region as the drainage basin of the Baltic Sea and the Kattegat, and those invited to participate are institutions located in this area, some of the approximately 225 currently participating bodies are located outside this space. One is the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, which hosts one of the three associated secretariats. However, with the exception of one university in the US, all the participating institutions are based in a country with at least some outflow to the Baltic Sea.⁴⁰

While the sea and its catchment area can plausibly serve to delimit the Baltic Sea region as a distinct ecosphere, environmental concerns cannot be thus limited. Polity-oriented environmentalism and issues of air-based pollution suggest a more open, trans-regional perspective. For example, while realizing that it may appear as “a geographical hybrid” to include the Barents Sea in the Baltic Sea, a Norwegian author has argued that it makes sense in a functional environmentalist perspective.⁴¹ However, environmentalism aside, an evident physical and functional connection to the Baltic Sea is no guarantee of identification with it.⁴²

CBSS: relations to the North Atlantic

A further definition of the Baltic Sea region is a radically widened one, in which the region is seen as stretching from Greenland via Iceland and the North Atlantic to Norway, down to Denmark and alpine Germany, via Poland and Belarus to Russia, and all the way to Vladivostok and into the Pacific. This vast area includes significant parts of the northern hemisphere. Such a construction may appear to be an unwarranted region-building exercise that requires considerable imagination. However, such a version of the Baltic Sea region is an actual one, founded upon the agency of nation-states, which continue to be the most significant entities conducting international relations.

The establishment of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), on a joint Danish-German initiative in 1992 by the foreign ministers of the nine Baltic Sea coastal states, Norway, and a representative of the EU Commission illustrates this. The idea of a Baltic Sea council had earlier been proposed as a group of national representatives, although with the participation of Germany and Russia limited to provincial authorities adjacent to the Baltic Sea. However, when the state government of Schleswig-Holstein, which had started to pursue an independent regional foreign policy during the perestroika thaw, invited the surrounding national governments to prepare for the council, the German foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, insisted on the foreign affairs prerogative of the nation-state. He made it clear that the Federal Republic of Germany did not endorse the initiative by provincial politicians in Kiel, and announced that he had already agreed with the Danish government to organize a summit of foreign ministers of the Baltic Sea region in Copenhagen that would consider the establishment of a Baltic Sea council.⁴³ According to his colleague, the Danish foreign minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, the presence of the German federal government was indispensable for Baltic Sea cooperation because a country with substantial weight was needed to “make the Russians behave properly” (while the other governments were tasked with making the Balts behave).⁴⁴

The CBSS meets biannually, its foreign ministers alternating with a summit of heads of government. Since 1998, the organization, which is a forum for confidence building and declaratory politics rather than actual policy-making,⁴⁵ has a permanent secretariat in Stockholm. Despite its vague overall political role, particularly in times of increasing dissonance between the West with Russia, the CBSS has been characterized as “a prime symbol of institutionalized Baltic space” and has been referred to accordingly by EU bodies.⁴⁶ The current crisis is evident in the fact that since spring 2014 CBSS summits and ministerial meetings have been cancelled, although CBSS senior officials continue to meet and projects continue.⁴⁷

In principle, the CBSS already had a North Atlantic dimension at its foundation. The Faroe Islands and Greenland are autonomous Danish territories that are not included in the European Union. However, contrary to European integration, it is formally not the state of Denmark, but the Kingdom of Denmark that is a CBSS member, and this kingdom encompasses three territories: Denmark proper, the Faeroes, and Greenland.⁴⁸ Norway was also a founding member, despite an initial debate as to whether

it and, in particular, Iceland were eligible to become members of the CBSS.⁴⁹ The Norwegian delegation to the CBSS founding meeting included a representative of the country's south-easternmost province, Østfold, and, it was claimed, that this province was located "at the mouth of the Baltic Sea". By contrast, at the time of the Cold War, when the Soviet Union proposed to turn the Baltic Sea into a "Sea of Peace" Norwegian politicians had underlined that their country was not a Baltic Sea state.⁵⁰ On yet other occasions the Baltic Sea area has been described as a "'Norwegian' neighborhood area".⁵¹

Iceland had not been invited to the founding meeting of the CBSS and initially stood apart. However, the Icelandic government later campaigned for membership and applied for accession in 1994 in order to avoid isolation in the face of intensifying cooperation across the Baltic Sea and the pending EU membership of the other Nordic countries. One year later, the CBSS accepted Iceland as a new member.⁵² The Committee of Senior Officials' report on the application states that consensus was reached on the issue during a meeting and that "it was agreed that Iceland's case is exceptional, and will not serve as a precedent."⁵³

Thus, despite Iceland being admitted, reservations about its membership are apparent. Statements by Icelandic politicians likewise indicate that they felt the need to justify their wish for inclusion. They interpreted the CBSS as a link between the Nordic countries and their neighbors around the Baltic Sea, and they emphasized historical connections from Hanseatic times to the independence of the three Baltic republics after World War I, when Iceland was granted sovereignty within a union with Denmark.⁵⁴ Iceland also enjoyed good-will in the region as the first country to have established diplomatic relations with the Baltic states in 1991. Iceland chaired the CBSS during the 2005/06 term and hosted the Sixth Baltic Sea States Summit in Reykjavík in 2006.⁵⁵ In a speech the following year, before the financial crisis changed the country's outlook, Foreign Minister Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir explained her country's role in Baltic Sea cooperation in relational terms:

Iceland might appear to some to be the odd man out when it comes to regional cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region. After all, you need only to look at the map to see that Iceland doesn't even lie near the Baltic Sea. However, this literal reading of the map obscures an important geopolitical truth: that as a Nordic Country, Iceland is closely intertwined into the Baltic Sea Region, both politically and economically. This fact is maybe best illustrated today in the active interest that Icelandic investors have taken in this region. Increased Icelandic investments in the Baltic Region did not come about as a result of any co-ordinated effort or intervention from the official level, but simply reflects the huge potential of this region, which Icelandic investors have

been quick to spot. There is every reason to be optimistic when it comes to the future of this region, especially if we succeed in building even stronger bridges between our countries.⁵⁶

The significance of the CBSS has been attributed to its general merit of encompassing potentially antagonistic states (i.e., including Russia in an essentially Western organization) rather than its "obviously limited regional value".⁵⁷ As an observer of the development of Baltic Sea cooperation in the late 1980s and early 1990s noted, the establishment of the CBSS as an intergovernmental organization meant that matters such as cultural affinities and regional identity were subordinated to the functional cooperation of nation-states.⁵⁸ Moreover, as the case of Iceland illustrates, the CBSS was also subordinated to prior patterns of identification and cooperation, such as that of the Nordic governments. Nevertheless, despite the "hijacking" of the project of the Baltic Sea region by nation-states, bottom-up initiatives sustained regional cooperation during periods of lost momentum by their official counterparts.⁵⁹ At the same time – as the inclusion of Iceland in the Baltic Sea NGO Forum illustrates – civil society interaction in the region remains heavily dependent on the public sector.⁶⁰

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), which has convened annually since 1991, has represented a wide geographical approach from the outset, but with a mixed overall record. Its first meeting was attended by Norwegian, Icelandic, Faroese, and Greenlandic delegates, along with representatives of assemblies adjoining the Baltic Sea and a few hinterland provinces (but not the German federal parliament, which only participated from the second conference on).⁶¹ By the late 1990s, North Atlantic participation in the BSPC had become irregular. Faroese legislators last attended a session in 2002, and their colleagues from Greenland have been absent since 2009. Iceland has missed nearly one-third of the meetings, but has been continuously present since 2012.⁶² When hosting the BSPC in Reykjavík in 2006, a meeting not attended by the neighboring North Atlantic legislatures, the President of the Icelandic Althingi "described how Icelanders view themselves as part of the Baltic Sea region, if not geographically, then politically and culturally".⁶³

ND and EUSBSR: administrative region building without resources

Over the years, the EU has adopted a variety of regional umbrella programs focusing on the Baltic Sea region. An abundance of bottom-up initiatives, academic signposting, and regional governance organizations have called the attention of EU policy makers to the Baltic Sea region as a prototype for the development of various macro-regional policy frames.⁶⁴

However, it was the self-promotion of actors from the region that was decisive, and while these EU programs have been introduced with considerable rhetorical effort, none of them created their own

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organization or announced funding in addition to existing programs.

In 1996, in preparation for the first CBSS summit of heads of government in Visby, the Swedish government urged the European Commission to draw up the Baltic Sea Region Initiative (BSRI).⁶⁵ The program's goal was to enhance political stability and economic development through improved coordination and increased focus on priority areas. It was assumed that the Baltic Sea region comprised about 60 million inhabitants, half of whom were EU citizens. This number indicates a restrictive view because it excludes, for example, the inland areas of Poland. However, in practice the initiative was based on various EU programs (such as Interreg, PHARE for prospective EU member states, and TACIS for other states emerging after the dissolution of the Soviet Union), and on those of international organizations such as CBSS and HELCOM.⁶⁶ Whether this was synergetic or parasitic may be answered with reference to a commentator who, after a few years, observed that the BSRI still needed "to demonstrate that the combined value of the various EU instruments employed in the region is greater than the sum of their parts". He subsumed it under EU Commission communications with an agenda-setting rather than a policy quality.⁶⁷ Some years later a German diplomat (then chairman of the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials) declared that the initiative had not had any strong impact.⁶⁸

Like the BSRI, the idea of a "Northern Dimension (ND) for the Policies of the European Union", officially adopted by the EU in 1998, came from an effort to maintain good relations with Russia, with an eye on the pending EU membership of the Baltic republics. Another parallel is the assertion that financial assistance need not be increased, and that overall policies can remain the same.⁶⁹ Hence, the term "dimension" meant increased attention paid to northern concerns, again within existing wider programs such as Interreg, PHARE, and TACIS.⁷⁰ The ND scheme became a catch all marketing strategy rather than a concrete political program. As it was difficult to pinpoint its policy content apart from its general area focus, officials have described it as a "non-policy".⁷¹

NEVERTHELESS, FOUR POLICY dimensions were developed over the years, among which the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) stands out with its support fund based on state donations and managed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). This fund facilitates local projects in northwestern Russia and Belarus and stood at € 347 million by the end of 2014, of which almost half was earmarked for nuclear waste management and the other half for environmental projects.⁷² Thus, despite its weak institutionalization and the fact that it is little known in foreign policy circles, the ND has been a more significant and longer-lasting feature of EU policy making than the short-lived BSRI.⁷³ Recently a group of donors assured the NDEP's continued existence until 2022.⁷⁴ While the advancement of the program has come to a halt, associates suggest that environmental cooperation should ideally be kept outside the realm of politics, and that the "NDEP will be able to re-start once the geopolitical situation has changed".⁷⁵

Like the acronym NEBI that was invented at about the same time, ND eschews stretching the geographically entrenched space of the Baltic Sea region into remote areas, preferring to subsume it under a more comprehensive (and vaguer) concept derived from a cardinal direction. With cooperation in the Arctic, the Barents area, Nordic neighborhood policies with eastern partners, and Baltic Sea cooperation as its pillars, the ND constitutes "a network of ideas with very different spatial shapes".⁷⁶ The discursive strategy behind the term ND – mirroring the critique of the European Parliament's Committee of the Regions on the BSRI, and brought to the EU agenda by the Finnish government's debut initiative as a member state – was the European mainstreaming of a variety of Finnish interests and the infusion of "the 'semantics of the periphery' with a positive sound".⁷⁷ The ND's overall extension has earlier been sketched as ranging "from Iceland on the west across to North-West Russia, from the Norwegian, Barents and Kara Seas in the North to the Southern coast of the Baltic Sea".⁷⁸ At the time of the Baltic States' accession to the EU, the ND was said to have moved from the high north to the Baltic Sea area, and it was later extended more broadly to Greenland and the European Arctic area. Despite such unclarity, it has always been at least as much eastern as northern.⁷⁹

The ND is a EU neighborhood program, including the EU candidate and, since 2004, member states Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, as well as closely cooperating countries like Norway and Iceland. However, northwest Russia has constantly been a major focus. From the beginning, ND was not merely a scheme towards EU neighbors, but a partner-oriented policy that gave them a voice in a political process that sought "to 'fly below the radar' of the high politics of EU-Russian relations and of Russian geopolitics".⁸⁰ Only in such a sense of functional cooperation at a subnational and local level has the Northern Dimension "encouraged a blurring of the frontiers" between the countries involved.⁸¹ Nevertheless, when the ND initiative was reinstated in 2006, the formal position of the partners was enhanced, becoming fully equal to that of the EU.⁸² While Russian commentators praise the unique model of joint ownership of an EU neighborhood policy, they also note its lack of achievement, apart from the NDEP.⁸³ The ND has been a disappointment for several reasons, but the strong position of Russia is one that has become increasingly aggravating as relations with the West have deteriorated. This has largely undermined the hope that the ND might function "as a 'face-saver' and a reminder of successful cooperation" between the EU and Russia.⁸⁴ Thus official websites connected to the ND and its various policies show that routines of cooperation had largely come to a halt by 2015.

When the European Parliament requested an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), it observed that "the Baltic Sea has almost become an internal sea, a mare nostrum, of the European Union following the 2004 enlargement". The strategy, which was especially promoted by Sweden, was initially presented as a means to territorially refocus the ND.⁸⁵ Instead, the European Council distributed tasks in conjunction with the EUSBSR to cover internal matters of the EU, and with the ND for

external aspects of Baltic Sea cooperation.⁸⁶ Subsequent EUSBSR documents discuss collaboration with Russia as if the Northern Dimension was an instrument of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy, a reversal of its initial design.⁸⁷ Some quarters have perceived the overlapping geographical scope as a potential threat to the ND and its constructive engagement of Russia.⁸⁸ However, the EUSBSR has more generally turned regional institutions such as HELCOM, CBSS, and ND into platforms for the implementation of EU policies, particularly when dealing with Russia.⁸⁹

A semiofficial publication reveals confusion about the EUSBSR and the chaotic Baltic space. It mapped an area including the whole of Norway, but showing only minor German and Polish coastal strips that do not correspond to administrative units; and excluding not only Russian littoral territories, but also a sort of corridor along the Lithuanian-Polish border that links the Kaliningrad area to mainland Russia.⁹⁰ On the one hand, the EUSBSR stipulated the existence of a specific “EU Baltic Sea Region” with nearly 85 million inhabitants, excluding the St. Petersburg area and the enclave of Kaliningrad, which is surrounded by EU territory.⁹¹ (The number is not explained, but is evidently the aggregate of all EU littoral states with the exception of Germany, which accounts for the remaining approximately 20 million people. As the population of the German territory covered by the Baltic Sea Interreg programs amounts to less than 14 million and there is no obvious extension of a German Baltic Sea space, this means that the proposed boundaries in Germany are vague.)⁹²

On the other hand, the EUSBSR deploys a deliberately functional approach to space. Its constitutive document states:

The strategy covers the macro-region around the Baltic Sea. The extent depends on the topic: for example on economic issues it would involve all the countries in the region, on water quality issues it would involve the whole catchment area, etc. Overall, it concerns the eight Member States bordering the Baltic Sea. Close cooperation between the EU and Russia is also necessary in order to tackle jointly many of the regional challenges. The same need for constructive cooperation applies also to Norway and Belarus.⁹³

The EUSBSR currently focuses on environment, growth, and communication objectives; an earlier fourth pillar addressing safety and security has been subsumed under the environmental “Save the Sea” theme.⁹⁴ The strategy has been criticized for excessively relying on a sectoral approach and for its lack of a clear territorial perspective, as opposed to an alternative, more cohesive, area-based approach.⁹⁵ However, spatial variance is endemic to a strategy that is laid out as an efficiency-enhancing framework for aligning diverse regional programs and instruments—and must be so, because the three principle “nos” of the EU macro regional method have been inscribed

in this policy from the outset: “no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures, and no new EU legislation”.⁹⁶ Against this backdrop, scholars have observed the strategy’s “double vision in which actors are induced to frame their activities in multiple spatial frames by attaching what could perhaps be called an ‘EUSBSR brand’ to their activities”. It remains unclear how such a polyphonic labelling exercise might be made consistent with the same academics’ claim that the EUSBSR gravitates towards a “singularized version” of the Baltic Sea region, with the European Commission serving as the “mouthpiece of the emerging ‘regional Leviathan’”.⁹⁷ Other scholars suggest there is an alternative between the EUSBSR as an EU-controlled umbrella for the “whole” Baltic Sea cooperation and “a European macro-region that principally continues to see itself as an area of cooperation in its own right and distinct from the EU”. This is an update of the juxtaposition of a Europe of concentric circles versus one of Olympic rings, a view that mistakes the plurality of regional arrangements for the sedimentation of a collective actor.⁹⁸

Yet there is an elephant in the room of the EUSBSR, namely Russia. The prospect of the EU policy construct of macro regional strategies is unclear—or even “doubtful”, as one researcher puts it.⁹⁹ In the Baltic Sea area, the two issues are, however, tightly intertwined: success will depend to a large extent on the kind of relations with Russia the EUSBSR will be able to draw on.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

In geographical literature, the Baltic Sea region serves as example of a new region that lacks a shared history and is instead a project of planners and policy-makers.¹⁰¹ The present inquiry leaves it to others to make sense of the frequently conflict-laden, but at times cooperative history of the Baltic Sea area (including the question of which quarters refuse to endorse the harmony of the Hansa era or of a particular *dominium maris baltici*).¹⁰² Moreover, it does not examine how local communities, administrative regions, islands, autonomous territories, and various civil society organizations position themselves in a Baltic Sea region that has emerged as a governmental enterprise across a variety of international bodies and policy programs. Particularly noteworthy in this process is the distinct trajectory of areal imaginaries of the Baltic Sea region from the VASAB concepts of spatial planning in the early 1990s, via the Interreg B schemes at the beginning of the new millennium, to the EUSBSR—the prototype of EU macroregional strategies.¹⁰³

The EU enlargements in 1995 with Finland and Sweden, and in 2004 with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, have contributed considerably to the political integration of the Baltic Sea area. Since 2004, regional cooperation across the Baltic Sea is mainly an exogenously designed project based in EU headquarters in Brussels.¹⁰⁴ The recent conceptual move that carves out an “EU Baltic Sea region” is the consequence of the ambition of Brussels-conceived multilevel governance,

“THE BALTIC SEA REGION IN ITS EU VERSION IS THUS A TORSO WITH ITS HEAD DISCONNECTED IN BRUSSELS, AND SOME LIMBS CUT OFF.”

and the remaining inapproachability of parts of the larger area to the planners and policy-makers based there. The 2015 *State of the Region Report* suggests that regional ownership of the EUS-BSR vis-à-vis the European Commission has recently improved, and that the deterioration of relations with Russia has provided “a new impetus to integration within the rest of the Baltic Sea Region”.¹⁰⁵ However, a major driving force of cooperation across the Baltic Sea has been the attempt to administratively bridge spaces with disparities of socioeconomic development and political culture, rather than to consolidate an a priori homogeneous area. Leaving out the enclave of Kaliningrad and the other westernmost parts of Russia asserts a territorial shape with blind spots that have the potential to disrupt EU efforts. The Baltic Sea region in its EU version is thus a torso with its head disconnected in Brussels and some limbs cut off.

An extended regional interaction draws on traditional patterns of Nordic cooperation, bringing Norway and parts of the North Atlantic into the orbit of Baltic Sea cooperation. Moreover, a partial merger with Barents initiatives has added some remote areas of Russia. Although the resulting hybridization buttresses the relational interpretation of regions, there is a notable uneasiness, correlating with distance from the topographical sea space in applying the “Baltic Sea” label, and also a lack of political commitment. Participation in an extended region seems to be more attractive in talk shops like CBSS than in engaging workshops like HELCOM.

AS A SEMIENCLOSED sea, the Baltic forms the tangible system of a geographical neighborhood, shipping passages, and commons, as well as a distinct ecosystem, across both the sea space and the larger catchment area. As natural conditions make the Baltic Sea exceptionally vulnerable, protective measures are vital for industrial littoral societies. Thus, even if there were no shared history, there would remain a set of issues with incentives for multilateral cooperation that include Russian and other non-EU territories – issues which cannot be reduced to planning and policy-making alone. It is no coincidence that fishing resources and environmental protection were the first multilaterally addressed issues at a time when the Iron Curtain still divided the Baltic Sea. Although, or perhaps because, functional environmental cooperation is primarily a Western concern, it continues to be among the areas in which cross-regional partnerships work best. Russian priorities such as nuclear security and combating organized crime are other fields suitable for ongoing collaborative efforts.¹⁰⁶

The fact that the Immanuel Kant State University of Kaliningrad and St. Petersburg State University publish the open-access English-language journal *Baltic Region* (“committed to highlighting the topical issues of sustainable development [...], as well as the theoretical and methodological problems of transborder cooperation”) underscores the interest and identification with the region in Russian riparian areas.¹⁰⁷ A recent article in *Baltic Region* dealing with increasing tensions between Russia and the West argues that these matters are not endemic to the Baltic Sea region, and that the maintenance of good communication is in

the national interest.¹⁰⁸ Another contribution endorses the EUS-BSR as experimental and innovative, while depicting disregard for the role of Russia as a hampering factor. The authors call for reorientation along the lines of the Northern Dimension project and for an approach that treats the Baltic Sea region “as an indivisible whole” rather than as an administrative platform for a variety of partially applicable cooperation programs.¹⁰⁹

Although considerably vaguer in shape, the Baltic Sea region in many respects resembles the Barents region with which it is occasionally conjoined. This concerns the structure of the region: soft boundaries towards the outside (in all instances in which they do not coincide with national borders), an extension across the hard borders of nationstates, the Schengen frontier (unless one relies on the exclusive EU-based definition of the region), and the boundary of NATO. Other parallels are mutual concerns of stability and security, and still more significantly, improving economic networks and the competitiveness of the area, all major aims of region-building.¹¹⁰ At the same time, environmental concerns seem to have an over-arching bearing on both dimensions, if not indeed forming a third dimension in the Baltic Sea area.

The Baltic Sea region has been described as “a meeting-place for function and territory” where borders and space are dealt with flexibly.¹¹¹ At the same time, it serves as a floating signifier for simultaneously valid regional images and definitions emerging from different networks and from the implementation of various policy programs.¹¹² Thus the region is an ambiguous, multidimensional entity constructed on the basis of functional, relational, and administrative determinants. Distinct, sometimes interacting concepts of region-building and territoriality are at work in different contexts. However, while there have been manifold forces shaping the region, they have not been consistently strong. Baltic Sea integration lost momentum after the 2004 enlargement of the EU, and has continued to do so over the past decade with the increasing estrangement and eventual rift between Russia and the West.¹¹³ Derogionalizing tendencies have been apparent since then, and at the same time there have been new deals with contra tendencies, including the elevation of Russia’s position in the Northern Dimension and the region’s theoretical downsizing to the format of a workable governance unit in the EUSBSR.

A RECENT RESOLUTION by the BSPP calls for “further development of the structural dialogue and cooperation between each and every regional organization and format” in order to attain “a common Baltic cooperation space”.¹¹⁴ However, the duality of the Baltic Sea region as a forum for political rapprochement and solving overarching functional issues on the one hand, and for pragmatic EU policy making and implementation on the other, is structurally ingrained. Under the present circumstances it is unclear at what levels and to what extent relations across the reemerging divides that run through the Baltic Sea area can be maintained. The crisis in the Ukraine and rising military tension along the borders of Russia, including increasingly aggressive naval and air force encounters in the Baltic Sea area, have resulted

in the cancellation of high-level meetings with Russian government representatives and the curtailment of other diplomatic encounters. The mechanics of collaboration continue to work “on autopilot”.¹⁵ Regional scripts that have been active over the past decades have now been set aside in hibernation. ❌

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Åland and the new security situation in the

Located in the middle of the Baltic Sea, between Sweden and Finland, the Åland islands were *demilitarized* in 1856 after the Crimean war. Following World War I, when the military defense of Åland was temporarily revived, the concept of demilitarization was reaffirmed in the 1921 treaty that provided for the neutrality of Åland. Parties to this convention were Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Latvia, Poland, and Sweden, but not the Soviet Union. During the Winter War of 1939–1940 the Soviet Union and Finland and World War II, the defense of the Åland archipelago was again reinforced. However, the demilitarization was confirmed in a bilateral treaty between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1940 and in the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947, and the military fortifications on Åland were destroyed. The

Åland consulate of the Soviet Union, and subsequently of Russia, was tasked with overseeing the observance of the demilitarization provisions.

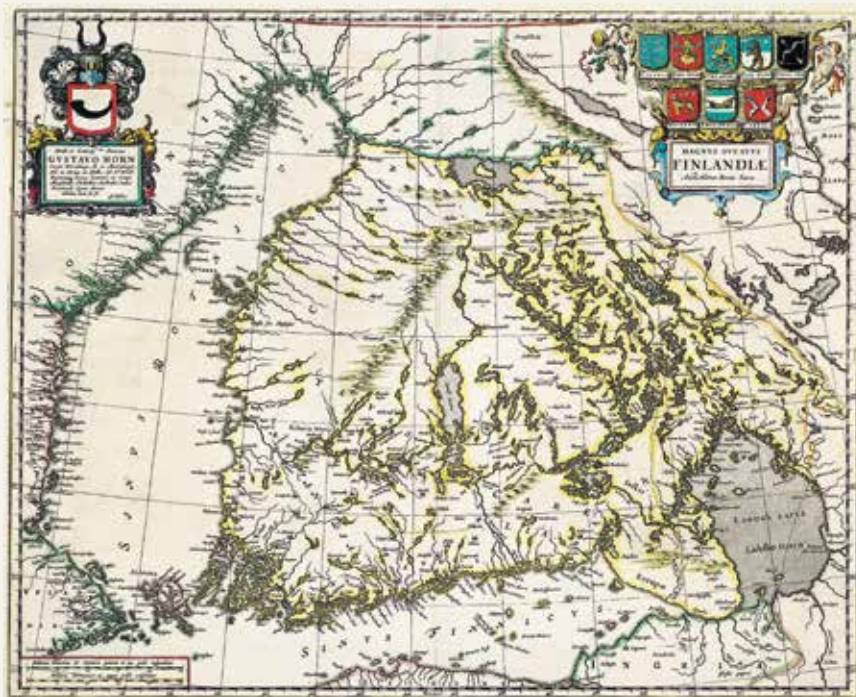
The recent increase in military tension in the Baltic Sea region, coupled with the fact that Russia has no treaty obligation to ensure the *neutrality* of the Åland Islands, has given rise to worst-case scenarios in which Russia would directly threaten the security of Åland or even occupy the islands in a blitz operation, as appears to have been envisaged in 1940. These current concerns have surfaced both in political declarations at the ministerial level in Helsinki and in the scholarly security community. Though Ålanders in general are reluctant to think in terms of threats to their security, in this situation they appear to be taking these current concerns seriously.

With the exception of Finland and

Sweden, the parties to the convention are now members of the NATO alliance. However, it is to be expected that Russia which has become a party to both the 1940 Finnish-Soviet Treaty and the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty – would oppose any attempt to terminate the demilitarization of Åland or the autonomous region's inclusion in NATO together with Finland.

THE STRICT IMPLEMENTATION of the demilitarization provisions extends to the Finnish defense forces, whose naval ships are subject to severe restrictions in Åland waters. There is a long-standing bureaucratic tug of war between the Åland authorities and the Finnish Ministry of Defense on the interpretation of the restrictive regime. Åland maintains that Finnish naval ships may anchor for only 24 hours at a time, which the Ministry of Defense is not prepared to accept. Current practice is

Åland – in the midst of the Baltic Sea



SWEDISH, RUSSIAN, FINNISH. For six centuries, Finland, including Åland, was part of Sweden, but after the war in 1808–1809, Sweden had to surrender Finland, including Åland, which became part of the Russian Empire, though retaining a considerable degree of self-rule, including its centuries-old Swedish laws. For the Russian Empire, Åland became a strategic western outpost.

When Finland gained independence from Russia in 1917, the question of Åland's future political and cultural domicile came to a head. Ålanders petitioned the King of Sweden to annex the island. However, the final say in the matter was referred to the League of Nations. The League ruled that Åland would remain part of Finland, although with guarantees of its right to use the Swedish language. As a result, the self-governing Åland islands are to this day Swedish-speaking and monolingual. Curiously, Swedish is the only official language, while the rest of Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish.

Baltic Sea

that ships usually remain only one to two days. Nowadays such visits occur quite regularly, on average 3–4 times a month. Every visit is accompanied by an elaborate bureaucratic notification procedure. Each time, the governor, who represents the central Finnish government, notifies the Åland authorities, who, in turn, report annually to the Legislative Assembly. The Finnish Coast Guard, however, which maintains a permanent presence in the demilitarized zone, is not considered to fall under the category of naval forces, since in peacetime it is subordinate, not to the Ministry of Defense, but the Ministry of the Interior.

To Ålanders, the twin concepts of demilitarization and neutrality are not dead words in obsolete documents. On the contrary, they are considered to be a corner-stone of Åland's autonomy. They are living political reality at the

ÅLAND'S SELF-GOVERNMENT

dates back to 1921. Currently the third law on self-government is in force. A fourth law is under preparation, in a joint parliamentary committee chaired by former Finnish President Tarja Halonen, with members from both the Finnish Parliament and the Åland Legislative Assembly. It has been tasked with presenting its final report



by 2017, so that the new law may enter into force in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of self-government in 2021.

Self-government encompasses health care, educa-

tion, economic policy, infrastructure, road and ferry communications, postal service, radio, television, culture and museum administration, but not defense and foreign policy.

Along with Finland, Åland joined the European Union in 1995, but remains outside the EU tax union.

Åland has had its own flag since 1954 and its own stamps since 1984.

grass-roots level, too; indeed they have become fundamental to the subjective identity and the popular self-perception of Ålanders, who are keen to make sure that nobody, including Helsinki, infringes on their autonomy. This is the prevalent sentiment among mainstream Ålanders. The opposition party Ålands Framtid [Åland's future] pursues an even more ambitious goal of independence, inspired

by separatist movements such as those in Scotland and Catalonia and in cooperation with the network of political parties in the umbrella organization European Free Alliance (EFA).

The demilitarization and neutrality of Åland are considered to be firmly based in international law. There is clearly a tendency to regard these concepts as permanent.



PHOTO: PLENZWIKIMEDIA COMMONS

THE ÅLAND ARCHIPELAGO includes more than 6,700 islands, of which some 60 are inhabited. In addition, there are some 20,000 small islets and skerries. The population is around 29,000, divided into a highly decentralized network of 16 local communities. The biggest is the capital Mariehamn, where almost one third of the

population lives: the smallest is the island community of Sottunga, with a population of only 100.

The population has been growing at a rather modest rate, in part because of the traditional restrictions on the acquisition of real estate by non-Ålanders and on the right to run a business in Åland. By and

large, Åland has not been affected by the recent influx of refugees into Europe.

Generally, Åland is a modern, advanced, well-to-do community. It is estimated that Åland has the most cars per capita in Scandinavia – some 750 per 1,000 inhabitants. It is one of the most affluent regions of Finland with a GNP per capita of some \$56,000.



PHOTO: CHINOWIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In a recent article, the retired Finnish ambassador René Nyberg recalls that the former Finnish president Mauno Koivisto comments in his memoirs that he had been “insulted” when measures by the Finnish armed forces for the defense of the Åland Islands were perceived as a threat, that Åland had attempted to secure new guarantees for its special status and even contemplated new powers to guarantee “against an imaginary Finnish threat”.

This testifies to the lingering tensions between Helsinki and Mariehamn on Åland’s status and how touchy the issue of Finland’s responsibility to safeguard Åland’s security is.

THE DEBATE in both Finland and Sweden about joining the NATO alliance, heightened by the recent rise in tensions in the region following Russia’s annexation of Crimea and support of separatists in eastern Ukraine, is now confronting Åland as well.

Åland succeeded in asserting and gaining recognition for its special status when Finland joined the European Union. Since Finland is currently not pursuing NATO membership, the question whether there would also be room for Åland’s demilitarization within NATO is entirely hypothetical. It may be noted, however, that NATO – like the EU – has already displayed a flexible approach to devising “variable geometry” solutions in order to accommodate different political circumstances. ✖

manne wängborg

Ambassador and Consul-General.

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The Europeanization of Ukraine – a matter of mindset

Civil society organizations in Ukraine have developed and increased their activities after Euromaidan in order to speed up the Europeanization process, and to monitor the implementation of reforms on all levels. There is a manifest and well-founded distrust of authorities among NGOs in Ukraine.

I have talked to some representatives of NGOs in Ukraine in order to learn about how Ukrainians think about the ongoing Europeanization process. My interlocutors are young and well-educated, and not everyone in the country may share their views. My quest, however, has been to find out how these activists look upon the situation today. What are the main challenges they face in promoting the EU to Ukrainians or talking in favor of Ukraine in the EU?

The process of Europeanization in Ukraine appears to be more about the mindsets of Ukrainian people than about formal reforms required by the Association Agreement (AA) between Ukraine and the EU. This indicates that it may be a very slow process. Changing people’s thinking takes time; mentality is part of the long-term structure.

SPENDING A COUPLE of months in the southwestern city of Chernivtsi, I meet many young activists who are taking initiatives in order to change their life opportunities and environment. They claim that their aim is to change the passive attitude that predominates in Ukraine. This attitude may have at least as much to do with age and education as with the West/East cleavage, although the latter is what media tend to focus on.

“Those who are 40 and older, honestly, are Soviet people,” says Tetiana “Tanya” Lebukhorska.

Tanya Lebukhorska works for the Bukovinian Agency for Regional Development (BARD), an NGO based in Cherniv-



PHOTO: HANS WAHLBERG

Tanya Lebukhorska, Bukovinian Agency for Regional Development (BARD).

si. It works on sustainable development and EU integration in the region. It is involved in the ERASMUS program as well as the EU-financed research and innovation program Horizon 2020. Currently they are busy with a training program focused on cultural heritage, in cooperation with partners in Moldova. They have done a lot of work in order to raise people’s awareness about the EU. Many people think it’s just about a visa-free regime, Tanya Lebukhorska tells me: “But we want to reach out to young people and spread knowledge about what European integration means. This is because we want to make it easier for them to form an opinion of their own. No one should just tell them what to think.”

She adds that this is something of a problem: “People in Ukraine are used to being told how to think. They also think that the government should give them all solutions. Of course, they don’t think that being a part of Europe means that they would be responsible for everything in their lives. This mentality is a remnant from the Soviet Union and especially common amongst the elderly and in villages and small towns.”

Tanya Lebukhorska also guesses that the EU has influence on the government, and that the conditions that the EU sets for Ukraine are forcing it to make



Chernivtsi oblast was created in 1940, joining parts of three historical regions: the northern half of Bukovina, northern half of the Hotin County county of Bessarabia, and Hertza region, which was part of the Dorohoi county (presently Botoșani County) of Moldavia proper. Ukrainians represent about 75% of the population of Chernivtsi Oblast.

changes. “The country declares that we are doing something in order to approach the EU standards. But this is only a declaration. If you ask some questions, you will see that the declaration and the real work can be different.”

The EU as a powerful lever to get a more “normal” life is an idea that repeatedly crops up here in Ukraine. The current political crisis has led to a media discussion about a possible technocrat government, completely free of politicians, or even letting the UN form the government. There is severe disappointment in the current situation, and confidence in domestic politicians is zero. The general opinion is that everything is corrupt, and that is probably not very far from the truth. “Mostly people just think that the EU will come and save us,” Tanya Lebukhorska says, rolling her eyes.

“It is important to remember that more than half of the population does not perceive itself as European,” Nadia Bureiko informs me.

She is currently a member of a team working on an anthology, *The EU and Its Eastern Neighbourhood: the Contradictions of Europeanisation and European Identities*, which will be published this summer. She is also engaged in several projects in the NGO Quadrivium in Chernivtsi, all of them promoting Western val-

ues and democracy in Ukraine. One project is about how Ukraine can take advantage of the experiences from East-Central European countries on their Europeanization processes. The recommendations will be published in a handbook of best practices. Effective Europeanization in Ukraine largely depends on national consolidation, according to her: an important note, which is easy to forget in the peaceful environment of Chernivtsi. Nadia Bureiko also highlights the importance of not only embracing the younger generation. “We can’t leave the older generation behind,” she emphasizes, showing a little more faith in the potential of reaching out to this group than Tanya Lebukhorska seems to do.

EUROPEAN CHOICE (Ukraine) is an NGO based in Kremenchug, an important industrial center in central Ukraine, and founder of the Civil Society Forum Eastern Partnership Ukraine National Platform and the EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform. Its current key project is the national Information campaign Year of Europe in Ukraine 2020. The campaign is aimed at helping the Ukrainian government and society to become more integrated into different EU projects, programs and initiatives. It works in two main directions, Ukraine in Europe and

Europe in Ukraine. In 2016 the first annual component of this project will be launched – Ukrainian Eurotour.

European Choice (EC) works hard on several levels to introduce European values. “One of the key problems is not corruption or effectiveness, but mentality. We have never lived in the world of high levels of competition, knowledge, and innovation,” says Kyryll Zhyvotovskyy, Executive Director of European Choice, “but it’s a challenge in a post-Soviet country to change the mentality.”

His statement indicates that people in Ukraine still belong to the species “Homo sovieticus”, with a certain way of thinking, that seems to be more durable than the Soviet ideology itself. He points out the need for experts in the fields of energy efficiency, democracy, and governance.

While Kyryll Zhyvotovskyy highlights the mental preparation of the Ukrainians to enable them to meet higher demands and competition, Taras Prokop from the Civil Network OPORA in Chernivtsi talks more about values.

One of the main objections to the EU that Taras Prokop encounters when talking to people is that Ukraine will have to accept the European defense of LGBT rights. Discrimination is a very big problem in Ukraine, he says, and adds that it’s a very sensitive topic for Ukrainian

PHOTOS: HANS WÄHLBERG



Nadia Bureiko is engaged in several projects within the NGO Quadrivium in Chernivtsi.



Taras Prokop from the Civil Network OPORA in Chernivtsi.

people. A study in 2010 confirms that only 28% of the Ukrainians have positive views of same-sex relationships. This fact made the parliament reluctant to pass the Labor Code, which prohibits discrimination on basis of sexual orientation, thereby putting the whole visa-free regime for Ukraine at risk.

The same can be said of migration, ethnicity, and religion, according to Taras Prokop. Everyone has heard about the migration crisis in the EU and people are afraid of open borders and fears immigrant waves, especially if they come from Islamic countries in Africa or Asia. "They are scared of these people", Taras Prokop tells me.

He stresses the need for NGOs to do a lot of work on discrimination. Changing attitudes takes time and requires access to information, which is a problem in Ukraine, according to Taras Prokop. He thinks the media do not provide adequate information about the EU. Ukrainians are highly dependent on domestic media due to their lack of knowledge of English. Foreign-language information on the internet rarely reaches Ukrainians.

According to a survey in 2013, there is a gap between people's wish to learn more about the EU and their actual knowledge. A lot of information comes from domestic media, and especially from TV, Nadia Bureiko claims. "The Ukrainians do watch TV ... a lot," she emphasizes. She thinks therefore that more information about the EU should be spread through TV. It is important to explain what the Association Agreement (AA) between Ukraine and the EU is about, not least in order to minimize the risk of false or exagger-

ated expectations. Many people at Euro-maidan thought the AA would guarantee a visa-free regime and were disappointed when it turned out to be something else, she says.

THE IDEA BEHIND Eurotour is not only to inform Ukrainians about the EU but also to spread knowledge and awareness in EU countries about what are identified as Ukraine's most urgent needs. The NGOs are trying to introduce a form of "people's diplomacy" since they think the formal diplomacy doesn't work well enough. However, interest from the EU institutions is not very high, according to Kyryll Zhyvotovskyy: "They don't need organizations like us because they are focused on their own agenda."

Taras Prokop confirms this observation of declining interest from the EU: "Actually, we all see that the EU's interest in Ukraine is falling. It's totally different from what it was one year ago," he says. This is something that worries him. "If the EU doesn't want Ukraine, Ukraine has to move forward on its own. It will be very hard and a lot of people will be disappointed," Taras Prokop tells me.

These worries may be well founded in the light of the migration trauma that has been shaking the EU countries. Ukraine, a country with one of the largest populations in Europe, is potentially a large contributor of work migrants to the present EU countries: A fact that might worry both politicians and people in EU countries. "I think they see that Ukraine is not an appropriate country to be a member of the EU, because it's like a problem country", Tanya Lebukhorska (BARD) says.

According to Kyryll Zhyvotovskyy, Executive Director, European Choice EU is focusing on the security situation. "Of course the refugee crisis, and the Schengen crisis mean that Ukraine is not on the priority list, but the UA-RU conflict puts us at the top."

The AA still has to be ratified by all 28 EU countries, and now is being put at risk by the result of the referendum in Netherlands. The referendum is non-binding, but it may prove impossible for the Dutch government to overrule the clear victory of the "no" side. There is also fear in Ukraine that this may trigger other countries to abandon the plans to ratify EU-Ukraine AA.

UKRAINE DOES FACE many challenges on the road to EU membership. Many of them depend on people's perceptions or consciousness and their readiness for change, as Nadia Bureiko concludes, stressing the importance of paying particular attention to mentality or the behavioral dimension. It seems that many civil society organizations in Ukraine are determined and ready to work on the process of changing people's mindsets. A parallel process is needed in EU countries, however, in order to accept and include Ukraine and Ukrainians in the European family. A doubtful issue may be whether the EU institutions and member countries are determined to work on their populations' attitudes towards Ukraine in a way that supports such a process. ❌

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ON POLICY-MAKING AND POLICY CHANGE IN RUSSIA

by **Marina Khmel'nitskaya**

I would like to provide you with a concise summary of my thoughts on the aspects that make studying policy-making in Russia an important scholarly undertaking.¹

I believe this topic is an interesting and relevant one from a number of perspectives. Perhaps the fact that we had such a good attendance at our workshop in Helsinki² is testimony to the relevance of the subject matter. There are at least four perspectives that make the topic worth analyzing. These are: (1) the Russian studies perspective; (2) the electoral authoritarian regime perspective, (3) comparative public policy, and (4) the comparative development perspective.

There is currently a significant interest in Russian area studies literature in the policy-making process. The scholarly debate involves the distinction between what can be described as the personalist and institutionalist views of Russian policy-making.³

The predominant view emphasizes the personalist nature of policy-making in Russia. This view represents an extension of the long tradition of conceptualizing the Russian political system as patrimonial and despotic. According to this characterization, any important decisions in the country are made by the chief executive and/or a narrow circle of officials and cronies surrounding him. This has certain policy implications for diverse issue areas. In the absence of due attention to any given policy problem by this extremely narrow group, the policy process is doomed to linger in a limbo. In this context, other institutionalized sources of policy-making capacity, such as the government and the parliament, play no independent role and exist primarily to rubber stamp decisions made elsewhere.⁴ This system of power and policy-making also features the prevalence of weak institutions all the way down to the local level. This institutional weakness essentially limits

the top leadership's ability to implement many of its decisions. While the leader is not constrained by such democratic checks as free and fair elections, an independent legislature and judiciary, or free media, policy-making capacity is nevertheless limited by the self-interested corrupt behavior of the officials who staff state agencies.⁵

Although the personalist and neo-patrimonial approaches to the Russian policy process are more widespread, the institutionalist perspective has its adherents as well. While we should not underestimate the Russian president's desire for power maximization or the rent-seeking motives of his close allies,⁶ a range of institutionalized policy participants – including government ministries and other bureaucratic agencies, the legislature, and some social actors such as business associations – have contributed to policy-making in Russia in different spheres.⁷ The studies in this tradition show that, in many areas, decisions have involved protracted policy debates which were addressed largely through an institutionalized bureaucratic procedure, with societal actors and the expert community given a chance to contribute to the process.

THE DEBATE BETWEEN these two concepts is by no means resolved and the relationship between the personalist and institutionalized elements of Russian policy-making is a subject that needs to be explored further.⁸ An important aspect of the discussion is the

consideration of the influence of Russian institutional structures (powerful executive and semi-presidentialism) on the policy strategies of individual actors and agencies. Yet an equally important dimension is the analysis of policy implementation.⁹ Ann-Marie S  tre and Leo Granberg examine this critical stage of the policy process

**“THIS
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The lack of real sharing of principles and trust with the West has pushed Russia towards finding alliances in the Eurasian Economic Union and BRICS.



The BRICS leaders in 2016. From left: Michel Temer, president of Brazil; Narendra Modi, prime minister of India; Xi Jinping, president of China; Vladimir Putin, president of Russia; and Jacob Zuma, president of South Africa.

through the prism of grass-roots initiatives carried out by local communities interacting with local administrations and businesses.¹⁰

This leads us to the second broad lens with which we can approach the problem of policy-making in Russia and to which the analysis of the Russian case can contribute. This is the question of policy-making in what have been termed hybrid regimes.¹¹ These are the political regimes that combine autocratic and democratic elements, also known as electoral authoritarianisms¹² or competitive authoritarianisms.¹³

Schedler¹⁴ notes that electoral authoritarianism has “turned into the most common type of nondemocratic regime in the contemporary world”, with significant prominence in the post-Soviet space, represented in other parts of the globe, and with some notable historical cases, by Brazil and Mexico in the mid-20th century. Two lines of enquiry have been pursued in particular: one related to regime longevity or the prospects for democratization, and the other to the regimes’ internal dynamics associated with the elite and voter choices. In two prominent recent books on the subject, Steven Levitsky and Lucian Way cite structural factors to explain regime survival,¹⁵ while a study by Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik attributes it to actor strategies adopted in relation to internal regime dynamics.¹⁶

Yet these analyses largely remain focused on the processes surrounding authoritarian elections; in other words they are “election-centric”.¹⁷ What is more, relatively little is known about the impact of institutional hybridity on the policy process and policy outcomes. The institutional organization of hybrid regimes, their government structures and the resulting process of policy-making and its outcomes so far have been largely undertheorized.¹⁸ Given the significance and persistence of hybrid regimes in the modern world, their policy-making processes and structures deserve greater scholarly

interest. Some research has been done in this direction in recent years,¹⁹ but there remains considerable scope for future analysis.

With the workshop here at the Aleksanteri Institute, and by exploring the case of policy-making in Russia, we aim to examine some of the effects of hybrid politics on the policy process, and in this way to contribute to filling in the void that exists in the literature.

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE to which the study of Russian policy-making could potentially contribute is comparative public policy. Much public policy theorizing has been developed on the basis of enquiry into the policy process of developed democracies.²⁰ A great deal of scholarly analysis has been applied to examining the differing ways in which their political systems are organized and how their democratic structures and capitalist institutions are balanced.

Under hybrid regimes, by contrast, the two meta institutions of democracy and market function in ways that are determined by their specific institutional arrangements. Nonetheless, the essential building blocks of the policy process, actors, ideas, and institutions, remain present in non-democracies as well; while their policy-making process still has to undergo the basic stages of agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation and policy evaluation. Policy-making still involves such elements as leadership, bureaucracy, policy expertise located inside and outside of the government, and rules and practices, i.e. institutions that direct actors’ interactions. Comparative public policy scholarship has developed sophisticated

models of the policy process, such as the “punctuated equilibrium” sequence of the policy process proposed by Baumgartner and Jones,²¹ the “social learning” model originally proposed by Hugh Heclo and developed by Peter Hall,²² and the “policy streams” approach by John

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Kingdon.²³ Some of the questions that emanate from these works and are currently debated by policy scholars relate to the mode of policy change: abrupt and revolutionary vs. slow evolutionary change, and the conditions under which each of the processes is likely to occur.²⁴ Carefully constructed historical accounts of policy development in the Russian context, where dramatic institutional changes have taken place since the mid-1980s, permit a contribution to such debates among comparative public policy scholars and make it possible to refine existing policy models.

Using the case of Russia we can explore questions about the interactions between institutions and actors' behavior and also the issues of institutional origins. In this regard, the historical institutionalist and statist approach possesses perhaps the most suitable set of analytical devices to account for both institutional stability and transformation. Historical institutionalists view policy ideas as an important basis of institutional genesis and subsequent change. In this tradition, institutional change and survival are explained by the interaction of normative and cognitive aspects of policy ideas,²⁵ the positions of their carriers within the policy community, the interplay between the ideas and actors' material interest, the impact of formal policy-making structures, and the timing of historical events. Not all political scientists agree, however. Some see the origins of policy choices as lying in the utility-maximizing behavior of individual actors.²⁶

The study of the Russian policy process can help test the usefulness of such differing methodological approaches to policy analysis as the historical institutionalist approach and the rational choice approach.²⁷ The analysis of public policy-making in Russia can also add to the body of comparative knowledge about public policy by examining the relationship between policy ideas and leadership strategies, as well as the patterns of policy change under conditions of subverted democratic practices, i.e. the conditions of regime hybridity. Pertti Ahonen discusses the causes driving the policy process in rapidly changing environments and challenges of studying such processes.²⁸

FINALLY, THE POLICY process in Russia is worth considering in the light of the "development" thesis.

Policy-making is an applied process. We can ask: towards what end or goal are policy-makers striving? At present, as far as domestic and increasingly foreign policy-making in Russia are concerned, an important policy direction can be described with reference to development. Several recent state-of-the-nation addresses by the Russian president resolutely confirmed this broad policy goal, which appears to encompass such diverse spheres as general economic policy, social policy, housing, energy policy, and the development of specific territories and regions, the Far East being important in this context.²⁹ The development imperative has also underlain such past "mega events" as the 2014 Sochi Olympics, the 2015 Universiade in Ufa, and the forthcoming 2018 World Cup.³⁰

Although development has represented a policy objective since the early 2000s – as testified by the names of Russian ministerial structures or policy initiatives – it has acquired specific importance in the light of the current geo strategic competition

that has developed in the relations between Russia and the West and culminated in the Ukraine crisis. As Matthew Sussex and Roger Kanet argue, "development of the national economy has been [one of the] ... dimension[s] of the Russian leadership nationalist discourse and policy efforts with an aim to ensure the survival of Russia as a nation."³¹

THE LACK OF REAL sharing of principles and trust with the West has pushed Russia towards finding other partners and alliances in (1) the former Soviet region: for example, the Eurasian Economic Union; (2) in the East generally: this includes various agreements between Russia and China, notably the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which has been described as Russia's pivot or turn to the East; (3) and globally, with the BRICS grouping that brought Russia together with Brazil, India, China, and South Africa.³² The degree of cultural affinity or shared historical background between these countries, or even the benefits to Russia of the partnership with China specifically, may be debatable. Nonetheless, it has been argued that these countries share a similar pragmatic approach, similar aspirations and strategic priorities in relation to the current world order, and similar domestic policy aspirations.³³

The shared developmental aspirations between the BRICS states represent a special interest from the public policy-making perspective. The study of the Russian state's developmental policies is an emerging area of research.³⁴ As a political scientist, I am not so much concerned with evaluating the results of Russian developmental policies; my interest is to understand the policy process involved and its elements per se. What kind of tools of public policy action does the Russian government use to promote development? How do these policy instruments compare internationally? In this regard, comparing Russia with the BRICS nations appears highly relevant. Barry Gills and Markus Kroger consider the development-oriented policies and institutions of these countries and the challenges that the developmental agenda faces in the future.³⁵

To summarize, the four perspectives outlined above make the study of the policy process in Russia an important and worthwhile subject. Each of these dimensions provide avenues for further research. ✖

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Note: This lecture is based on the introduction to a workshop on *Policy-Making and Policy Change in Russia*, which took place at the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, on 28 January 2016.

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CULTURAL MEMORY OF EUROPE: EAST AND WEST

by Tora Lane

We organizers, Tora Lane and Kazimierz Musial, both at the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies at Södertörn University, approached the topic of the course, "Cultural Memory of Europe: East and West" with open questions. In order to critically examine the topic, we invited; Tomasz Zarycki, who analyzed how the notion of Eastness is construed in contemporary discourse, Carl Cederberg, who talked about the universalist claims in the very idea of Europe; Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, who gave a lecture on official discourse on the theme of the Memory of Europe; Irina Sandomirskaja, who critically examined the field of Cultural Memory, and Marcia Schuback Sá Cavalcante, who asked how we can understand the need for memory today using the notion of *afterness*. An important question that we were able to pose together with the lecturers and the students during the course was very basic, namely, how to understand the title: are we dealing with Europe remembering East and West in or as cultures, or are we remembering Europe, and to what extent is the distinction between East and West decisive for our understanding or memory of Europe?

The importance of the question can be viewed against the backdrop of the history of the field of cultural memory. Although the study of collective and cultural memory became popular earlier, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the German reunification gave a strong impetus to the field of cultural memory, and the cultural memory of Europe in particular. Since then, memory studies have abounded, especially in Eastern Europe, where there allegedly was a need for a "recovery of memory", allowing censured personal memories to appear and suppressed historical facts to resurge. However, as Pierre Nora wrote in his 2002 article "Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory", there seems to be a confusion between history and memory in the

field of cultural memory: "Memory" has taken on a meaning so broad and all-inclusive that it tends to be used purely and simply as a substitute for "history" and to put the study of history at the service of memory." As he so astutely asserts, memory seems to add a realism to the historical narrative, a question of personal and cultural identity.

INDEED, THE NOTION of a cultural memory of Europe is often conflated with the historical narrative of Europe and its culture, in particular with regard to the distinction between East and West. The formulation of the historical narrative of Europe is also influenced by how the memory of East and Eastness is linked to the memory and/or history of socialism. Maria Mälksöo presented the current memory politics in Estonia, where the critique of socialism regrettably has led to a vindication of the collaboration with the Germans during the Second World War. The consequence of memory politics was also a theme when Viacheslav Morozov presented his book *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*. And with the screening of Andrzej Wajda's film *Danton*, Leonard Neuger posed the question whether we must not remember the horror of the Revolution as both an Eastern and a Western phenomenon.

All these questions were posed in their own right and related to the Baltic Sea region as a borderland between East and West.

Three junior researchers are publishing texts in this issue of *Baltic Worlds* emerging from the discussion on the Summer Course. Rasa Navickate analyzes the changed meaning of the Green Bridge in Vilnius; Olga Gontarska gives her reflections from the course, and questions whether one can talk of a common identity without ignoring the vast differences in power relations and resources; and Antony Kalashnikov reviews Viacheslav Morozov's book. ✖

THE CBSS SUMMER SCHOOL on "Cultural Memory of Europe: East and West" took place at Södertörn University, June 15–23, 2016. The course was organized by Södertörn University's Centre for Baltic and East

European Studies (CBEES) and the Philosophy Department at the School of Culture and Education, in partnership with Lund University, the University of Greifswald, the University of Gdansk, the University of Tartu,

and Saint Petersburg University of Economics (UNECON). It gathered 23 students – mostly PhD and a few MA students – from across Europe and from different academic disciplines. For 9 days with 16 lectures

and seminars, the teachers, students, and administrators vividly analyzed and discussed different topics related to the theme of the course.

More info at www.sh.se/cbees



THE “APOLITICAL” POLITICS OF SOVIET MEMORY IN VILNIUS

After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the restoration of independence, the three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – underwent a significant cleansing of their public spaces from any signs of the former Communist rule. The image of Lenin cut, above his knees, from his pedestal and aimlessly flying in the air came to stand as a symbol of the victory of democracy over the Soviet system. No one could have guessed then how long and complex this “reparation” of historical memory would take, and how it would define the post-socialist identity-making of the Baltic States even into the twenty-first century.

The paraphernalia of Soviet rule could not possibly have been completely removed from the public space in the heat of the revolutionary moment in the early 1990s. One of the most controversial symbols of Communism remaining in the heart of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, was the Green Bridge with its four socialist realist sculptures, idealized portrayals of workers, kol-khoz farmers, students, and Red Army soldiers. Called “Industry and Construction,” “Agriculture,” “Youth of Education,” and “Guarding Peace,” these four monuments, built in 1952 and symbolizing the triumphant Soviet postwar reconstruction, remained part of the city landscape for more than 25 years after the country declared independence from the Soviet Union.

Like the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn, Estonia, the Green Bridge monuments have been the subject of heated public debate. Part of Lithuanian society firmly demanded the removal of what they saw as painful reminders of Communist propaganda and oppression. Countless articles in the media advocated getting rid of these monuments, which were said to symbolize occupation and national humiliation, and symbolically prevent Vilnius from developing into a truly progressive and European city. The sculptures were also routinely subject to vandalism with paint or graffiti.¹ Others, however, advocated preserving these sculptures precisely as a reminder of the complex history of the country and its cultural heritage. Moreover, the monuments were created by well-known Lithuanian artists, including the sculptor Juozas Mikėnas, a founder of modern sculpture in the country. One might say that, given its central location in Vilnius, the bridge had become the material and visual axis of disagreement over the terms of inclusion of the Soviet period in the national narrative and collective memory.

In July 2015, the newly elected liberal mayor of Vilnius,

Remigijus Šimašius, with the unofficial approval of the Minister of Culture, Šarūnas Birutis, decided to remove the Green Bridge monuments. As the bridge was still legally protected as an object of cultural heritage, Šimašius claimed that the sculpture removal was temporary. The monuments were affected by corrosion, the authorities claimed, and could collapse at any moment. The president of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, issued a statement regarding the Green Bridge, saying:

I would like to avoid politicizing this question. We are talking about the emergency state of these sculptures, which creates danger for passers-by. [...] I think that this is the best way to approach this problem – as a threat to public safety.²

The Green Bridge sculptures, which had been inspiring public debate for over 25 years, were supposedly removed for “apolitical” reasons – to repair them and prevent any accidents. The authorities were not taking a stance, ostensibly, on the complicated questions about the Soviet past of Lithuania that the sculptures invoked, but were simply thinking of the safety and wellbeing of citizens. If the intention was to avoid stirring up public opinion, or even provoking riots, as in the case of the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn, the authorities definitely succeeded, and the removal was performed without any public protest. The only contestation of this removal happened in the discursive terrain, debunking the supposedly “apolitical” character of the Green Bridge issue, as I show below.

At the time of writing, the memorial sculptures have been gone from the bridge for a year without any restoration having started. Moreover, in March 2016, the Department of Cultural Heritage lifted the legal protection of the Green Bridge and thus untied the hands of the municipality. Mayor Šimašius was quick to praise the ruling of the Department and called it a great example of how “the law catches up with reality.” He stated that:

It is a reality that Lithuania was declared independent on the 11th of March, 1990, so it’s natural that many things have changed and will continue changing. It is also a reality that the Green Bridge sculptures were removed last year in July. I personally observed that it would happen smoothly. I think that it was already



by Rasa Navickaitė

clear then that these sculptures would not be returning to their places.³

It is no coincidence that in retrospectively justifying the removal of the sculptures, the mayor compared it to the declaration of Lithuanian independence in 1990. Such a comparison makes it quite obvious that the removal of the Green Bridge sculptures had much less to do with the safety of passers-by than with the security of the national identity. By comparing the removal of these monuments with the declaration of Lithuanian independence in 1990, Šimašius represented the act as a sort of continuation, or even a reenactment, of the declaration of national independence. The removal of the sculptures from public display was, in retrospect, to be understood as an effort to set the historical record straight, to fix the collective memory, and to secure a consistent national identity. Illustrating this point, the architect and art historian Kęstutis Lupeikis, a member of the Committee for the Evaluation of Real Estate at the Department of Cultural Heritage, said, “As a person I was always ashamed when taking city guests over the Green Bridge. I didn’t know how to explain why these monuments were standing there.”⁴ Removing the sculptures therefore resolved the perceived historical inconsistency and created a feeling of security and assurance.

The Estonian political scientist Maria Malksöo, who has written extensively on the politics of memory in the Baltic States, argues that for countries such as Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia, the question of “setting the historical narrative straight” is crucially important to their post-Soviet identity-making.⁵ Since being accepted into the European Union, the Baltic States have continued to struggle with the perception of being seen as “less European” than their Western European counterparts. The portrayal of the socialist period as something alien, imposed purely from the outside, and the criminalization of the legacy of the Soviet period are therefore ways for these countries to symbolically “westernize” and become “fully European”, and hence to overcome their fundamental insecurity over national existence.⁶ In her work, Malksöo focuses on the politics of memory at an international level, for example, the attempts of the Baltic States to draw attention to Communist crimes and challenge European Union remembrance policies. However, one might interpret the removal of the Green Bridge monuments as a similar ritual of the creation of national identity via historical

memory, intended mainly for the local audience and visitors to Vilnius.

Lithuania has reacted especially sensitively to the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, even restoring compulsory military service. The relatively rational security concerns in the context of Russian military aggression in Ukraine are accompanied by excessive concerns over the correct national historical narrative. While the removal of Soviet symbols from the cityscape in 1990 was a symbolic act of building national identity from scratch, the removal of the Green Bridge sculptures in 2015 signals resurgent or even increasing fears over national identity and security in the context of Russian aggression towards its neighbors. Another illustrative example of this resurgent insecurity is the case of the late Lithuanian writer and poet Justinas Marcinkevičius and his possible collaboration with the Soviet system. Public debate started soon after his death in 2011, revising his status as a national cultural treasure and the hero of *Sąjūdis*, and instead asking about his role as a pro-Communist propagandist.⁷ The case of Marcinkevičius can be seen as a part of the broader attempt to establish a clear-cut distinction between the collaborators and dissidents and thus purify the national “hall of fame”.

AS CULTURAL HISTORIAN Violeta Davoliūtė notes, the new wave of interest in memory politics in the Baltics is probably first of all a response to Russia’s historical revisionism and the information war waged against its neighbors.⁸ The goal of the current struggle to revise the national historical narrative in Lithuania, unlike in Russia, is to identify and condemn the local collaborators and conformists and further externalize the Soviet past. Unfortunately, as Malksöo correctly notes, so far the attempts of the political elites in the Baltics to deal with these states’ Communist history have often fallen short in terms of self-criticism, “essentially camouflaging the extent to which the communist system and practices were actually internalized by the very people who lived for decades under this regime.”⁹ Essentially, the constant purging of the symbols of the Soviet past from the cultural sphere hides the true extent of the continuation of authoritarian and paternalistic practices in politics and state institutions.

Unsurprisingly, it is precisely in this context of an ongoing memory war that the Green Bridge sculptures were removed by the newly elected mayor of Vilnius. Šimašius, who fosters his progressive and dynamic image, could not miss an opportunity

to participate in the general trend of “setting the historical narrative straight.” In a short opinion piece, issued in the media after the removal, Šimašius literally called the Green Bridge memorials a historical lie. He claimed that the four sculptures represent a *deception* about the Soviet past, which was actually much more gruesome than the sculptures would suggest.¹⁰ The removal of the sculptures appears in Šimašius’ account, not as the construction of a certain historical narrative, but as an innocent reconstruction of the historical truth. In this “correct” account of the historical memory of Lithuania, the Soviet period was a mistake and a uniformly dark period which it would be better to forget. The externalization of the Communist regime and even the physical cleansing of any signs of it therefore seems to pave the way for the new Vilnius and new Lithuania – progressive, free, and Western.

THERE ARE, HOWEVER, at least two serious problems with such cleansing of public spaces and the subsequent “fixing” of the collective memory. The first problem is that it creates its own enemies, i.e., those who do not fit the unitary national historical narrative. The British newspaper *The Guardian* represented the conflict over the removal of the Green Bridge sculptures by stereotypically emphasizing that it was only Russian-speaking minorities who were “upset” by this decision.¹¹ This is not true, even though the Lithuanian media sometimes also jumps on the bandwagon in exploiting such stereotypes. There were plenty of Lithuanian-speaking historians, heritage experts, and public intellectuals who criticized the removal of the Green Bridge sculptures. The historian Rasa Čepaitienė, for example, claimed that the decision to keep the monuments in their original place would have been a sign of maturity and coming to terms with the past. A member of the Lithuanian New Left movement, the writer Kasparas Pocius, criticized the removal of Soviet monuments as an act of eliminating any alternative from the public space currently dominated by neoliberal ideology. These and similar opinions that contradicted the official approach and did not join the chorus of blaming the Soviet past for all present afflictions were dismissed as naïve, nostalgic, or unpatriotic, and sometimes even as downright treasonous.

The second problem is, of course, that when identity is built on a certain denial, such as, the erasure of the Soviet legacy, it is very difficult to envision the positive contents of the national “self” that could compensate for the erasure of the past. When asked what would replace the Soviet monuments on the Green Bridge, Mayor Šimašius answered: “The bridge will stay like this for a while, without any burden or extra weight.” This material and ideological void did not endure, and after only a year, in July 2016, the bridge became the site of commercial advertising. In the empty place left by the monument “Agriculture,” a full-scale yellow car was installed, advertising a new model of Audi. Representatives of Audi claimed that they wanted to use the opportunity to present “a symbol of a young, growing, and free city,” once the bridge was cleansed of the old symbols.¹² This advertising installation was approved by the municipality and the Department of Cultural Heritage. The banality of the symbolism here is almost comic, as the images of the Communist regime

were literally replaced with the images of capitalism, constructing a new collective memory – the post-socialist narrative of neo-liberal hegemony and Western-oriented progress.

Although the president of Lithuania as well as the mayor of Vilnius urged society to see the removal of the sculptures as a matter only of public safety and avoided politicizing it, the gesture was clearly political in nature. In fact, the way the debate over the destiny of the Green Bridge monuments was cut short by the one-sided decision of political leaders and implemented by diktat issued from behind closed doors illustrates the deeply political character of the process of shaping the historical memory of the country. By erasing the last symbols of the Soviet regime from the cityscape, the authorities demonstrated their desire to construct a monolithic historical narrative and in this way to avoid uncomfortable haunting questions about the legacy of the Soviet past and the present-day Lithuanian identity. The question now is whether the Green Bridge monuments were really the last symbols of troubling historical inconsistency, or whether there are still other physical objects that could be purged from Vilnius in an endeavor to “set the historical narrative straight.” ❌

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IDENTITY, MEMORY AND NEW BOUNDARIES IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

By **Olga Gontarska**

Discussing the Baltic Sea region and its regional identity, participants of the CBSS Summer Course at Södertörn University tackled the problem of new boundaries that can be detected in the CEE region. Considering Central and Eastern European identity and common memory, and searching for a universal concept of this region, we must eventually face the problem of its internal, essential, and distinctive diversity. Inequality in living conditions, social development, and access to goods and ideas is sometimes overlooked by the Western scholars. Can we then expect real mutual cooperation and exchange between Western, Central and Eastern European academia, taking into account political structures, and economic and social conditions? Finally, are all the political roundtables and academic conferences enough to provide common ground for a discussion of memory and to consider a common discourse? Searching for new appropriate notions to describe the situation in the region is the crucial challenge at the moment.

TOMASZ ZARYCKI'S concept of dividing Central and Eastern Europe into three zones by political structures and relations was presented in his lecture "Ideology of Eastness vs. Orientalism: Self-colonization of CEE and BSR" during the Summer Course at Södertörn University this year. However, the idea of locating Ukraine and the Baltic States in the same zone is questionable in view of changes in this region, the enlargement of the EU being just one factor in this context. Perceiving Belarus and Ukraine as "too multi cultural to make a clear pro-European choice" is another of Zarycki's controversial remarks concerning the problem of developing a concept for pan-European identity-building. Ukraine seems to be the best example in which to study the internal differences in the CEE region and to question the established division of the post-Soviet region, the moment of EU enlargement to the East.

Another Summer Course lecturer, Alexander Drost, a researcher in the history department of the University of Greifswald, pinpointed the absence of extended intellectual exchange caused by difficulties in access to sources and financial support, as well as language barriers, particularly before EU enlargement in 2004. The question of an invisible intellectual Iron Curtain between the West and the New East emerged. According to Drost, regions become reality as a result of the rebuilding of networks

in a special unit, the production of collective meanings through symbols, the development of common institutions, the emergence of regional identity, and a transnational, transboundary perspective. Therefore scholars' cooperation and participation in this network is crucial.

What concerns researchers using postcolonial methodology for the CEE region is questioned in academia. During his lecture "Russia's Postcolonial Identity", Viacheslav Morozov, professor of EU-Russia Studies at the University of Tartu, noted that, as a theory explaining everything, the postcolonial approach should be viewed with skepticism.

According to Morozov, the best time for developing the concept of the Baltic region is past, although it might have been possible 10–15 years ago. Currently, the main problem we face is the question about Russia as a part of this project.

Inventing theories on the CEE region, scholars seem to deny the existing, or at least growing, invisible Iron Curtain that divides Europe in several ways. Bilingualism in the New Eastern European countries, to mention only one example, is not only a problem of identity, but also a problem of access to resources, education, the job market, and cultural exchange.

IN THEIR PRESENTATIONS, Carl Cederberg, Maria Mälksoo, and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa noted generational changes and the absence of shared values and common memory that could unite young people. The post memory of the younger generation after the EU's enlargement to the east is therefore a major topic to be examined now. It could be worth considering for the next Summer Course at Södertörn University.

Can we talk about unity and shared memory while the next generation of Ukrainians, Belarussians and Moldavians is growing up in a state of mind based on the experience of long queues at borders for non-EU members and several visa requirements that will become their common experience and common memory? ❌

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Russia's postcolonial identity. Beyond the modernization/cultural determinism debate

**Viacheslav
Morozov,
Russia's
Postcolonial
Identity:
A Subaltern
Empire in a
Eurocentric
World.**

New York, and
Basingstoke:
Palgrave Mac-
millan, 2015, viii
+ 209 pages

Viacheslav Morozov's new book argues that postcolonial theory is a fruitful explanatory framework to apply to Russian politics. In such a framework, Russia must be analyzed as a "subaltern empire" Russia's long-standing economic and normative dependence on Europe, and its attempt to "catch up", have precipitated cycles of internal colonization and forced cultural Europeanization. The perpetual failure of these compensatory measures conditions Russia's domestic, foreign, and identity politics.

Morozov's narrative runs counter to the predictions of modernization theory, according to which the maturation of the Russian economy, institutions, and political culture should inevitably lead the country to "normality" Rather, Morozov argues, Russia's subaltern condition has proven to be stable and difficult to break out of. Conversely, the book exposes essentialist intellectual shortcuts, which assert Russia's inherent uniqueness. Such cultural determinism, Morozov demonstrates, is itself rooted in misplaced frustrations with Russia's semi-peripheral status in the world economic system and its normative dependence on the West.

THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED in the following way: after an exposition of the book's conceptual machinery in the first two chapters, chapter three establishes Russia's economic and normative dependence on Europe. Morozov proposes a nested understanding of colonialism, uncoupled from temporal, geographical, and racial markers. While Russia may not have been formally colonized, it was a quasicolonial periphery in its relation to the European, capitalist core, acting from the sixteenth century on as a source of raw materials and a market for manufactured goods. At the same time, conditions of inequality also led to European normative hegemony, in which the Russian elite internalized European standards, discourses, understandings of modernity, etc. These conditions produced several outcomes. First, in an effort to "modernize" and transcend its subaltern economic condition, Russia embarked on state-driven self-colonization of the peasantry and the geographic periphery. Second, Russian elites forced a cultural Europeanization, at times expressed as liberalism, at others as a *mission civilisatrice* legitimating the imperial project. However, Russia's application of European-modeled measures to subaltern conditions always led to failure, most recently seen in the post-Soviet economic catastrophe presided over by liberal Westernizers. Paradoxically, as chapter four argues, while the ensuing anxiety and resentment re-invigorated an imperial and anti-Western identity, Russia remains committed to and normatively dependent on the West. Putin's "paleoconservative" turn remains Eurocentric in its modernization goals, soft-power commitment to "true" European values, and quest for Western approval, e.g. by invoking discourses of legality and self-determination in annexing Crimea. Even the most hostile discourses merely "invert" the West, using the empty signifier of the nonexistent "Russian peasant", and fail to

propose a positive system of values – a condition which echoes the hybridity of former European colonies. In policy terms, as chapter five demonstrates, subaltern imperialism generates Russian aggression in the post-Soviet space, perceived as defensive actions, and domestic repressions of the "fifth column". Furthermore, the true subaltern the Russian people are prevented from voicing their interests and engaging politically, Eurocentric elites still viewing them as backwards and immature. All this manifests Russia's enduring postcolonial condition.

THE BOOK'S METHODOLOGY is a mixture of theoretical reflection and synthesis of previous empirical research, supplemented by analysis of dominant Russian political discourses. While Morozov is adamant that his approach is postcolonial, it almost seems that the Marxist tendencies in his account are stronger. Indeed, the two major concepts used, the core-periphery distinction and the notion of hegemony, are drawn from world-systems and Gramscian theory, both in the Marxist tradition. Granted, Morozov explicitly rejects the primacy of the economy in favor of "overdetermination". Nonetheless, the narrative structure suggests otherwise: economic dependence as the original cause of Russia's subalternity, and the failure of *any* politico-cultural process (including the Soviet experience) to break this economic dependence. While Morozov's goal is to strengthen postcolonial analysis by adding an economic dimension, the outcome may be better characterized as a neo-Marxist account with postcolonial dimensions. This is not casuistry; in my view, openly proclaiming these credentials, and the causal model they suggest, can only add to the heuristic potential of Morozov's account.

As it stands, Morozov's narrative represents a fresh look at Russian history and politics, one of those rare books with the potential to pioneer a paradigm. At the very least, it successfully undermines the universalistic pretensions of modernization theory and the fantasies of those for whom Russia is an exotic, timeless Other. Not unimportant are Morozov's theoretical reflections, which provide an interesting way of combining and enriching postcolonial theory with Marxist approaches.

Morozov navigates with ease among the dense poststructuralist writings that many of us fear, communicating and critiquing them in a lucid, accessible way.

It is perhaps natural that an argument of such breadth and ambition as presented in the book would require some further nuancing and fine-tuning. For one thing, there is a rather careless conflation of the notions of “capitalist civilization”, “core”, the “West”, and “Europe”. These groupings are not coterminous; moreover, I also expect that a more careful analysis of Russian political discourse would reveal subtle distinctions in the symbolic mobilization of the latter two. Similarly, the patterns of Russian politics and identity over the last five hundred years are also overgeneralized. For instance, in the context of the mere four pages devoted to the Soviet period, the equation of Stalinist collectivization with colonialism (uncritically taken from Alvin Gouldner) is unconvincing.

FURTHERMORE, THE NARRATIVE implicitly depicts a uniformly passive Russia, merely on the receiving end of European norms, discourses, and processes. However, this one-sided view ignores pan-European, co-constitutive processes, in which Russia played no small part: we may think of Russian futurist and avant-garde influences on understandings of modernity, the stimulus to anarchist, socialist, and communist political movements and thought, etc. Eurocentric modernity was not internalized by Russia, but actively produced by it, in concert with other European and Western nations.

These questions must be answered in future studies, which I very much hope will spring from the approach developed by Morozov. The book is by all standards successful in proposing a new angle on studies of Russian politics and identity, bypassing the old battle lines of modernization theory ranged against cultural determinism. This will be particularly useful to historians and political scientists. ✖

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**Benedikts
Kalnačs,
20th Century
Baltic
Drama:
Postcolonial
Narratives,
Decolonial
Options**

Bielefeld:
Aisthesis, 2016
235 pages

A decolonial view of Baltic Drama. Countering postcolonial narratives

The Latvian theater critic and theorist Benedikts Kalnačs's recent monograph is a bold attempt at reading the history of modern and contemporary Baltic drama through the postcolonial lens. To most readers, a postcolonial interpretation of Baltic drama would seem unusual, as postcolonial studies have focused on the global South and seldom regarded semi-peripheral Europe as a possible focus for research. Intersections of postsocialism and postcolonialism, and issues of internal European colonization and otherness, have remained marginal. Yet intersections of postcolonial and post-Soviet sensibilities must be taken into account in any effort to further develop the postcolonial critique on a more global scale.

Not surprisingly, Baltic academics have already started to successfully apply postcolonial theory. Among such efforts, Violeta Kelertas's edited volume *Baltic Postcolonialism* (2006) stands out, as do several special issues of established scholarly journals, the most recent being the *Journal of Baltic Studies* 47, no. 1 (2016). The decolonial option, originating in Latin-American subaltern studies and later evolving into a much more epistemologically and politically radical and global discourse on the critique of Western modernity/coloniality, has so far remained marginal in Baltic academia. This is not surprising, as decolonial thought is dissonant with the predominant post-Soviet Baltic angst of returning to the European bosom in order to finally merge with it as equal and not a second-class Europeans. In this respect Kalnačs's work is the first and so far the only one in which the author creatively transforms the main premises of decolonial thought, analyzing the Baltic dramaturgical and wider cultural and historical material of the last century.

THIS BOOK IS PARTICULARLY important for those who share both the postcolonial and the post-Soviet predicament, and are attracted by the decolonial existential, ethical, and political stance. Kalnačs manages to balance between pure and abstract theorizing and a meticulous, detailed reading of Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian drama which could otherwise easily risk becoming a traditional literary historical survey. As a result, readers get a fair glimpse of the enormous, diverse world of Baltic theater, previously almost unknown internationally. Even more importantly, they get a good idea of the evolution of the contradictory and changeable Baltic identity against the historical calamities of the 20th century. Not only does Kalnačs provide us with a broad picture of contemporary Baltic drama; he also offers an original analysis of more historically distant plays that differ considerably from the representations of Baltic arts that were typical for Soviet period. The Baltic difference from the rest of the Sovietized cultures was most graphically expressed precisely in theater and cinema. Kalnačs confirms this with his analysis of the hidden forms of resistance and subversion and other typically postcolonial tools, which in the Baltic case were also anti-totalitarian.

Continued. A decolonial view of Baltic Drama

He strives to juxtapose and take into account the two main narratives of Eastern European historical and contemporary self-reflection, which seldom if ever hear each other: the fixation on the consequences of Soviet colonial politics and the post-socialist states' discontent with finding themselves on the darker side of global coloniality today – in a sense, as objects of the global North's neocolonial policies. Decolonial thought allows the author to make sense of these two narratives together as different manifestations of global modernity/coloniality.

THE BOOK ATTEMPTS to draw the Baltic littoral into the larger picture of global coloniality instead of the habitual concentration on Soviet colonialism and its aftermath or even the unfortunate Eastern European predicament. The author reflects on the complexity and insecure Europeanism of the Baltic social and cultural profile, marked by a constant wavering at the crossroads of imperial domination by Russia and by the German-speaking nations in the West. At the same time, the colonial periphery is a looming third reference point in the awkward positioning of sovietized Eastern Europeans, from which they try to distance themselves despite subconscious feelings of affinity with their historical destinies. It is symptomatic that, after the immediate threat of the Soviet occupation is over, Kalnačs finds it important to critically revisit the neglected older historical landmarks of internal European otherness and to reflect on the contradictory European influence on the Baltic peoples that often lead to dependencies and insecurity in contemporary relations with the EU. He shows that Europeanization has become a double-edged weapon in the Baltic littoral which could and still can act as a form of voluntary self-colonization.

The program of Baltic decolonization drafted by Kalnačs aptly incorporates and creatively reworks both postcolonial and decolonial discourses and the Eastern European postsocialist narrative. Demonstrating the independent thinking and self-critical positionality of someone no longer happy merely to be accepted into Europe, but rather problematizing the boundaries and penetrability of the European identity as such, the scholar points out: "The Baltic peoples link future prospects to the recognition of their colonial difference as a necessary step in the more global process of decolonization. Careful discussion of their historical and present experience is vital for Baltic societies in order to get out of the shadow of internal otherness and enter into a dialogue with the European community, itself on its way toward refiguring the European consciousness of the 21st century, on equal terms" (35).

Although the plays analyzed in this work may not be familiar to a general audience, the book is engaging and structurally and logically accessible. The author offers a simple yet persuasive model of the historical development of the main dimensions of Baltic drama, corresponding to the evolvement of decolonial sensibility and agency in the Baltic littoral, closely linked to the construction of national identity. Kalnačs singles out six facets of

this process which chronologically follow one another and correspond to the German/Czarist and Soviet/post-Soviet global dominations. They include national, philosophical, historical, contemporary, absurd, and postcolonial aspects; the book's six chapters are grouped around these facets.

Particularly interesting to a wider readership is the book's rigorous theoretical introduction which can easily be read as an independent text in which the author presents his main decolonial hypothesis with respect to Baltic cultures. He turns to postcolonial and decolonial methodologies, not for the sake of looking for mere similarities with countries of the global South, but rather to perceive the complexity of the difference-in-similarity, the dynamic commensurability of dissimilar local histories which nevertheless "point to the shared colonial difference" (33) and allow the Baltic cultures be written into the global modern/colonial discourses.

Kalnačs starts with, then departs from, the main decolonial premise that the 16th century was the beginning of the colonial matrix of power as it combined early mercantile capitalist development with the Christianization of the New World and the invention of race. The Latvian scholar attempts to rewrite this decolonial master narrative by moving its origins back to the 12th–13th century conquest of the Baltic littoral by the Teutonic knights and the subsequent turning of the Baltic lands into a German settler colony. He sees this local history as a training ground and a rehearsal for future global conquests and the emergence of the coloniality of power, claiming that the Teutonic conquest manifested such elements of future global coloniality as forced Christianization, the annihilation or assimilation of whole ethnicities such as the old Prussians, the settler colonial power hierarchies, the economic exploitation and dehumanization of people through serfdom (an analogue of slavery), and the erasing or devaluation of local cultures, languages, and knowledges.

Classical decolonial thought would disagree with this revision and claim that two important elements of the colonial matrix of power were missing in the Baltic conquest as described by Kalnačs those of capitalism and race. And in the beginning it probably was so. Yet Baltic co-

loniality has been dynamically changing since then, together with modifications of global coloniality as it acquired elements of various Western imperial experiences, economic models, and anthropological and political discourses. One of the strengths of Kalnačs's book is precisely this dynamic and historically changeable picture that he tries to recreate. It refers, for example, to the ways in which ethnicity and class (acting similarly to race in the New World) intersected in discrimination against the Baltic indigenous populations by the German settler colonists, later resulting in a typically colonial image of Estonians and Latvians as the milder, European versions of the "noble savages" – the eternal peasant communities overlooked by of modernity and in need of German-style economic modernization. Yet the notorious catching-up discourse grounded in the unbridgeable gap between the metropolis and the colony has been meticulously kept intact until now. Kalnačs expresses this in the following words: the "Baltic peoples are not full members of the European narrative of modernity, but rather belong to its darker side" (216). This predictably leads to mimicry and double consciousness, linked with a chronic lack of options, as the Baltic nations are used to survival mode and maneuvering between stronger and bigger neighbors.

KALNAČS SHARES the decolonial view that, no matter what ideological forms coloniality might have taken, global coloniality's logic of mimicry has remained intact. Yet the scholar is aware of the non-synchronicity in the way this coloniality has evolved. This is expressed in the asymmetrical waves of his historical timeline, which stress different speeds and directions of the processes of colonization, decolonization, and recolonization in different parts of the world and, consequently, disconnections in the ways they are conceptualized.

The book's six chapters present a thorough analysis of several important plays written by key 20th century Baltic playwrights such as Rūdolfs Blaumanis, Anton Hansen Tammsaare, Rainis, Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius, Juozas Grušas, Jaan Kruusvall, and others. Kalnačs looks at these texts from decolonial, postcolonial, and at times new historicist and anthropological angles, as he realizes that Baltic drama



PHOTO: RIMANTAS LAZDYNAS/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

should be evaluated within its particular complex social and political context of cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual colonization and also with regard to various anticolonial impulses it triggers in multiple hidden subtexts. According to Kalnačs, decolonial impulses in Baltic drama include the predictable national local color stage, which later gives way to allusions to and appropriation of classical European texts such as the Bible with which local colonial history is correlated through appeals to universal human values, yet always with a sense of subaltern difference. Following Dipesh Chakrabarty and Edward Said, the Latvian scholar calls this anticolonial allegorism a "charting of cultural territory preceding the recovery of geographical" space (99).

Specific attention is paid to the historical dimension of Baltic drama. The author analyzes the ways dual consciousness, mimicry, and eternal lack of choices were represented allegorically in critical Baltic rewritings of medieval imperial and colonial historical narratives. With the shift to Soviet dominance, this fictional historical allegorism became one of the very few possible ways of expressing indirect resistance. Kalnačs shows that what historians could not say was told by poets and playwrights. The scholar stresses the cathartic effect of theaters acting as replacements for lecture halls as the plays often appealed directly to people's emotions and sensibilities, launching a painful process of existential liberation.

An important part of Kalnačs's book addresses the dissolution of the "glorious narrative of victory in World War II" (124) as the central Russian/Soviet historical narrative, which still prevents the Baltic countries and Russia from having a meaningful dialogue. Kalnačs sees the Soviet interpretation of the Great Patriotic War as a stable and monolithic glorification. In reality, the myth of the war was a rather late creation of Soviet ideologues, a result of the failure of all previous propagandistic clichés and the harsh realization that communism was never going to arrive, and the general shift from the model of a future-bound society to that of one looking back to the presumably heroic past. The Great Patriotic War became the new societal glue for late Soviet culture. A nonconventional view of the war was harshly persecuted, not only in the cases of Soviet colonial cultures for which both the Nazis and the Soviets were equally dangerous and alien, but also in the works of the Russian Soviet writers who took part in this war themselves and later attempted to tell its contradictory story. Yet Kalnačs's attempt to look at the period of Soviet occupation through the prism of coloniality of perception, memory, thinking, is quite persuasive, in contrast to both Russian imperial positions which deny Soviet colonialism altogether, and some naïve Western left and postcolonial views, which tend to

On August 23, 1989, up to two million Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians linked hands to form a continuous human chain all the way from Vilnius through Riga to Tallinn, a distance of some 600 km.

Continued. A decolonial view of Baltic Drama

idealize the presumed internationalism of Soviet policies.

One of the central ideas of Kalnačs's book is the subversion from within of socialist realism and of, the broader Soviet literary canon by many playwrights who pretended to be loyal to the Soviet system. Their grotesque and ironic play on socialist realism is seen as a form of anticolonial resistance. It was expressed both in the use of national folklore and in a turning to the European modernist and postmodernist experiments, such as the theater of the absurd. This tool is similar to postcolonial canonical counter-discourse. Kalnačs does not mention this key postcolonial term but offers a detailed analysis of several plays written according to this principle, such as Māra Zālīte's *Margarēta*, a rewriting of Goethe's *Faust*. The author repeatedly claims that the audiences was not ready to accept such theatrical experiments, as their perception was colonized by the socialist realist canon, even though this audience was partial to anti-colonial and anti-Soviet resistance. One could object that the sad penchant for verisimilitude is not an exclusively Soviet feature, and the middle-brow Western audience would also prefer some version of "Bürgerliches Trauerspiel" to any Beckett play.

ADDRESSING THE SOVIET and post-Soviet period of Baltic drama, Kalnačs refers to Katerina Clark's book *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (2000), which is at times discordant with his decolonial interpretations. Clark opposes the Western novel to the Soviet one whereas in a decolonial reading, both are manifestations of modernity – one socialist, the other capitalist – but share the main modern/colonial premises. Russian, and later Soviet, literature were always marked by imperial difference and mimicry of the original Western European tradition. Presumed faults of the Soviet novel, such as deliberate myth-making or its specific package of rules to follow, are in fact integral elements of fiction as such, characteristic of any literary convention. The ideological husk of socialist realism can be easily discarded to reveal the same recognizable patterns, archetypes, and plots which we find in what is known as Western literature. A number of theorists even questioned the existence of socialist realism as a distinct literary tradition, claiming that the classical socialist realist works were often late romantic narratives rather than specifically socialist texts. Kalnačs briefly addresses this issue to explain what exactly binds all Soviet fictional works together, apart from purely external circumstances, but unfortunately he remains within the Baltic context, which is hardly enough for such broad phenomena as the mythic socialist realism.

Moreover, even restricted by the Iron Curtain, Soviet literature remained a part of global literary processes and environment and featured its own distorted versions of the main aesthetic and philosophical trends which were to be found in Europe or overseas. And if, in the Baltic case, these tendencies, as Kalnačs claims, were a form of anticolonial resistance, in the Russian Soviet literature socialist realism was equally subverted from within through various antimainstream means, such as ex-

istentialism, the mock-documentary war prose, the so-called countryside fiction with a strong anti-progressivist and ecological element, the ethnic renaissances in many national republics. These phenomena remain outside Kalnačs's interest. Yet sometimes he involuntarily creates an impression that, while Baltic authors were practicing their resistance, the rest of Soviet literature froze at some early Stalinist level of dogmatic socialist realist aesthetics. A more dynamic way of analyzing Baltic drama in various wider contexts, both Soviet and Western, Russian and colonial, would be favorable for this otherwise great work, as it would help us see the uniqueness of the Baltic tendencies, and at the same time, be aware of their affinity with other models. One of the most interesting examples of such exclusively Baltic decolonizing techniques analyzed by Kalnačs is the creolized mimetic form of playful resistance through singing, which eventually resulted in the famous singing revolution. The ludic mixture of the absurdist and the folkloric then becomes a uniquely Baltic dramaturgical form of political and mental resistance.

In the end, Kalnačs comes back to the painful issue of rethinking European identity that was previously seen almost exclusively as postimperial, while the possibility of postcolonial Europe was often ignored. His pioneering attempt to look at Baltic drama and identity through the colonality of power as a global phenomenon is therefore all the more important. This book is important for postcolonial and decolonial thinkers, as it offers a considerable correction to some of their assumptions, thus problematizing the possible neo-universalism of these theories and showing that each local history generates its own concepts and logic, even if it shares the predicament of global colonality. Benedikts Kalnačs's monograph is one of the first groundbreaking steps in the long process of Baltic epistemic, cultural, and aesthetic decolonization, which will hopefully be followed by others in the near future. ✕

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Fashion at GUM at the end of the 1950s.

Fashion in the Soviet Union. A glimpse of everyday reality

Jukka Gronow and Sergey Zhuravlev, *Fashion Meets Socialism, Fashion Industry in the Soviet Union after the Second World War*

Helsinki:
Finnish
Literature
Society, 2015
303 pages

Moscow, 1955: A group of Komsomol youths in grey uniforms gather in Gorki Park. “Hand me the tool,” their leader orders and is quickly offered a pair of scissors. The group sneaks its way through the park to an illegal party attended by young, fashion-oriented men and women, known as *stiliagi*. The *stiliagi* are dancing, drinking, and laughing; bright red lipstick and colorful patterns in motion contrast with the pale, stern Komsomol group that lurks in the shadows while one of them peeks inside. Suddenly the intruders are spotted and chaos ensues: “Riot!” shouts a stylish young man as the Komsomol group attack with their scissors. They rip up nylon stockings, tear clothes, and cut off the men’s long hair. “Every *stiliaga* is a potential criminal,” say the leader of the Komsomol group, equating indecent clothing with immoral behavior.

SO OPENS VALERIY TODOROVSKIY’S 2008 Russian film *Hipsters* (*Stiliagi*), which, with its focus on colorful individuals and their unique dress code, captures a typical preconception about the Soviet Union and fashion: that there was none. A well-known American television commercial from the 1990s plays on the same idea: Russian women walk down the runway in identical gray uniforms (contrasting with the many choices available in a US burger chain). It was assumed that color was reserved for the West and that fashion was ideologically impossible in the Soviet Union, where socialist politics did not allow consumerism and where ideology infiltrated every aspect of life so deeply

that it demanded uniformity on every level. In *Fashion Meets Socialism: Fashion Industry in the Soviet Union After the Second World War*, Jukka Gronow and Sergey Zhuravlev disprove such notions and offer insights into a different reality, proving that fashion was a thriving industry in the Soviet Union in spite of the many obvious political and economic restrictions.

THE AUTHORS BEGIN by asking how fashion could thrive in a planned economy, explaining that the five-year plans determined years in advance even what kinds of buttons and what colors of textiles would be produced; the Soviet economy appears to contradict the conditions inherent in the quick changes of fashion seasons. The book’s nine brief chapters focus on the post-World War II period and are centered on three main preoccupations that go beyond the economic considerations set up in the book’s introduction: the ideological considerations behind Soviet fashion, the economic conditions of the Soviet garment industry, and the internal organization of the Soviet fashion industry in the post war period.

Fashion Meets Socialism begins by taking the

Continued. Fashion in the Soviet Union

reader through the establishment of a kind of *anti-fashion* in the 1920s, to a stated “need for fashion” motivated by a proletarian definition of aesthetics centered on the idea that functional equals beautiful; ultimately, Soviet fashion became organized to respond to needs of hygiene, comfort, durability, and beauty. The book identifies an unease in Soviet society that consolidated a number of paradoxical positions: fashion was considered both frivolous and necessary; dismissed as bourgeois luxury yet constructed with effort for the people. As a symptom of a capitalist economy, fashion should have been obsolete, and yet it thrived.

Examining rich source materials from state archives, media coverage, personal memoirs, and interviews conducted by the authors themselves, they ultimately show that, however frivolous, fashion was of the utmost importance in the Soviet Union. While the book states that there was no unified Soviet ideology on fashion, it shows convincingly that clothes came to hold social and political implications. From decisions about what kind of tie a Komsomol boy could wear to explicit attempts to imbue Soviet clothing with proletarian ideals, fashion was politically relevant. As the authors show, this was true even during the early years of socialism. In fact, the first Soviet house of fashion opened in Moscow in 1934, immediately after the great famine, during a time when many still lacked clothes and shoes. The book provides ample examples of how the reality of poverty did not influence the fashion choices or home décor of the political elite, who did not quite live up to Soviet ideals of modesty. The importance of fashion as a political symbol is perhaps best exemplified in the book’s discussion of the reception of Soviet design abroad and Western influences on Soviet fashion. In spite of an anecdote about Brezhnev trying on jeans, completely untroubled by the political implications of the garment, the political influence of the fashion houses in international relations is best illustrated in a photo depicting Patricia Nixon and Viktoria Brezhneva in conversation during a visit to a Soviet fashion house that served as both an aesthetic and a political space.

The next part of the book deals with the issue of how ideology conflicted with real living conditions. The book makes it clear that, in spite of the authorities’ dismissal of consumerism as harmful, Soviet citizens held legitimate expectations of an increased standard of living; it was implied by socialist ideology and explicitly stated in propaganda that the Soviet Union would surpass even the West in terms of well-being, which came to be measured materially. The book shows how this clash of expectations and economic capabilities resulted in complaints from the public that were not addressed due to the reality of the Soviet economic system: it was more important for factories to meet their state-ordered quota than it was to respond to consumer demands. A more unexpected insight is how the fashion industry and its organization led to inadvertent competition among local and state bureaucracies: there was much overlap between the Ministry of Light Industry, the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Everyday Services, and the Ministry of Local Industry, all of



Left: An evening dress from the GUM collection demonstrated by the model Yana Kokoreva in 1964. Right: A beach dress designed by LF Averyanova. The 1958 GUM fashion album.

whose functions are carefully elaborated on and explained in the book.

Chapter 8 examines the media and how fashion was described by the press; it is one of the richest chapters of the book. The authors categorize journal articles dedicated to the topics of economics and fashion, and discussions about the management of resources, as well as the topic of fashion under socialism. Calls for modesty and avoiding extravagance are explicitly linked with socialist values by journalists who discuss the high standards of socialist beauty and the dangers of showing off and excess. This chapter offers the most in-depth discussion of how something that could be described as Soviet “decorum” was expressed through fashion, how behavior and etiquette were considered intrinsically linked to visual appearance. This point is reached, for instance, in the book’s discussion of the *stiliagi* culture (described in the film mentioned above), which provides examples of the media coverage that defined their dandified lifestyles and their choice to stand out as a lack of culture. This section of the book gives a rare view of men and fashion since it describes exclusively examples of *stiliagi* men. This fact is not pointed out or problematized by the authors, who mention on a few occasions the differences between fashion for men and for women in the Soviet Union while apologizing for the lack of systematic studies of femininity and masculinity in flux in the society compared to the West. While it seems implausible that there are no such studies, the rich material collected by the authors themselves offers a great opportunity for a gender analysis of the workings of fashion in the Soviet Union. Such an analysis would have been a substantial complement to the other themes, and perhaps ought not to have been so quickly dismissed.

The book covers a long span of time and offers many elucidating examples that define each period, but it does not account for development or changes in state politics (except, to some degree, the economic market conditions). For instance, a 1967 picture of a model wearing a “Red Army-style” outfit in commemoration of the October revolution illustrates an ideal that seems far from the proletarian ideals underlying the design of uniforms made after the revolution, which were truly and visibly inspired by the Red Army. Differences between the original proletarian ideal and this neo-proletarian fashion truly exemplify the short memory of the fashion industry with its quick seasons and suggests that, even if the Soviet Union had a slower fashion cycle, it too suffered from aesthetic memory loss. A last point of criticism is that, unfortunately, poor grammar, frequent typos, and longer literal translations from Russian distract from the book’s thorough investigation and important argument.

ULTIMATELY, THE BOOK’S greatest merit is that it offers three main points of view into the fashion industry in the Soviet Union (ideology, economics, and the workings of the industry itself) which together offer a glimpse into the everyday reality of the Soviet citizen. The book ought to benefit scholars of fashion as well as novices to the field. Ours is a time fascinated with Soviet-era commodities: films such as *Stiliagi*, and Wolfgang Becker’s internationally acclaimed German production *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003), testify to an interest in the material reality of the socialist period. *Fashion Meets Socialism* is a book that meets this interest and offers a historical context to the fictional stories. In some ways, the book complements the films’ comedic genre through its lightheartedness; beyond its economic and sociological analysis shine photographs and entertaining examples. Indeed, at times the book’s insights into Soviet life and fashion are both smart and funny! ❌

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Baltic Russians under pressures. A minority with split identities

**Kalle
Kniivilä,
Sovjets
barnbarn:
Ryssarna i
Baltikum.
[The
grandchildren
of the Soviet
Union: The
Russians in
the Baltic
states]**

Atlas 2016.
320 pages

THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK has been likened to Nikolai Gogol and Ivan Turgenev, since he shows there is another Russia than that of Stalin and Putin, and to Chekhov, who exposes dilemmas to the reader without solving them.¹ A more appropriate and up-to-date comparison can be made with Svetlana Aleksievich, because of Kniivilä’s use of interviews and his empathetic and respectful approach to interviewees of various ages, origins, and professions and to their often touching or dramatic lifestories.

However, there are of course significant differences: Kniivilä asks questions concerning the identity of the Russians living in the three Baltic states, the problems they encounter in daily life, their view of Russia and the West, and how and why they or their parents came to the Baltics. Second, unlike Aleksievich, Kniivilä as a political journalist provides context for the interviews, explaining facts and sometimes arguing with his interlocutors. He describes his trips and the places he visits, thus producing a travelogue that could even be used as a guidebook for ambitious travelers. He visits the cities where the most Russians live, the three capitals and towns in the eastern parts like Narva, Daugavpils, and Visaginas, and Klaipeda.

Kniivilä starts by visiting the Russian-dominated town of Visaginas in eastern Lithuania and the Ignalina nuclear power station nearby. The latter was built from 1975 onwards, intended to be a showcase of Soviet development but it was closed down by Lithuania in 2009 as a condition of EU membership because of the dangerous Chernobyl-type reactors. Kniivilä sees this fate as a symbol for the Soviet Union: a gigantic, ill-conceived project. The book ends with a visit to Lasnamäe, the biggest suburb of Tallinn with over 100,000 inhabitants, most of them Russian-speaking.

Kniivilä clarifies several facts about the over one million so-called Russians living in the Baltics. He shows that they are in fact an ethnically very heterogeneous group, including Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, Tatars, and others, with the Russian language as their main defining feature. Many are of mixed origin and have married Balts. Their identities are often split and changeable.

HE STATES THAT in Estonia and Latvia, where in 1991 the native Balts feared they would become a minority, only those inhabitants who were citizens of the republics in 1940 and their descendants automatically became citizens, while others had to apply for citizenship and prove knowledge of the national language and the constitution. The citizenship laws have since been liberalized as a condition of membership in the EU. In Estonia, about 30 percent of the population are Russian-speakers nowadays (2011). About half of them have become citizens, and one-fourth of them, mostly old people, are non-citizens with aliens’ passports valid in the Schengen area. One-fourth have chosen Russian citizenship instead, which gives them visa-free entry and voting rights in Russia. The Russian-speaking minority in Latvia is a little bigger (34 per cent), but about 14 per cent of the population still lack citizenship and only 1.6 per cent have Russian citizenship.

In Lithuania, by contrast, only 7.2 per cent are Russian-speak-

Continued. Baltic Russians under pressures

ers, which partly explains why all inhabitants became citizens on independence. Kniivilä could have added that the Poles, being a little more numerous, constitute a greater problem, since they find it easier to learn Russian, a Slavic language, than Lithuanian and are cooperating with Russian political parties.

Kniivilä shows that the Baltic Russians now want to stay in their countries because they realize that they are better off there than in Russia, where the economy is falling behind. Elderly people who are not citizens look longingly back to Soviet times rather than to the Russia of today. Like the Balts, many Russian-speakers take the opportunity to work in other Schengen countries. Russian-speakers who are citizens can also serve in the border troops and be very useful there, and some have even fought in Afghanistan, on the NATO side this time, as a way to integrate.

However, after being the leading nation in Soviet times, the Baltic Russians are unhappy to be seen as a suspicious minority and as occupiers. Those in Estonia and Latvia would have liked to be granted citizenship automatically as in Lithuania. Kniivilä seems to support this view, even if he also understands the Baltic leaders in view of their 50 years' experience of Soviet occupation. He states that Russians also suffered under the Soviet system and that today's Baltic Russians can hardly be blamed for Soviet oppression. Most Balts acquiesced to it in order to survive, and some collaborated. One could even argue that the Balts, too, are among the children and grandchildren of the Soviet Union.

KNIIVILÄ ALSO NOTES that the Russian-speakers are critical of the Baltic language laws, which prescribe that all official and public material be written in the state language, even in places where Russian is predominant. After a petition list gathered enough signatures for making Russian the second state language in Latvia, a referendum was held in 2012, but the result was negative. The most hated institution among the Russian-speakers in Latvia is the language inspection, which may come at any time and check whether all signs are in Latvian and all employees speak Latvian well enough; otherwise they can be fined.

Kniivilä further pays attention to the Russian-speakers' opposition to the gradual transition

to the state language at Russian schools, for example in Latvia. Some young Russian-speakers prefer to learn English instead of the small national languages and go abroad for higher education. However, most of them understand the need to learn the state language. In Russian-dominated Daugavpils, Kniivilä visits a Russian school, where more than the stipulated 60 per cent of the education is in Latvian, and a pub which remains popular despite its stated policy that every customer must speak Latvian.

Kniivilä also identifies one issue which nowadays tends to bring Balts and Russian-speakers together, namely the European refugee crisis. Despite their own experience from Soviet times, the three governments have strongly opposed the demand of the EU Commission to receive two thousand non-European asylum seekers. He quotes the once liberal former foreign minister of Estonia, Kristiina Ojuland, who has spoken of a genocide of European peoples and claimed that Sweden and Finland already are living according to Islamic law. As in the rest of Europe, xenophobic and homophobic nationalist parties in the Baltics, otherwise hostile to Russians, have now received backing from the local Russians as well as from Russia.

The greatest obstacle to the integration of the Russian-speakers into their societies, according to Kniivilä, is interference from Russia through the mass media and various organizations.² He observes that most Russian-speakers watch Russian television, especially the channel aimed at the Baltic states, Pervyi Baltiiskii Kanal, which provides both good entertainment and political propaganda. The Russian media accuse the Baltic governments of discrimination against Russian-speakers and emphasize the common Russian cultural heritage and traditions. They cherish the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany, defend the Russian conquest of Crimea in 2014, blame the current war in Donbas on the Ukrainian leadership, and oppose any NATO presence in the Baltic countries. Indeed, many Baltic Russians still celebrate the Soviet Victory Day, May 9, and have sympathy for President Putin. Some activists went to fight for the separatists in Donbas. These issues set the Russian-speakers apart from most Balts, who talk of 50 years of Soviet occupation, support Ukraine against Putin, and call for more NATO presence. Kniivilä notices a growing fear that small groups of Russian activists with support from Russia could wreak havoc and motivate military intervention, as happened in Donbas, which could have worldwide repercussions.

Still, Kniivilä concludes that unless Russia interferes more forcefully and the Baltic governments take strong measures against the Russian-speaking minorities, in which Russia has a strong interest, the overwhelming majority will continue to adapt to and be integrated into their societies. With this hope one can only agree. On the whole, this is a well-written and easily read reportage which provides many current insights into an important topic that also should interest people in neighboring countries with a less turbulent history. ✖

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Correction: In the latest issue, Kristian Gerner was also among the contributors. Kristian Gerner is professor emeritus of History at Lund University. He took his PhD in 1984 with a PhD thesis on Soviet-Central European relations in the postwar era. Gerner's research has focused on 20th century Central and Eastern European history and cultural history.

MONITORING DEMOCRACY

For people to have the opportunity to choose their representatives in decision-making assemblies is usually seen as the ultimate proof of democracy. Consequently, to hold free and fair elections, or at least to give the impression of having done so has become immensely important for the leaders of what are often called transitioning countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space. Since September 2010, *Baltic Worlds* has been publishing online commentaries on elections taking place in the vast area covering Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans, and the wider Baltic Sea region. So far we have covered elections in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia as well as in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Ukraine, Germany and the EU.

These in-depth analyses, written by area specialists, not only provide a useful overview of the election proceedings and outcomes, as a useful resource for teachers, students, researchers, journalists, and other interested parties. In many instances they also reveal interesting similarities between different contexts and “cross-over” aspects from one country to another. Moreover, by addressing the settings and conditions in which the elections take place, the commentaries give insights to aid overall understanding. Some of these analyses provide enlightening empirical illustrations of phenomena already well known in the theoretical literature. One such example are the analyses of seemingly uninteresting elections in so-called electoral autocracies, where the outcome is always known beforehand. In these states regimes hold elections that appears democratic, but systematic and extensive violations of fundamental democratic rights and freedoms strip the vote of all credibility.¹ This is especially obvious in hegemonic autocracies where elections always lead to the president, his supporting party, or “independents” loyal to the current ruler win more than 70% of the vote.² The elections in this type of regime are generally minimally inclusive (universal suffrage), minimally pluralistic (opposition parties are allowed to participate), minimally competitive (parties and candidates outside the ruling coalition are allowed to win votes and seats, but not power) and minimally open (the repression of dissent is solid, but often selective and sporadic repression).³ *Baltic Worlds’* coverage of the presidential elections in Belarus in 2015 and in Azerbaijan in 2013, for example, echoes insights from research in this field by corroborating the role of elections as a tool to strengthen authoritarian leadership. Impressive electoral victories have been shown to deter both elite defection and opposition because they paint a picture of the regime as invincible.⁴

Although these observations are rather depressing for friends of democratization, some research does indicate to the contrary that, by opening the playing field for competition, regular elec-

tions create a sort of “politics of uncertainty” that could at least in theory lead to change.⁵ Additionally, both Teorell⁶ and Lindberg⁷ argue that of the “non-democratic” regime types the electoral authoritarian model is the one with the greatest chance for democratization over time. In the course of *Baltic Worlds’* coverage, we have seen some interesting examples of elections in previously authoritarian states that were perhaps not completely democratic, but still appeared to be surprisingly free (see for example the presidential elections in Georgia and the parliamentary elections in Albania in 2013).

THIS FALL *Baltic Worlds* looks forward to adding Moldova to the list of countries covered, as we will be able to publish an analysis of the October presidential election. We are equally happy to have contributions on the new Russian, Georgian, Belarusian, Croatian, and Lithuanian parliamentary elections, as well as on the referendums in Hungary and Azerbaijan. Even though these countries represent a variety of regime types, from the consolidated democracy of Lithuania to the “last dictatorship in Europe”⁸ – Belarus – and although the quality of the voting varies extensively throughout the region, they all illustrate the importance of elections. ✕

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