A scholarly journal and news magazine. October 2021 Vol. XIV:3
From the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES), Södertörn University.

Dag Hammarskjöld's diary: A new reading

BALTIC WORLDS

balticworlds.com

Change is in the air

East European emigrants are returning home

Comic artists as feminist activists in the Baltic Sea region

Reforming institutional care for orphans in Russia

Illustration: Karin Z Sunvisson

also in this issue

SOVIET WINE INDUSTRY / RELIGION & GENDER POLITICS IN LITHUANIA / SPATIAL VIOLENCE IN THE BALKANS

SÖDERTÖRN UNIVERSITY
sh.se | STOCKHOLM

BALTIC WORLDS
balticworlds.com

Sponsored by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies
ÖSTERSJÖ-STIFTELSEN

editorial

Winds of change

Former emigrants from Eastern Europe and the Baltic States have returned to their home countries since the pandemic started. This trend has been observed in a number of countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania and Latvia. And according to new findings, a number of these people will not emigrate again as Påhl Ruin states in an article, "From brain drain to brain gain." However, the Executive Director of the non-governmental platform Global Lithuanian suggests in an interview that: "Surveys show that people still emigrate from Lithuania partly because of its lack of respect for human rights."

The deinstitutionalization of child welfare as a coherent reform was introduced abruptly across Russia, writes Anna Tarasenko and Meri Kulmala. The reform aimed to reduce the massive system of residential care for children and triggered placement of children in foster care or adoption. According to Kulmala, it can be seen as a "paradigmatic shift" since it challenges the persistent Soviet understanding of state organized institutional care as the best option for children left without parental care.

IN THIS ISSUE we note two major new shifts in trends: that people are returning home instead of leaving their countries, and orphans in Russian are placed in family-like units rather than in institutional care. One was generated by unforeseen circumstances, namely the pandemic, in the setting of an EU with free movement, the other a result from a top-down reform decision in an autocracy.

Change is never easily achieved, and this is of course also true if driven from a goal-oriented, bottom-up perspective. One way to initiate such changes may be through comic art. Yes indeed: A group of researchers suggest in a commentary that feminist comic art has the potential to create political and cultural debate and that artists in Sweden, for instance, today serve as influential social commentators and powerful political activists. Feminist comic artists from different counties in the Baltic Sea region are now forming networks inspiring each other.

CHANGE CAN ALSO be a painful process. Silvia Kučėnaitė Foti is the author of the book *The Nazi's Granddaughter: How I discovered my Grandfather was a War Criminal*. In an interview she shares the process of denial she went through discovering her grandfather was not the war hero she heard about but a Nazi collaborator. She finally decided to write about it to help Lithuanians to come to term with their dark history. She says:

"My goal at this point is to break the narrative that Lithuania had nothing to do with the Holocaust."

An issue of *Baltic Worlds* hopefully raises a lot of new entry-points to further discussions, and studies of and in the region, that eventually lead to changes in their turn.

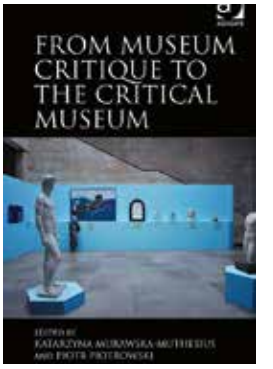
Ninna Mörner

in this issue

Wine production in Georgia and Armenia

"After 1985, the area planted with vines decreased following a central decision to drastically limit alcohol consumption.

Page 14



On Piotr Piotrowski's museography

"The question, however, is hardly the number of masterpieces but what is being done with them.

Page 47

ILLUSTRATION: KARIN Z SUNVISSON

colophon

***Baltic Worlds* is published by the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES) at Södertörn University, Sweden.**

Editor-in-chief
Ninna Mörner

Publisher
Joakim Ekman

Scholarly advisory council
Sari Autio-Sarasmo, Aleksanteri Institute, Helsinki University; Sofie Bedford, IRES, Uppsala University; Michael Gentile, Oslo University; Markus Huss (chair), Stockholm University; Ekaterina Kalinina, Jönköping University; Thomas Lundén, CBEES, Södertörn University; Kazimierz Musiał, University of Gdańsk; Barbara Törnquist Plewa, Lund University

Corresponding members
Aija Lulle, University of Latvia; Michael North, Greifswald University; Andrzei Nowak, Jagiellonian University, Kraków; Andrea Petö, Central European University, Budapest; Jens E. Olesen, Greifswald University; Olga Schihalejev, Tartu University

Copyediting/proofreading
Matthew Collins, Semantix, Bridget Schäfer

Layout
Sara Bergfors, Lena Fredriksson, Serpentin Media

Illustration
Karin Z Sunvisson, Ragni Svensson, Moa Thelander

Subscription
bw.editor@sh.se

Printed by
Exakta Print AB, Malmö 2021
Printed: ISSN 2000-2955
Online: ISSN 2001-7308

Contact *Baltic Worlds*
ninna.morner@sh.se

FROM BRAIN DRAIN TO BRAIN GAIN

by **Påhl Ruin**

Eastern and Central Europe are seeing emigrants returning – Brexit and the pandemic are major reasons. But they are not the only reasons.

Over the last 30 years the opposite trend has been the rule: Former Warsaw Pact countries and countries liberated from Soviet-Russian occupation have seen millions of citizens moving to richer countries in Western Europe or leaving the continent. This development has accelerated for the 10 countries that joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007, since the borders to the rest of the union more or less opened for them once they became members.

Lithuania and Latvia have lost close to 25% of their citizens since 1990; Bulgaria and Romania approximately 20%. In Poland, over two million people have left, primarily to the UK, Germany, France, and Ireland. Of course, over the years, some people have returned, although those leaving have always outnumbered those returning. Until now. The trend for more people to return to their home countries started as a trickle before Brexit and the pandemic – but has grown over the last couple of years.

It is impossible to state the exact number of EU citizens who have left the UK since the referendum – determining the precise number of internal migrants in the EU is a difficult task since registration is not mandatory – but they can probably be counted in hundreds of thousands. Since 2020, many people have left the UK, not primarily because of Brexit, but because of the corona pandemic. So, the big question is: will some of these people who have returned to their former home countries during the pandemic also remain at home once the pandemic is over?

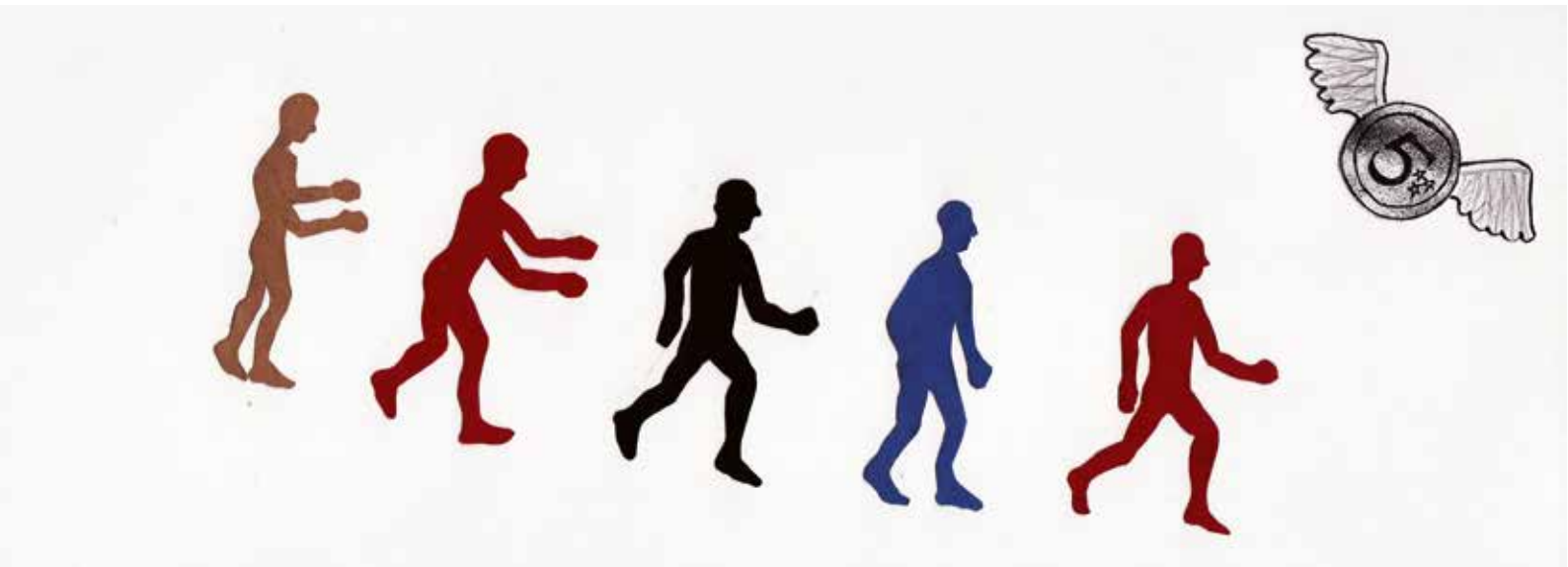
The answer is yes, according to researcher Ognyan Georgiev at the European Council on Foreign Relations. In his report *The Grand Return* from 2020, he examines the case of Bulgaria. Three months into the pandemic, over 500,000 Bulgarians had returned home. It was not possible to calculate the proportion who had lived abroad on a long-term basis, but many of them had. Using Facebook, he and his colleagues were able to contact around 130 people scattered across the country, many of whom had been living abroad for several years. When asked why they had returned home, the most common answer was "I wanted to be with my family and relatives". The second most common answer was "I lost my job".

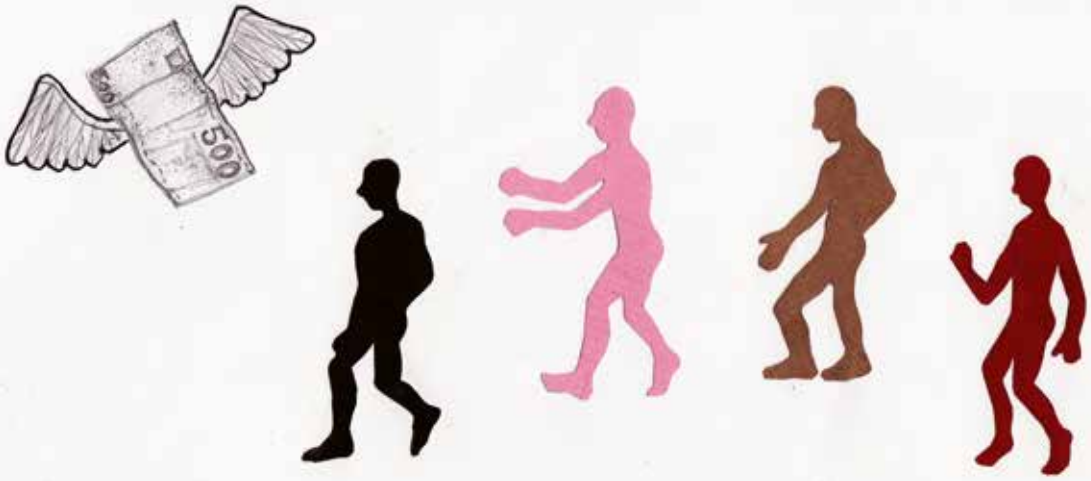
THEY WERE ALSO ASKED whether they intended to migrate again. Many answered yes. However, 10% said no – and 25% were unsure.

"The pandemic will definitely lead to more people moving back to their home countries permanently compared to what we would have seen if there had been no pandemic", says Ognyan Georgiev in a telephone interview from Sofia.

And it does not really surprise him:

"Put yourself into their situation. You live in the UK, you've always been thinking of moving back home one day, but you don't know when. And then suddenly the move happens due to a reason you couldn't predict. The dwelling on whether to stay or not is not a decision in your hand, you're already back. Of course, we will see some of them remaining at home."





Do your results apply to other countries in Eastern and Central Europe?

"Yes, we have data from other countries showing that they have also experienced a large influx of former emigrants since the pandemic started. What's happening in Bulgaria is happening everywhere. And a number of these people will not emigrate again."

Some countries have modernized more than others over the past 10–15 years. Does that affect the number of people wanting to remain after living back home during the pandemic?

"Absolutely. The Baltic countries, for example, have developed more quickly than my home country Bulgaria or also Romania. Some of those answering our survey mention corruption and weak institutions back home as reasons to emigrate again. I would imagine that such hesitation is less common in the Baltic countries."

"THE PANDEMIC WILL DEFINITELY LEAD TO MORE PEOPLE MOVING BACK TO THEIR HOME COUNTRIES."

OGNYAN GEORGIEV ADMITS that he has a rather small sample of answers from temporary returnees during the pandemic to be able to draw clear conclusions. This uncertainty is also underlined by researcher Liam Patuzzi at the Migration Policy Institute's European branch. He makes a comparison:

"We have some experience from the economic crisis in 2009–2010 when, for example, many Poles left Ireland and returned home. But almost all of them went back to Ireland after the crisis since the living conditions had not been good enough in Poland", he says in a telephone interview from Germany.

But this time, he would imagine that a higher percentage of those waiting out the pandemic in their home countries would stay even after the pandemic is over – since people had begun returning in higher numbers already before 2020.

"They started returning because of higher wages and more job opportunities and research has confirmed that finding a good job is by far the only factor behind a decision to return. People also say that it is important how public institutions work, whether they are effective, whether the level of corruption is low. And not least: whether they can return home to good schools, good health care and a rich cultural life."

Of course, Eastern and Central European countries can fulfil these wishes to varying degrees. This has resulted, for example, in Bulgaria and Romania attracting fewer citizens than the Baltic countries. Lithuania has probably experienced the largest influx of former emigrants – as a proportion of the population – over the last couple of years. Thus, I travelled to Vilnius to look more closely into the issue in one of the countries that has been mostly affected by this latest trend in European migration patterns.

In 2020, for the first time since the break-up of the Soviet Union, more Lithuanians returned to Lithuania than those who had left the country: 20 800 returned, while 15 300 emigrated. Of course, this trend has not passed unnoticed in a country in which the population decreased from 3.7 million citizens in 1990 to 2.8 million today. The media has been full of stories about the returnees, says Jovita Sadaite, who is the coordinator of a government funded program helping Lithuanians who want to return home. The program "I choose Lithuania", which is run by the UN related body IOM (International Organization for Migration), was launched in 2015 – and has become increasingly important.

"Some people questioned whether our role was necessary, but we proved them wrong. In the first year we had 215 consultations; last year we had over 12,000."

These phone calls and online contacts have skyrocketed as a result of Brexit and the pandemic. The purpose of the program is to provide Lithuanians in the diaspora with the right information at the right time – and ensure that they get all their questions answered in one place. This way they do not need to call one government agency after the other with all their loads of questions. So, what do they ask?

"Many different things: about housing, health care, social security, schools, the job market. Deciding to return home is a big step".

Do you know of people who moved back temporarily because of the pandemic who are now considering staying for good?

"Yes, I have heard several stories about that sort of thing. The country has changed a lot during the last decade and many hadn't realized how much."

ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

PHOTO: PÁHL RUIN

Jovita Sadaite, coordinator of the program "I choose Lithuania".

PHOTO: PÁHL RUIN

Ruslanas Iržikevičius, editor-in-chief of the *Lithuania Tribune*.

And she talks from her own experience. Like so many others, she went abroad to study and get an university education. In Denmark she got a degree in Middle Eastern Studies and then worked in the Middle East for several years before returning to Lithuania in 2019.

"Vilnius had become a city like many others in Europe, more multicultural with more bars, restaurants and cafés than before. I felt more at home."

Behind her decision to move back at least temporarily was also a longing for the Lithuanian landscape, the countryside, which is close, even if you live in a large city like Vilnius. Jovita Sadaite never settled for a long time in one country, which meant that moving back to Lithuania was not such a big step for her as it would have been for someone who had become rooted after several years in another country.

OVER LUNCH IN THE old town, I meet a couple of the latter kind, Judita Stanikūnienė and her husband Vytas Stanikunas. She moved to the UK in 2005 with her daughter and met Vytas there – and the two had a son, Donatas, in 2011. Vytas himself had left Lithuania as early as 1998 as a 20-year-old to join his older brother and to learn English.

"I didn't move because of lack of money, like many others, I rather moved out of curiosity. And I stayed on."

After several different career moves, he ended up as a very successful carpenter and shopfitter with more work than he could manage.

"For many years, returning to Lithuania was never really on the agenda for me".

Judita Stanikūnienė had a very different reason for moving to the UK. After her divorce it was difficult to make ends meet as she had sole responsibility for her daughter Sonata – so she was eventually convinced by her ex-husband to come and join him in Manchester. She was unsuccessful in her attempts to mend the relationship, but she remained anyway since she quickly found a very rewarding job taking care of an old Lithuanian man who had fled to England af ter the war.

"I read poems and sang for him in Lithuanian. His wife told me that nobody had improved his mood in such a profound way before".

AFTER DONATAS WAS BORN, Judita Stanikūnienė left the labor market for several years, then started working for a doctor as a receptionist and administrator. She then began studying to become a naturopathic nutrition therapist. Unlike her husband, she nurtured a dream to one day return to Lithuania.

"I always felt that one day I would return. But it's not so easy to take that step when you're rooted with children in school and have become part of a local community".

Every year they have returned to Lithuania and, in 2017, they bought a piece of land near Birštonas some 80 kilometers from Vilnius. The aim was not to move back and settle there, but the idea of returning had taken root. And the main reason was Brexit.

"After the referendum I started to get nasty looks, both at school and when I met patients", she says. "It made me feel unwelcome."

"FOR MANY YEARS, RETURNING TO LITHUANIA WAS NEVER REALLY ON THE AGENDA FOR ME."

Vytas also got nasty looks and comments and it affected both of them. Vytas got upset:

"I've been paying taxes in the UK for 23 years; I've not been on benefits for a single day.
I have obeyed all the laws and rules – and now they treat me like this."

There was never really a risk that they would not be allowed to stay, since they had lived in the country for more than five years. But when the UK eventually left the EU on the first of January this year, they started to see the everyday difficulties with Brexit.

Judita Stanikūnienė:

"It became difficult to send packages to Lithuania because of customs clearance; the car needed additional insurance if we drove in the EU countries and there were new rules for entering with our dog. This all added to our decision to leave."

Her employer begged her to stay. One of Vytas Stanikunas' cli-

PHOTO: PÄHL RUIN

Vytas Stanikunas and Judita Stanikūnienė met in the UK.

PHOTO: ZANETA PAUNKSNE

Aušra Kukelkaitė, Executive Director, Global Lithuanian Leaders.

ents threatened to hide his passport – but in April they put their house on the market and in July they landed in the Lithuanian capital. Judita Stanikūnienė was born and brought up in the old town of Vilnius, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a place that she loves. After lunch we walk over to the house where she was raised. In the backyard she recognizes a neighbor from her youth. They start talking and laughing and when I ask what the old woman thinks of Judita returning to the country – she raises her thumb and gives all of us a big smile.

"We were thinking of settling here in Vilnius", she says after we left the house and took some pictures in the street of her childhood, "but the countryside attracted us more. It is a different quality of life that we are looking for. We want to find a slower pace than in Manchester, being close to nature".

However, they are not naïve about moving back. Of course, they heard the voices over the years from those who think that the emigrants were traitors who fled Lithuania in hard times instead of staying and helping to build the newly independent country. These sentiments have not been very well grounded, particularly after the financial crisis of 2008–2009 when jobs in Lithuania became so scarce that emigration helped the country to avoid much higher levels of unemployment.

SO, WHAT ARE the sentiments towards returning emigrants today? On the government program for returnees, they recently carried out a survey asking around one thousand Lithuanians: "Considering all the pluses and minuses, how do you see the returning migrants on a scale where 1 is 'very negatively' and 10 is 'very positively'?" The average of all answers was 6.5.

"It means that many people still have rather negative feelings, which makes me a bit worried", says Jovita Sadaite. "If we want more citizens to return, we have to give them a good welcome. This negative attitude is one of the reasons more people don't return".

One of the Lithuanians who has been working the hardest to change people's attitudes to emigrants – and to make returning to the country easier – is the conservative parliamentarian Dalia Asanavičiūtė. For several years she lived in London and was the head of the Lithuanian community in the UK. Last year she returned home for a reason she won't share with anyone else in the country – she was elected to parliament (the Seimas). It was the first time in the history of the country that someone from the diaspora was offered a place in the Seimas.

"I'm so glad that we now have a voice where the decisions are made", she says when I catch her for a short interview in Parliament between meetings.

What do you say to those who claim that you let the country down by leaving?

"I left for financial reasons. I was a single mother with two kids. I received no support in Lithuania while I was working, studying and being a mom at the same time. I left to make a living; I didn't let my country down."

DURING THE ELECTION campaign, she stressed how she and many other emigrants have supported Lithuania in many ways while living abroad.

"We have collected money for hospitals and for children in need. We have supported companies that provide cheap food to the elderly. During the pandemic we have sent home face masks and plastic shields. And many have sent money home to their relatives. We really think of those in need back home!"

Changing the attitudes towards returnees is one way of making more people return. Another way is to better prepare the ground for those who have decided to return. And much more can be done here, argues Dalia Asanavičiūtė**.**

"The main reason why people hesitate to return is their uncertainty about getting a job and therefore we must help them better to find one. We have to make it easier to recognize foreign qualifications such as graduate certificates, for example, in the field of electronics, IT and medicine. I have raised this with the Minister of Education, who is a member of my party."

She argues that many Lithuanian companies do not realize the potential among their countrymen who live abroad and are thinking about returning.

"I've heard so many stories about people in the diaspora showing interest in jobs here, but who are only told by the companies that they are welcome to contact them once they have

moved back. It's absurd! Of course, a decision to employ someone can be taken before a person returns."

Many also hesitate to return because of the language. They are afraid that their kids, who have only spoken Lithuanian at home, will not manage to return and be integrated into the Lithuanian school system. Thus, more must be done to prepare the kids for the return.

"There are at least 100,000 Lithuanian school age children in the diaspora, but fewer than 10,000 go to Saturday and Sunday schools. I have prepared a law to support more of these schools. Hopefully, it will be in place by 2023."

FURTHERMORE, Dalia Asanavičiūtė is one of many who supports the idea of introducing the right to have passports in two countries. Particularly after Brexit it has been a major issue for those entertaining the idea of returning home – their return would be less dramatic if they could have passports from both countries. Lithuania has had a referendum on the topic, but it was cancelled due to the low turnout. A new referendum has been set for 2024.

Dalia Asanavičiūtė would have returned anyway, she says, even if she had not been elected to parliament. Her children have finished school and her parents need her here. She has moved back to a large city – which is typical for the returnees, not only in Lithuania but all over Europe. Not many former inhabitants return to small towns and villages.

The government program coordinator Jovita Sadaite confirms this: the large cities in Lithuania are by far the most popular destinations. This means that many of those who left villages don't return to these villages once they decide to return. Jovita gives an example of her own small village close to the Polish border:

"I've heard from my relatives there that the young generation has left. And they're not coming back."

But as always, the picture is not black and white. As we heard, the couple Vytas Stanikunas and Judita Stanikūnienė chose to live in the countryside, not in Vilnius. And they are not alone. My friend and journalist colleague Ruslanas Iržikevičius, editor-in-chief of the *Lithuania Tribune*, tells me about his sister who has recently returned from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to their mother's village of Pušalotas – which, according to Wikipedia, has 692 inhabitants.

"And she's bringing her American husband! He has started to work online for his company in the US. So far they seem to be fine."

He tells of yet another relative who has moved back to the village and who has built a new house there.

"You know, these villages and small towns have received a lot of EU money over the years – roads, buildings and parks are in better shape than before. People who return are surprised at the changes."

Of course, there are very few jobs in these villages and towns, but a growing number of people work online or commute to the nearest city.

"I've met many people who have returned to Lithuania and who are fed up with the hectic urban life-style."

The reason why many people left Lithuania – and other countries in Eastern and Central Europe – in the first place was the higher wages in the West. Living abroad still means earning more than in Lithuania, but it is not 4-5 times more like it used to be, closer to 2–3 times more. For the highly skilled, the gap is narrower still – and on top of that the cost of living is generally lower in Eastern Europe. Wages in Vilnius have increased by 10% per year, on average, over the last decade (with interruptions during the pandemic, of course). The increase is not as high in small cities, but Lithuania – and other countries in Eastern Europe – is without doubt closing the gap with countries in Western Europe. This is yet another reason why the migration flows are changing.

Those returning to their home countries in Eastern and Central Europe come from all walks of life. However, surveys and research have shown that people with higher education have been slightly overrepresented over the last couple of years. Many of these people also received their education abroad. Ruslanas Iržikevičius welcomes this development. He remembers the major impact his education in Scotland had on him in the late 1990s.

"GO AND EXPLORE THE WORLD; WE NEED THAT WORLD HERE ONCE YOU RETURN!"

"The eight years I spent in the UK were formative years; they changed me forever. I was brought up in the Soviet system. The years abroad forced me to change, and I am forever grateful for it."

He underlines that the values and norms in Lithuania have changed a lot since the 1990s, but more needs to happen.

"We can still see a lack of tolerance, a lack of openness. I hope more people move abroad; it's good for our country! Go and explore the world; we need that world here once you return!"

I MYSELF LIVED FIVE YEARS in Vilnius (2011–2016) and during this time I often heard such messages from liberal thinkers who had spent time abroad. The late Leonidas Donskis, a well-known philosopher and member of the European Parliament, once told me something important that has stayed in my mind:

"I'm sick of this talk of emigration within the European Union. We should not talk about emigration; we should talk about circulation. People circulate between the countries of the union, learning new things, gaining new experience. This movement of people is positive and should be encouraged."

Back in 2011 I visited a young Lithuanian woman living in Stockholm and I remember how strongly she reacted when I quoted the criticism directed towards her and others emigrating: "Why are they so critical? I'm just doing what everybody was longing to do during the Soviet occupation – to be able to move freely. I'm using my freedom to live where I want to live". When I look her up in the online telephone book, I see that she still lives in Sweden, now in a house instead of an apartment.

She is an example of the problem with philosopher Donski's ideas of a continuous circulation of people within the EU – some

countries have not seen so many circulating back. Even if there are signs in that direction now, as we have seen, the decade behind us has been worrisome for many countries. In the case of Lithuania, between 2009 and 2019, almost 500,000 people emigrated – while 225,000 immigrated (of which 160,000 were Lithuanian citizens).

These figures have caused tremendous problems for the country. Companies lack manpower in many areas, particularly engineers and other professions in the construction industry, not to mention health care: the lack of doctors and nurses and other health professionals is immense. In the latest wave of returnees, some doctors have also returned – but not that many. And why is that?

I sent that question to Tadas Kananavicius, a doctor managing a network of Lithuanian doctors in the UK. He replied:

"I know some doctors who moved back. However, contrary to the common impression, there are not that many of them. Medical governance hasn't changed much since Soviet times, which stops many willing doctors from returning. Of course, there are examples when outstanding individuals are moving back and trying to lead the change."

OF COURSE, THIS IS a crucial question for all people who are contemplating moving back home, particularly those with a higher education: how much has my country changed? How open is it to new ideas? On the non-governmental platform *Global Lithuanian Leaders*, connecting talented individuals all over the world, Executive Director Aušra Kukelkaitė is often confronted with such questions. How does she answer?

"It's much better than before, but not good. Human rights are still lacking in many aspects, for example, how we treat people with mental illness or with other kinds of disabilities. And we still have the issue of LBTG rights. Yes, it's become better, but it's depressing to read how the Kaunas authorities are trying to stop the Gay Pride march this coming Saturday."

She shows me the article in which the authorities state that it would be inconvenient to march along the main pedestrian street due to construction work – but basketball fans were allowed to march along the same route recently!

"Surveys show that people still emigrate from Lithuania partly because of its lack of respect for human rights. These attitudes that still remain in our society are also an obstacle when we want to attract more investment from our diaspora."

Furthermore, she hears from people who have left Lithuania or who are thinking about leaving that the work ethic in some Lithuanian companies has to improve.

"People say that they are not treated with respect by their employers, that the hierarchy is still very present. The idea of flat organizations has not spread as much as one would like."

At the same time, she is eager to emphasize how much the country has changed.

"I meet many of those who have returned, and they are often surprised by what they see. They tell me that Lithuania has changed much more than they would have thought; they had a much bleaker picture of the society they had left. They didn't know what a fertile ground we have for start-ups and other innovative companies."

THE OVERRIDING CHALLENGE for all companies that want to grow, in Lithuania as well as in most other countries in the EU, is the lack of manpower in certain sectors. And here comes yet another challenge for Lithuania, argues Aušra Kukelkaitė**:**

"If you want to thrive as a country, you have to be more open to foreigners. It's getting better, but many people are still holding onto the idea that the Lithuanian nation would be threatened by too many immigrants. Our history of being close to extinction cannot stop us from developing as a modern nation."

And she adds an important point:

"If we want more Lithuanians to return to our country, we cannot at the same time be skeptical about other immigrants. These two issues are closely connected, not least because many of the returning Lithuanians have foreign spouses."

Ognyan Georgiev, who conducted the study of returning Bulgarians, agrees with her. And he uses a term which has become popular around the world: "the battle for talent".

"It is a new battlefield; you compete with other cities all over Europe to attract the people you need. Of course, the cities of Eastern and Central Europe are part of this battle, even if they don't always realize it."

And poorer regions with smaller towns? Are they totally outside of this battle for talent?

"The big divide in living conditions in Europe today is not primarily between nations: it's between regions. Scarcely populated rural regions in virtually all countries are facing major challenges."

Liam Patuzzi at the Migration Policy Institute is also rather pessimistic. When Eastern and Central European countries now see more returning citizens, it's the cities and rural areas close to the cities that are the winners.

"Depopulated regions are stuck in a vicious circle: people move because of lack of work and services, which leads to more services disappearing when tax revenues decline which, in turn, leads to more people leaving. It's understandable that people returning to their home countries don't choose to live in such regions."

But during the pandemic we have learned to work online. Could this development offer hope to regions that have seen fewer returning citizens? Is it worthwhile for them to tailor campaigns for the diaspora with the message that they can work close to the beautiful countryside?

"It's a possibility; locally tailored strategies could have some effect. But they can't stop the general trend in Europe of the growing differences in living standards between regions."

Påhl Ruin is a journalist and freelance writer based in Stockholm.

"My goal is to break the narrative that Lithuania had nothing to do with the Holocaust"

Silvia Kučėnaitė Foti it the author of the book *The Nazi's Granddaughter: How I discovered my Grandfather was a War Criminal*. After going through major trauma when discovering her grandfather was not the war hero she heard about but a Nazi collaborator, she started to investigate her grandfather's past. Considering Jewish sources along with the Lithuanian sources Foti questions the Lithuanian official narrative denying any involvement in the Holocaust.

by **Martina Urbinati**

MARTINA URBINATI: **You've been working on this book for 20 years. Can you just tell me what convinced you to embark on such a Herculean task? What have been the greatest limitations that you faced during the writing process?**

SILVIA KUČĖNAITĖ FOTI: My mother passed away in the year 2000, only 60 years old. On her deathbed, she asked me to write the book she never managed to finish.. She had been working on this book about her father Jonas Noreika for 40 years. I grew up always listening to stories about him, about what a wonderful hero he was, how he fought against the Communists. In 1997, I went with my mother to Lithuania, and she received the Cross of the Vytis[1] from president Algirdas Brazauskas. He was very proud to be standing next to her when she received it.

At that time when I took on the task, I thought I was going to write a book about my grandfather, this wonderful hero. That's what I really thought. I did not know anything about his involvement in the Holocaust.

Once standing in the school named after him in Lithuania, the director mentioned the killings of the Jewish community that were ordered by my grandfather, and I almost fainted on the spot. When I came back to Chicago and talked to a lot of relatives about it, they said that it was communist propaganda. And I believed them for a long time

Silvia Kučėnaitė Foti dedicated 20 years writing the story of her grandfather, Jonas Noreika, known as General Storm in World War II, Lithuania. Although he is still venerated as an anti-Soviet resistance hero, she found evidence of his collaboration with the Nazis. Right: Memorial plaque at the Library of Academy of science in Vilnius.

because I loved my grandfather, even though I never met him. It literally took me almost ten years until I finally got to the point where I wanted to research what happened during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania.

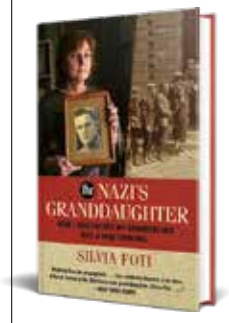
The biggest obstacle that I faced was my own psychological denial over it. When I finally changed my mind, I discovered his anti-Semitic pamphlet *Raise Your Head, Lithuanian*. When I finished reading this, I wanted to burn it because I wanted to protect his reputation. But as a journalist, I knew I couldn't. Later, I also found a document that my grandfather had signed in 1941 while he was district chair of the Šiauliai region, in northwestern Lithuania. Basically, he ordered that all Jews and all "half-Jews" in the whole region to be rounded up and sent to a ghetto that would be created from scratch in the small town of Žagarė on the border with Latvia. It didn't take me long to find out that the holiday known as "Yom Kippur" was purposely chosen to massacre all the 2,000 Jews in that ghetto.

The Nazi's granddaughter took me 20 years to write. Ten years were just taken up with the psychological denial I went through. As part of that process, I did research on his anti-Soviet resistance, whereas in the remaining ten years I was digging into the Holocaust.

MU: Did something eventually change when you started to find evidence of your grandfather's collaboration with the Nazis? Was there a moment when you questioned your identity? Finally, how hard was it to take a critical stand when writing?

SKF: Yes, it was very hard. It was maybe the hardest thing I had to do in my life. Even though I was born in Chicago, I was raised very Catholic, but also very Lithuanian. When I went to Kindergarten I didn't even speak English because that's how the Lithuanian community was. They wanted to inculcate their children to speak the language and to feel this patriotism before they even went to an American school.

It was so hard. I almost went into a little crisis over it. It felt like a huge betrayal to me. I saw that it was not just my grandfather: Even though my book is just about my grandfather, he was not the only one. Then I started putting the picture together and then I got angry at Lithuania for lying. And I began to sense that it was an intentional lie because they wanted to protect their reputation. It's better to look like you're just the victim than also to be a victimizer. So, I said to myself that it was about time to write the best story I could.



The Nazi's Granddaughter. How I discovered my Grandfather was a War Criminal (Regnery History, 2021, 376 pages).

MU: Are you afraid of being heavily criticized for the subject of your work? Or was this part of your aim?

SKF: The worst part for me was going through my own denial; then of course I know that others are going to go through it. Nevertheless, I think my book is practically unassailable. Besides being very careful with my research, I had to get a degree in creative non-fiction because I did not want to just assemble facts. I wanted to create a narrative that would really draw a reader into understanding what happened. I tried to combine the Jewish and the Lithuanian narratives into one, considering all the Jewish sources along with the Lithuanian sources. And when I put them side by side, I soon realized that the Jewish sources were much stronger.

MU: How important was the role of Lithuanian Jews' testimonies for your work?

SKF: It was everything. I found one relative who was ten years old at the time. Thanks to her account, I discovered that my grandfather took over a home previously owned by Jews and moved his entire family into it. That memory she had was like the last piece of the puzzle. I had assembled a lot of other information by then: let me tell you this anecdote.

Here in Chicago, I have a really good friend who was a journalist for *The Chicago Sun Times* and is Jewish. I had been telling him about this project since the nineties. He knew me even before I discovered the whole Holocaust side of the story. In the year 2013, which was the year I decided to go to Lithuania to conduct my research, he told me about his recent Holocaust tour experience, which I found very moving. A few days later, I called him back with the idea of asking his Holocaust tour guide to take me to the places where my grandfather was involved in killing Jews.

"There has been a lot of pushback by the nationalists, but I think more Lithuanians are now willing to look at what happened in the Holocaust with some honesty."

When I contacted the Holocaust guide in Lithuania, who was the director of the Sugihara museum[2] in Kaunas, at first he did not want to do it because I think he felt uncomfortable. After a few weeks he contacted me again and accepted: indeed, he was very instrumental in giving me the Jewish perspective.

MU: As for today, how did Lithuanian authorities react to Lithuanian Jews who asked to end the celebration of Noreika as a hero? Do you think that such request was welcomed or pushed back?

SKF: I think there has been a lot of push back. Grant Gochin, a Lithuanian Jew living in California, has launched a lawsuit against the Genocide Center of Lithuania, which is like the historical remembrance Institute of Lithuania in charge of preserving my grandfather's heroic memory.

He had gone through every single possible court in Lithuania, and they all ruled against it. Now he has just filed a lawsuit to the European Court of Human Rights, and we have already combined forces on this for three years.

At the same time, the Genocide Center is having trouble because more and more historians are now rebelling against it. It was based on their research that they lifted up my grandfather's anticommunist side and they completely overlooked or ignored what happened in the Holocaust. There has been a lot of pushback by the nationalists, but I think more Lithuanians are now willing to look at what happened in the Holocaust with some honesty.

MU: Was there a specific historical moment when Noreika started to be celebrated as a hero?

SKF: During WWII, he led a rebellion against the second invasion of the communists in Lithuania. He tried to unify all the partisans, but in the end, he did not succeed. His bravery was the reason for which he was initially celebrated. He was soon caught by the KGB and spent over a year in jail, until he was executed in 1947. As part of the Soviet Union, no Lithuanian heroes were allowed. Another major problem was that the Soviet Union would not count Jewish deaths in the Holocaust; they called them Soviet citizens. That also contributed to masking the Holocaust in Lithuania. So going to your original question, my grandfather was resurrected as a hero after Lithuania's independence in 1990 as a nation-building strategy: the patriotic narrative prevailed in the general euphoria of that time.

MU: Do you think that your book will create a new momentum for the reconfiguration of the WWII collective memory? Or on the contrary, is there something else that needs to happen in order to open a dialogue about Lithuania's memory of the Holocaust?

SKF: I do think that the book will help. My goal at this point is to break the narrative that Lithuania had nothing to do with the Holocaust. Again, my goal is to help Lithuanians to come to terms with their dark history. They did not even have a chance to do that, because Lithuania was subjugated under communist rule for those 50 years.

The historical Jewish quarters of Naujoji Žagarė (New Žagarė) in Joniskis district in Šiauliai county. Noreika was appointed governor of the Šiauliai district in August 3, 1941. He issued orders on sending all the Jews of the district to ghettos and on the confiscation and distribution of their property.

So I'm hoping that my book will contribute to Lithuania following the example of other democratic European nations.

MU: In your opinion, is it possible to create a comprehensive understanding (and not conflicting) memory within society?

SKF: It's possible, but people have to be willing to reconstruct, which is what I did in my book. I only did it for Jonas Noreika, so others have to do it for the rest of the country. I took the Jewish perspective and the Lithuanian perspective on equal terms, whereas I think in Lithuania they only gave the Lithuanian perspective priority and almost discounted the Jewish viewpoint.

MU: Your experience and your work are absolutely fascinating and will inevitably inspire current and future generations to question official narratives of the past. To conclude our interview, I would like you to share a message with memory researchers or more generally any young person who might be tempted to investigate his/her own family's personal history.

SKF: I don't know ... be very careful. It is not just looking at the historical facts, but more of an expansion of my heart. It is quite easy to look at the heroic side of history; conversely, it is not so much fun when you come across horrible events in which your ancestors were involved. It does sort of affect your own identity. My faith has helped me the most, as well as my journalism training.

Martina Urbinati holds a MA in Social Sciences at the University of Bologna and was a trainee at the Centre of East European and International Studies (ZOiS). Martina's main research interests include urban memory and conflicting interpretations of the historical past in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States.

references

1 The Order of the Cross of Vytis is a Lithuanian presidential award conferred for heroic defence of Lithuania's freedom and independence.

2 Chiune Sugihara was a Japanese diplomat. He was appointed vice-consul of the Japanese Consulate in Kaunas (interwar capital of Lithuania until the Soviet annexation) in 1939. During his service, he provided hand-written visas to Polish and Lithuanian Jews, eventually saving thousand lives. For more information, see: Sugihara, Y., Sugihara, H., & Silver, L. (1995), *Visas for life*. South San Francisco, CA: Edu-Comm. Plus.

WINE IN THE SOVIET FOOD REGIME

EXPERIENCES FROM ARMENIA AND GEORGIA

by **Paulina Rytkönen**

abstract

Wine constitutes a corner-stone in the past and present of Armenian and Georgian societies. During the Soviet era, the production, distribution and consumtion of agro-food products, including wine, became elements in the geopolitical organization of food and agricultural relations of the USSR and of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance Reconstruction (after 1965). The Armenian wine industry was restructured and its main focus became the production of sherry, while the Georgian wine industry focused on wine production, most of which was exported to Russia. The wine sector became restructured, vineyards were collectivized and their management was centralized and a far reaching division of labour was implemented at industry level. This article offers a glimpse of the economic history of wine in Armenia and Georgia between the 1920's and 1991.

KEYWORDS: Wine history, Soviet food regime, Armenia, Georgia.

The history of wine in Armenia and Georgia dates to 6 000–8 000 years ago and includes the domestication of vines, the invention of wine and development of production and consumption practices.[1] Wine has been a key element in peasant agriculture as well as in the construction of national identities both in Armenia and Georgia. Wine has been used in religious ceremonies and to connect the region to Christianization in the 4th century AD. Many centuries ago, a peasantry-based system evolved in which mountain pastoralism was combined with orchard cultivation, wine making, and production of grains. Moreover, the region has in different periods been occupied by foreign powers.[2] During these occupations, the production and consumption of wines has filled an important role maintaining local identities.[3]

This was also the case when Armenia and Georgia were

The Armenian monestary Khor Virap on the foot of Mount Ararat is surrounded by vineyards.

PHOTO: MAKS KAROCHKIN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

incorporated into the Soviet Union. For the wine industries in Armenia and Georgia, this meant a shift from private ownership, to central planning, collectivization of vineyards and wineries, establishment basic institutional infrastructure (hygiene regulations, production protocols, etc), territorial organization of production (i.e. wine regions) and the creation of an intra-regional sourcing system in which wine was one of many other products.[4]

WINE CONSTITUTES a corner-stone in the past and present of Armenian and Georgian societies. But, while the ancient history of wine has been well studied, the last 100 years have been less studied. The aim of this article is to shed light on the impact of the Soviet Union on the wine industries in Armenia and Georgia. Although it is impossible to offer a complete overview of the subject, the purpose of this article is to open a new window to the economic history of Armenia and Georgia during the Soviet Union. The following question will be addressed: How did the organization of food and agricultural relations during the Soviet era influence, develop and constraint the wine industries in Armenia and Georgia?

Methods and sources

This study started out using an inductive approach. Initial interviews and initial reading was done departing from the author's previous knowledge about the economic history of wine, but without a specific knowledge of the cases. A few exploratory interviews were conducted in both countries. The analysis of the initial interviews were used to outline the rest of the study and formulate a hypothesis on the history of the wine industry during the Soviet food regime (SFR). Fieldwork was

Rtveli is a traditional vintage and rural harvest holiday in Georgia accompanied by feasts, musical events and other celebrations. *Rtveli in Kakhetia* by Grigory Gagarin, 1847.

PHOTO: TEMUR888/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Decorative *Kvevri* of Twins Old Cellar Wine house in Napareuli, Telavi, Geogia. Kvevris are large earthenware vessels used for the fermentation, storage and ageing of traditional Georgian wine.

conducted in 2017, 2018 and 2019 in Georgia, and during a longer period in 2019 in Armenia. The main approach in this study is triangulation,[5] although phenomenography and text analysis were used as complementary methods to analyze collected data.

14 in-depth interviews were conducted in Georgia, four with winery owners and eight with winery managers and one winemaker, most of which were conducted in the wineries. In Armenia 14 interviews were conducted in total, seven of which were conducted with winery owners and three with winery managers. The interviews included questions regarding company history, investors, market conditions, company strategy, past and current target markets, products, grapes and other issues associated with production including information about oenologists, technology, domestic and foreign influences and general information about the industry in each country. Interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders at respective ministries, the Georgian Wine and Grape Growers Association, FAO Armenian division, EVN (Jerevan Wine Academy), wine historians and local scholars with connection to two scholars (one in Armenia and one in Georgia) who are also involved in the industry. Interviews were anonymized and codified.[6] Additional informal interviews and discussions about the wine industry, its history and the quality of statistical data were also conducted with statistical experts at the national statistical services in both countries, local historians and university scholars.

"GRAPE PRODUCTION AND ELABORATION OF WINE BECAME ORGANIZED AND RUN BY COOPERATIVES."

Interviews were processed and analyzed departing from a phenomenographic approach, an inductive method used in the search of differences and variations in human interpretation, perceptions and views of a specific phenomenon or issue.[7] Phenomenography uses specific protocols to differentiate perceptions of different informants. Perceptions, opinions, and statements are contrasted, codified, and grouped into comprehensive categories. Identified categories thereafter are linked to theoretical concepts, official descriptions, or generalized ideas identified as being the framework of the study. In this case, food regime theory and generalized perceptions of the Soviet Union found in previous research have been used (See table 1). Categorization in this article is based on interview results and information material provided by companies that recount their respective histories.[8] As historical sources are scarce and existing archives were not possible to access, other sources, for example previous research, have been used.

THE PHENOMENOGRAPHIC analysis also helped to identify a suitable time division of the studied period (see figure 1) between around 1923 to 1991. After 1991 the wine industry experienced a period of transition that landed in a totally new orientation and industrial structure.

Written sources, especially website content was used to trace the story of different companies, or of the ancestors of current owners during the Soviet period. Superlatives and other information that is used to convince consumers to buy a product have been omitted from the analysis, while very specific information such as name of a deported ancestor, or confiscation of the company has been included. Some of the topics identified are: De-kulakization, technological development, land expansion and upstarts during the SFR. Although it is necessary to have a critical approach to stories told in retrospect by people who did not experience the events themselves, these stories can still be considered as valuable and varied testimonies of events that influenced the industry during the Soviet regime.

Figure 1. The chronology of the Soviet food regime from a wine perspective

Source: Own elaboration derived from previous knowledge, interview results and content analysis of webpages. Note: 1940—1945 were left out because agro-food relations within Soviet food regime (SFR) appear to have been disrupted during the war. Moreover, no data was found for this period.

Triangulation offers a good help to avoid statements that are not backed by known historical facts. In total 17 of the 40 home pages of Armenian wineries and 78 of the 180 wineries in Georgia were analysed using qualitative text analysis. The text analysis disclosed the same periodization and categorization of the analysis of interviews, but it also offered information about national and international cooperation and main business orientation in previous periods.

A clear challenge in the available sources is that the quality of historical statistics is uncertain.[9] According to the Armenian and Georgian statistical services, data on production is unreliable, therefore it was not possible to elaborate times series with production or trade data within the USSR. However, data on number of hectares under vine was found and discussed with local experts who claim that the number of hectares under vine for industrial production is accurate, but that figures do not include the numerous family farms that produced wine for domestic consumption. Production in family farms was however marginal compared to industrial production. Area under vine provides no information about how much wine was produced, because it says nothing about the type of grapes and output per hectare, but it can help us understand larger trends and changes.

Food regimes – a conceptual discussion

The history of the wine sector is closely associated with issues of local and global power, culture, religion, geography, trade, and resources/capital. Therefore, a fruitful way to study the wine sector during any historical period is to focus on the geopolitical organization of food and agricultural relations, e.g. *a food regime*. This approach enables a holistic understanding that includes endogenous and exogenous sources of influence during a period and include the underlying geopolitical structures and institutional and structural sources of power within a system.[10] The food regime approach poses questions about where and by whom food is produced and consumed and connects food with its socioeconomic and environmental consequences, but it also links food to international relations far beyond the local, the regional and the national context. It also studies food and agricultural relations through a systemic lens.[11] Friedmann (1989) and McMichael (2009)[12] argue that food regimes exist during limited periods of time and include an institutional and structural power base, a mode of regulation and the impact of endogenous and/or exogenous forces. The mode of regulation in a food regime conditions the economic space of all economic agents and this is especially true for the wine industry because wine has throughout its history been an important international trade item.

The food regime approach is flexible and visualizes interplay between changing societal structures, rules, regulations, market conditions and responses of businesses and industries within a system. Moreover, previous research argues that food regimes appear during a limited period in time, therefore a strict timeline was developed and used to label the previously known food regimes.[13] In addition, while previous research has an Anglo-centric focus by placing the UK (during the late 19th century and early 20th century) and the US (1950's–1970's and 1980's until today) as hubs around which geopolitical food and agricultural relations evolve, a supporting argument in this article is that the USSR constituted an additional axis around which a different type of food regime evolved.

FROM PREVIOUS RESEARCH we only have glimpses of the SFR. One such glimpse is what became labelled as "the great grain robbery", when the Soviet Union after having a severe crop failure in 1972 managed to purchase vast amounts of cheap grains from the US at a sub-price.[14] Some researchers consider that the consequences of the "the great grain robbery" were that while famine was avoided in the USSR, poor countries that were dependent on imports of cheap (subsidized) grains from the US experienced a severe famine in 1972–1973 instead.[15] After this event the UN World Food Program was created. However, this is only a moment's picture of the SFR, therefore more research is needed.

In this article it will not be possible to thoroughly study all aspects of the SFR. Instead, in order to keep focus on the issue at stake, the following concepts will be used in the analysis: The structural and institutional basis of the SFR; Endogenous and exogenous forces influencing the wine industry; The outcomes and consequences of the SFR for the wine industries in Armenia and Georgia. As the SFR was not static, but evolved and changed over time, a chronology that will help us understand the changing contexts of the SFR was developed.

During the initial period a new structural and institutional form was implemented and a new mode of regulation was adopted. The entire agro-food sector was collectivized and a process of de-kulakization, integration and re-organization was set in motion.[16] One of the most distinct organizational features of the wine industry was establish already at the start of the SFR. Grape production and elaboration of wine became organized and run by cooperatives. Although it is not possible to get deeper into firm structures in this article, a distinct feature that emerges

Fidel Castro and Nikita Khrushchev drinking wine from a drinking horn in the Soviet Republic of Georgia, 1963.

Soviet posters and ads for wines.

after summing up results from previous literature, interviews and field studies is that wine elaboration seems to a large extent have been disconnected from grape production. In the long run, wine quality was negatively impacted because winemakers lacked control over the raw material and vineyard managers only needed to meet productivity targets. Thus, there were no longer incentives to work for higher product quality.[17]

DURING THE SECOND period the agro-food industries in respective countries were restructured and/or modernized and investments in more advanced technologies for large scale production were developed and introduced[18]. In 1949 the economic collaboration within the USSR was deepened and started to expand and include new partners mainly in Eastern Europe, after the creation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance Reconstruction (CMEA).[19] From 1965 and onwards, the SFR expanded as new countries were added to the CMEA (for example Cuba in 1972, Vietnam in 1978, Finland in 1973, Irak and Mexico in 1975, Nicaragua in 1984 and Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Angola, Moçambique, Laos and South Yemen in 1986). Some of the main characteristics of the third period were the development of food aid to Latin American and African countries and technical assistance to potentially "new" CMEA members, which was driven as one of the strategies of the USSR during the cold war. At least at beginning of the period there were also some investments and technical development. The decline of the SFR actually started before 1987 and was characterised by lack of investments and technical obsolesce.[20]

A historical background to Armenian and Georgian wines

The ancient history of wine in Armenia and Georgia became established after archaeologists discovered traces of wine pottery in the Gadachrili Gora village settlement which proved to be 8,000-years-old. The settlement is located close to the current border between Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.[21] During this early period wine was one of several elements that contributed to the foundation of peasant agriculture in the area.[22] The same type of artefacts, practices and methods were discovered in the excavation of the Areni-1 cave in Armenia, dated to 6,100 years ago. The Areni-1 site shows a large wine production facility with several historical layers.[23] Findings from both sites bind the present to the past through practices and artefacts that were historically reproduced in the peasantry-based system that evolved over history and that to some extent still features the present-day wine industry.[24] And especially of wine made for home consumption.[25] Because of this ancient history, many winemakers, especially in Georgia market their wineries as "the cradle of wine".[26]

"ARCHAEOLOGISTS DISCOVERED TRACES OF WINE POTTERY IN THE GADACHRILI GORA VILLAGE SETTLEMENT WHICH PROVED TO BE 8,000-YEARS-OLD."

The first wave of modernization, especially in Georgia, took place during the 19th Century after both countries were annexed to the Russian Empire. Thereafter, the economic integration with Russia, as well as the development of new transport alternatives (such as the railways) allowed for a higher economic exchange between Southern Caucasus and Russia. In Armenia,

Table 1. Main features of the Soviet food regime and its development phases

Concepts	1922–1940	1945–1960	1965–1986	1987–1991
Institutional and structural power base	Soviet supply system, intra- state planning (establishment of 5-year plans), cooperative form.			
Mode of regulation (main sources of influence)	Dekulakization, confiscation and creating a new institutional frame based on 5-year plans.	Internal consolidation of production and distribution within the USSR. Enlargement of the SFR through new wine countries.	Wines, mainly from "new" SFR countries is exported to Western countries to provide foreign currencies needed to import key inputs from the west. Modernization and investments in the industry.	Gradual decline, many factories were abandoned, and the industry was impacted by the decline of the SFR.
Endogenous forces	Exceptional historical and geographical conditions for wine production.			
Exogenous forces	Ideologically driven efforts to eradicate traditional forms of production, and re-shape the wine industry with focus on productivity increase and change consumption patterns (from wine to Russian vodka)			

Source: Author's own elaboration departing from interviews, webpages and previous research.

the lack of an organized market in the early 19th century in combination with surplus production created incentives to distill the surplus. Distillation made it possible to store the product (Armenian brandy). However, in the late 19th century, wine production had become an organized trade and in the 1870's there were two distinct products, namely fortified wines/distilled products and wine (both dry and semi-sweet). In addition, wine regions started to emerge. Production was quite limited as the total area under vine was just under 20 thousand hectares and the majority of the population was poor. At that time there were 1150 wine presses only in the Yerevan Governorate, but wine was not only produced from grapes, pomegranate was also quite important as input to wine production.[27]

Wines, brandy and vodka were exported from Armenia to St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Warsaw during the first years of 20th century. In fact, it was the increasing export revenues from brandy exports that allowed the wine industry to invest in modernization programs. It is also during this period in which the large brandy company led by Nikolay Shustov, Ararat was established.[28]

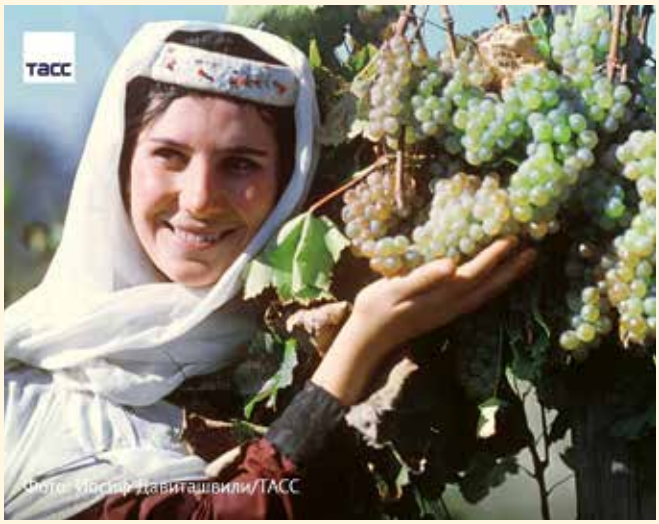
IN GEORGIA THIS PERIOD was quite different from the corresponding period in Armenia. After 1820 a number of estates were founded inspired by French chateaux. Some of these are Dadiani Estate (in Zugdidi), Tsinandali Estate (in Tsinandali Village), Chăteaux Mukhrani (in Natakhtari-Tsilkani-Mukhrani), Vazisubani Estate (in Vazisubani) and many others.[29] These estates introduced state-of-the-art European technologies and European grapes were used with the intention of replacing native grapes with foreign varieties. Investments during the 19th century were considerable, but this concerned only a few wineries and a dual industrial structure emerged, with a small but modern wine industry that focused on exports, while a large artisan sector with strong connection to peasant agriculture using ancient technologies and that focused on local markets remained. The high-profile, high-quality wines were exported and in spite of the intention of replacing local varieties with French grapes, the local varieties prevailed. Wines were exported mainly to Russia, but managed to find their way also to some international wine competitions, such as the Brussels Exhibition (international wine competition) in 1888 and 1907.[30]

Wine in the Soviet food regime (SFR)

Based on the chronology established above and using the main theoretical concepts in the food regime theory, it is possible to identify the main phases and features of the SFR and how it influenced the wine industry between 1922–1991.

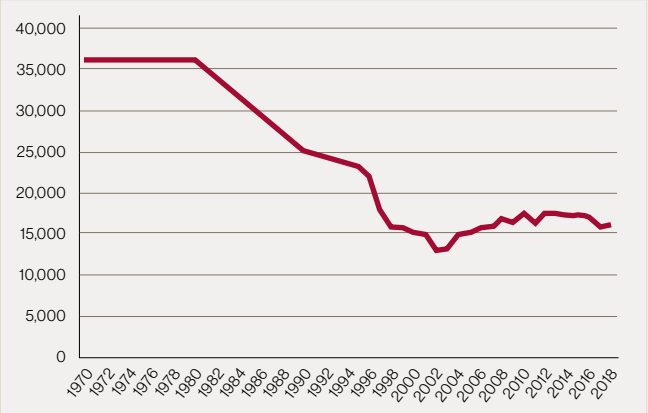
The content in table 1 (above) [31] is the result of the interview based phenomenographic analysis and of the text analysis conducted on written company information and webpage content and previous research. As can be seen above, the wine industry was affected by processes and changes that influenced all production, distribution, and consumption of food. During the formation of the SFR (1922–1940) private ownership was eradicated and the institutional and organizational foundations of the SFR were established. Wineries were especially affected by de-kulakization since elaboration and storage of wines requires a certain degree of capitalization.[32] The new orientation that followed on the articulation of the SFR, is according to experts, likely to have caused the loss of substantial amount of endemic vitis vinifera vines and of knowledge, know-how and cultural heritage.[33]

In the subsequent period the structure of the SFR seems to



Picking grapes in Georgia, postcard from Soviet news agency TASS 1971.

Diagram 1. Number of hectares planted with vineyards in Armenia 1970–2018



Source: Own elaboration from N. Scanell, J. Newton and R. Ohanian.

have become more mature and a new institutional infrastructure concerning hygiene regulations, production protocols, etc. was developed, in addition the idea of wine regions were created and found their place in the process of market integration and production coordination that became realized after WWII.[34]

AN IMPORTANT ISSUE is the post war expansion of the Soviet sphere when Bulgaria, Hungary Czechoslovakia, Romania, became members of the CMEA. This is especially important because the mentioned countries are all wine producers.[35] Especially after 1965 when CMEA countries needed to export goods to western countries in exchange for foreign currencies (mainly USD) to pay for imports of oil, machinery and other things that were not possible to produce within the Soviet sphere. Wine was one of the commodities exported and especially Hungary and Bulgaria played an important role in the exports of wine to Western countries, while Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan were more important as suppliers within the CMEA.[36] According to analysis made by Cochrane (1989)[37] production of grapes shows no positive or negative trend for the CMEA countries except for the USSR where production of grapes seems to have almost doubled. Although the figures were analysed by the USDA before publication, they need to be interpreted with caution, but an increase is consistent with the analysis of area under vine (see graphs 1–2). From 1985 Gorbachev's "dry laws" (partial prohibition campaign) were implemented, which negatively impacted wine production .[38] During the 1980's the SFR started to decline and it came to an abrupt end with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

"DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LENIN'S NEP (UNTIL 1927), WINERY OWNERS BECAME ARRESTED, SOME EVEN ASSASSINATED."

Armenia

Just before 1922, Armenia lost part of the province of Ararat as a consequence of the Turkish-Armenian war. The Ararat province was and still is important as a production area with soils and climatic conditions that are optimal for wine production. Thus, the Armenian wine industry suffered a considerable territorial lost just before the establishment of the SFR. The war had also led to a widespread impoverishment amongst Armenians.[39] Thus, the economic pre-conditions to support the growth of an industry were limited and wine production was characterized by its low quality. The nationalization of companies and factories was initiated in the early 1920's when one of the largest factories, the Shustov factory was nationalized in 1920, thereafter several other companies were nationalized. In 1923 the state-owned Ararat Trust was established to organize production and exports of wines and spirits and in 1927, the wholesale cooperative Hayginkoop was established. Ararat Trust and Hayginkoop coordinated their activities from 1930 and in 1937 the Ararat Trust became the state alcohol monopoly.[40]

The production and food sourcing goals of the USSR were rapidly adopted. Armenia became a net importer of food, hence wine production might have been regarded as unnecessary luxury. [41] During the implementation of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), until 1927, winery owners became arrested, some even assassinated and plenty of accounts are found in interviews, webpages and literature about incarcerations and how ancestors were labelled as insurgents.[42] Here, a representative example of such stories:

> **The vineyard was founded by our great grandfather. He moved back to Armenia from Boston in the 1920's and**

PHOTO: SEROUJ/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In the Areni cave in Armenia, archaeologists have unearthed the earliest known winery, an estimated 6,100 years old.

PHOTO: DICKRAN KOUYMJIAN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

This wine themed mosaic with Armenian inscription dating back to the 6th century was found near the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem.

> **bought the vineyard. He was shot and his property was confiscated by the Bolsheviks.**[43]

Another important aspect for the industry at the start of the SFR is the creation of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region in 1924, an enclave within Azerbaijan where 94 per cent of the population at the time were Armenians.[44] This is of importance for the wine industry, as one of the unique features of Armenian wines is that the oak used in barrels originates from Nagorno Karabach.[45] This particular oak adds a distinct cherry tone to the palate, which today is claimed to be an important and distinctive element in Armenian wine. Once wine production became organized under the SFR, the main orientation of the industry was to produce sherry that was used as an input in brandy production.[46]

ARMENIAN WINE WAS considered as marginal within the USSR and is for example not mentioned in the overall statistics of the USSR.[47] In addition to brandy, a limited production of table wines and sparkling wines took place. Although records are not complete, 19 of currently existing wine and alcohol producing companies were established between 1877 and 1980, most of which were established during the SFR. 16 of the 19 focused on production of sherry-based brandy, remaining three focused on wine and fruit wine.

The displacement of wine production also caused a decline in wine consumption as many consumers preferred less expensive Russian Vodka.[48] It is reasonable to conclude that the decision to focus on brandy production in Armenia instead of wine is motivated by the low purchasing power of the population and that quality of wine was poor at the start of the SFR.[49] In addition, Armenian brandy production and exports were well established by the late 19th century and the specific terroir element in brandy production using local grape varieties and the sensory quality provided by the Nagorno Karabakh oak, made Armenian brandy an excellent candidate for exports. Several informants stated that Armenian brandy was exported to other parts of the USSR, but was also well-known internationally. A reasonable hypothesis is that Armenian brandy helped the USSR to acquire foreign currencies, which was an important contribution of the SFR to the economy of CMEA countries.

The number of hectares under vine decreased after 1970[50] and Gorbachev's attempt to reduce alcoholism in the USSR through the 'dry-laws' led to the destruction of thousands of hectares of vines in the 1980's.[51] Consequently, the number of hectares under vine dropped from just over 32 thousand hectares to just above 25 thousand hectares. However, in some cases such as Bulgaria, production started to decline already in the 1970's.[52] After 1991 widespread poverty affected Armenia and wine consumption fell even more. Today, there are around 40 wineries in Armenia and a long-term effect is that Armenians lost knowledge and know-how of how to produce wine.[53]

Georgia

Georgia became incorporated to Soviet rule, first through the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (1922–1936) and thereafter into the USSR until 1991. Georgian economy benefited from the New Economic Policy (NEP) during the initial years. Although all land became confiscated, peasants were initially allowed to keep the land that was granted to them during the 19th century. Lenin's policy of Central planning in agriculture was established with the first central plan for agriculture in 1928[54] however, economic planning structure was fully developed in 1934.[55]

The NEP promoted modernization and a rapid increase in production of inexpensive industrial food. However, food production was insufficient to meet the needs created by the accelerated rate of urbanization caused by the shift in economic structure. Food prices were set by central authorities, but agriculture could not meet the increase in demand. Agriculture was

Vineyards belonging to Chateau Zegani in the Georgian district Kakheti.

PHOTO: CHATEAU ZEGANI/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

inefficient and production rates fell to levels below the 1917 harvests.[56] Consequently, diversified agricultural production was replaced with monoculture and a higher degree of specialization. For example, land previously used to produce wheat became replanted with tea and grapes, both of which were labor intensive.[57] Some new crops, such as tea, tobacco and citrus were also established in reclaimed lands in Western Georgia, where large areas were drained. Moreover, small plots of land were leased to peasant families. In the drained areas agricultural output rose rapidly.[58]

IN THE 1930'S a campaign was launched to promote farm collectivization. In 1931 the "War against Kulaks" was initiated as the First Secretary of the Central Committee declared that "the Kulaks as a class must be destroyed".[59] This followed a decision of the communist party from 1930 in which it was stipulated that Kulaks were to be removed from their land, that agricultural land, vineyards, wine cellars and agricultural equipment must be confiscated and should be handed over to the kolkhozes; that livestock should be confiscated; Kulaks activities became restricted and they were forced to do compulsory "public labour".[60] Thus, the wine industry and large farms in Georgia were especially targeted by the "de-kulakization" campaign. Persecution had severe consequences for private ownership. One vineyard owner describes the events to which their family was exposed to through the following statement on their webpage:

> **In 1939, Piruza and his brother were turned into 'Kulaks' by the Soviet regime as they refused to join the 'collective' group. Their homes, lands, cellar and all the items of the house were deprived. Fortunately, qvevris were not brought out of the land. Joseph found the shelter in Tusheti and only later returned to the village in the 1960s, he had no son in his descendants. Piruza was arrested, judged and sent to Russia in distant Siberia. He never returned.**[61]

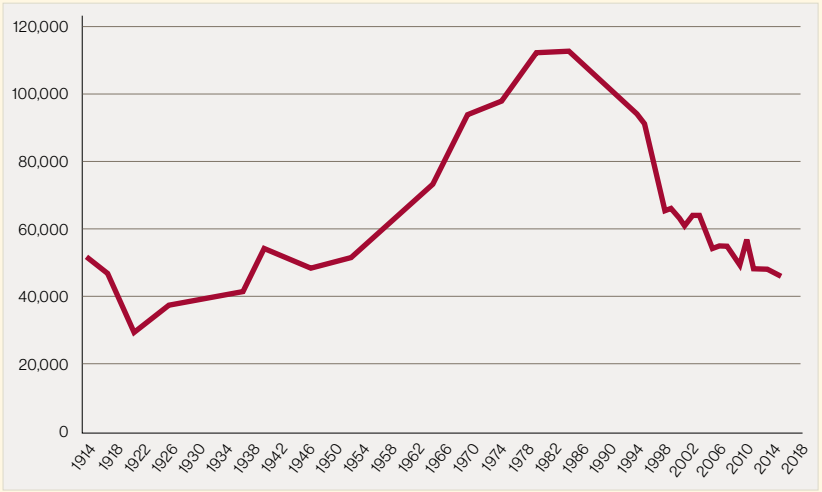
The process of confiscation and collectivization was by no means a peaceful process and violent clashes took place between state representatives and opponents to collectivization.[62] Results from conducted interviews confirm that private property was confiscated and that the equipment and buildings which were left in the former estate wineries deteriorated and/or was destroyed.[63] For example, in Chateaux Mukhrani all qvevri (large clay vessels) were used to store fuel and the wine cellar was demolished,[64] while other wineries were abandoned.[65]

While large farms, especially in the Kakheti region became collectivized, in the western parts of the country, large areas of wetlands were drained, which increased the amount of arable land. Parts of the new land was leased to poor rural families and composed a new family farm structure.[66] During some periods, the small-scale family farms were more efficient than state-owned cooperatives. Family farms contributed to satisfy family needs, but also to the domestic market by selling all surplus.[67] An important part of the commercialized surplus consisted of wine. According to all informants, domestic consumers preferred the artisanal wine produced from small-scale farms partly because of its distinct sensory quality, but also because drinking traditional wine represented a form of protest against the USSR. Informants describe traditional wine consumption as "an act of patriotism". The new, industrially produced wine was exported to other parts of the USSR and local consumers were wary of its quality.

After 1924, wine production was organized and coordinated

Wine harvest in Kakheti, Georgia, 1984.

Diagram 2. Number of hectares planted with vineyards in Georgia 1914–2016



Source: Own elaboration from Unpublished statistics from the Georgian Wine Association.

by the "Trust of Popular Estates" (Samtrest), the primary coordination department/institution for viticulture and winemaking in Soviet Georgia. Samtrest coordinated production and administered confiscated estates, such as Mukhrani. Samtrest continued to use some of the pre-soviet brands and wine names. One example is "Khvanchkara", one of the most exclusive wines of the period. The internal USSR market was large enough to absorb Georgian wines and the lion's share of the industrially elaborated wine was exported under the USSR's sourcing strategy.

After 1934, new large-scale processing and storage facilities were built and high yielding vines replaced less productive ones. As can be seen in diagram 1 below, the area under vine increased from +/-50 thousand hectares in 1914 to +/-112 thousand hectares in 1985[68]. But some wine factories were established during in the 1970's. Wine Industry Number 3 is one example. This factory located in the outskirts of Tbilisi specialized in the bottling of wine, while other factories specialized on pressing, fermenting and storing wine.[69]

In some areas of the USSR general agricultural productivity rose as a result of modernization and investments between 1950 and 1970.[70] It is difficult to establish if this was generally the case in Georgia, however, as can be seen from diagram 2, the area under vine increased steadily between 1955 and 1980.

During its peak period, vines were collected and pressed in more than 100 primary processing plants and thereafter wine was matured and bottled in the bottling plants.[71] Around 40 different wines were produced. Moreover, after 1936 a large-scale investment in producing sparkling wines under the coordination of "Shampankombinat". Production of sparkling wines took place in five factories and the Mukhrani Estate.[72]

DURING THE 1970'S some investments in new wineries and a new brandy factory were done.[73] Two examples are the Achinebuli winery, established in 1972 (the facility is today used by Georgian Wines & Spirits Company Ltd)[74] and Wine Factory No. 3, also established in 1972 (today the facility is owned by Tblivino).[75]

Diagram 2[76] above shows that the number of hectares under vine increased rapidly and especially after 1955, this is consistent with the analysis made by Cochrane (1989) who argues that total production of grapes increased in the entire USSR, this says however nothing about the amount of grapes produced. All informants and previous studies state that quantity was at the expense of quality and that wine quality declined. After 1985, the area planted with vines decreased following a central decision to drastically limit alcohol consumption and address the social and economic problems caused by alcoholism.[77] In Georgia this meant that a large number of vines were destroyed, but a challenge that has not previously been highlighted is that the dismantling of production structures in the USSR started to take place in the late 1980's. Two of the informants stated that their respective production facilities deteriorated due to the Gorbachev campaign and eventually one of the facilities was abandoned and the other had been used as headquarter for an oppositional group. They also argue that this was a widespread

"AFTER 1985, THE AREA PLANTED WITH VINES DECREASED FOLLOWING A CENTRAL DECISION TO DRASTICALLY LIMIT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION."

Figure 2. The development of the Armenian and the Georgian wine industries during the Soviet food regime

Source: Own elaboration. Note: 1940—1945 were left out because internal agro-food relations within the SFR seem to have disrupted during the war. Moreover, no data was found for this period.

problem that affected state owned vineyards, wineries, but also other branches of the food industry. Thus, in the final years of the USSR the SFR fell apart.

A specific aspect of the wine sector during the entire SFR period is that while formal industrial production became a part of the organized geopolitical organization of food and agricultural relations, domestic production for self-consumption continued to exist.[78] This was largely hidden activity, but traditions and to a large extent also parts of the endemic varieties of vitis vinifera grapes were preserved in people's gardens. When asked about the informal market all informants stated that informal production "kept the tradition alive during the soviet period" and that it was part of the resistance of locals against the Soviets to refuse consuming industrially produced wine. The distrust of industrially produced wines is according to informants something that even today affects consumption patterns in Georgia.[79]

Concluding remarks

The development of the wine industry followed the same patterns as the rest of the food industry and agriculture throughout the Soviet sphere. The wine industry became a target of the SFR during the initial years of the USSR as vineyards and wineries were a symbol a social class and a group that the Soviets wanted to eradicate. In a comparative perspective, in Georgia a dual pattern of production emerged which included small-scale artisanal production in small family run farms, and industrially produced wine in large scale facilities. The latter became a component in the internal exchange of goods and division of labor within the SFR. In Armenia, wine production declined, and a shift took place as wine, especially sherry styled wines became the main product, destined to become an input in the production of brandy. Brandy on the other hand became one of Armenia's most important commodities in the internal sourcing strategy of the SFR, but it also played a role in the economic relations between the "east and the west" by becoming a global export commodity.

Food regimes are responsible for the geopolitical organisation of food and agricultural relations. In the context of this article, it is clear that the orientation of wine production and wine consumption was subordinated the organization of agro-food relations and a new internal sourcing strategy of the USSR. When the SFR was being formed, the wine industry was dismantled in both countries as a result of de-kulakization. Thereafter, the industry in Armenia took a new turn when brandy production was favoured over wine production in Armenia, while wine production in Georgia concentrated on the Russian market. At least from current sources, it is possible to get a glimpse of a re-orientation that included investments and the establishment of new production facilities after the war.. Armenian and Georgian wines do not seem to have been at the forefront of the global expansion. Data on other CMEA countries, such as Hungary indicate that wine was used in exchange for foreign Western currencies, however, a thorough investigation with archive data from central trade authorities is needed. It is also clear that during the fourth and final period, production restrictions, but also what seems to a general deterioration led to a downturn in the industry in both countries. (Fig 2.)

THE REFLECTIONS put forward in this study provide important information that can allow for a more thorough and holistic study of the wine industry during the SFR. On the one hand, digging deeper into the periodization suggested above, some important new insights can be achieved on the differences between each period. Moreover, including other countries like Bulgaria, Hungary and Moldova can provide a total overview of the history of the wine industry during the SFR. The analysis of trade flows is particularly interesting in this respect. This might be possible by digging into the archives of the former USSR. Several countries were engaged in trade with the USSR, two of these countries are Sweden and the USA. Future projects could benefit from a thorough study using available primary sources in the mentioned countries.

In addition, especially after 1950, a reasonable question to formulate in a future study is the extent to which wine production and exports contributed to strategic issues, such as the supply of western currencies and the role played by various agro-food products in the economic and geopolitical relations between the socialist block and the rest of the world, as well as clarify important elements of the internal sourcing strategy of the SFR. Conducting further studies of the wine industry can also offer a deeper insight into how different countries and regions, for example Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia and Hungary were used in the geopolitical agricultural and food relations during the SFR.

Paulina Rytkönen is an Associated Professor in Economic History at the School of Social Sciences, Department of Business Administration, Södertörn University.

references

1 P. McGovern, M. Jalabadze, S. Batiuk, P. M. Callahan, K. E. Smith, G. R. Hall, E. Kvavadze, E., Maghradze, D., Rusishvili,N., Bouby L., Failla, O., Cola, G., Mariani, L., Boaretto, E., R. Bacilieri, P. This, N. Wales, and D. Lordkipanidze, Early Neolithic Wine of Georgia in the South Caucasus, *PNAS*, 114:48 (2017) 10309–10318; G. Areshian, B. Gasparyan, P. Avetisyan, R. Pinhasi, K. Wilkinson, A. Smith, R. Hovsepyan, and D. Zardaryan. The chalcolithic of the Near East and south-eastern Europe: discoveries and new perspectives from the cave complex Areni-1, Armenia, *Antiquity*, 89:331 (2012) 115–130; H. Barnard, A. N. Dooley, G. Areshian, B. Gasparyan, and K. F. Faull. Chemical evidence for wine production around 4000 BCE in the Late Chalcolithic Near Eastern highlands, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 38 (2011) 977–984.

2 T. de Waal, T. The Caucasus: An introduction, Second Edition, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

3 N. A. Hovhannisyan, A. A. Yesayan, A. A., Bobokhyan, M. V. Dallakyan, S. G. Hobosyan, and B. Z. Gasparyan, *Armenian vine and wines,* (Bonn and Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft Fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2017), 150–202; G. E. Curtis. "Georgia: A Country Study: Crops" http://countrystudies.us/georgia/, (Washington GPO: Library of Congress. 1994); G. E. Curtis, *Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, Country Studies,* Federal Research division, (Washington: Library of Congress, 1995).

4 Curtis, "Georgia…", 41–56, 190–205.

5 R. K. Yin, Case Study Research Design and Methods, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009).

6 Armenian Experts: AE1–4. Director of Jerevan Wine Academy; Director of Armenian Vine and Wine Foundation, Ministry of Agriculture; Armenian expert scholar who made an inventory of all wineries and established Jerevan Wine Academy; Head of FAO project making inventory of biological heritage of Armenian grapes. Armenian wineries. 2 large wineries (A1–2), 4 medium sized wineries (A3–6). All involved in production, exports and wine tourism. 3 small wineries involved in production, domestic sales and tourism (A7–9). One small winery with only production and domestic sales (A10). Georgian Experts: GE1–3. Director of Georgian Wine Association, Ministry of Agriculture; Marketing manager of Georgian wine growers Association; Georgian Historian. Georgian Wineries: 6 large wineries with production, domestic sales and exports. Four of which also with tourism facilities. 5 small wineries with production, domestic sales and tourism. One of which is a start-up.

7 G. Åkerlind, G. Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research & Development*, (2012) 31:1, 115–127

8 D. F. Feldon and C. Tofel-Grehl C. Phenomenography as a Foundation for Mixed Models Research. American Behavioral Scientist. (2018) 62; 7, 887–899. doi:10.1177/0002764218772640 F. Marton. Phenomenography–A Research Approach to Investigating Different Understandings of Reality, *Journal of Thought*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Fall 1986), 28–49.

9 S. Nelgen and K. Anderson, Global Wine Markets, 1961 to 2009: A statistical compendium, (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2009).

10 H. Bernstein, Agrarian political economy and modern world capitalism: the contributions of food regime analysis, The Journal of Peasant Studies, (2016) 43:3, 611–647; H. Campbell, H. "Breaking new ground in food regime theory: corporate environmentalism, ecological feedbacks and the 'food from somewhere' regime?" Agriculture and Human Values (2009), 26, 309–319; H. Friedmann, "Distance and durability: Shaky foundations of the world food economy", Third World Quarterly, (1992), 13:2, 371–383; P. McMichael, "A food regime genealogy", Journal of Peasant Studies. 36 (1): 139–169.

11 Bernstein, 611–647.

12 Friedmann (1989) and McMichael (2009).

13 H. Friedmann, The Political Economy of Food: The Rise and Fall of the Post-war International Food Order, *American Sociological Review*, (1982), 88 annual supplement: 248–286; McMichael,139–169.

14 J. Traeger J, *The Great Grain Robbery*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974)

15 C. Nordin van Gansberghe, I. Gerremo, A. Bergqvist, T. Sjöberg, P. Ivarsson, P. Alfer, and M. Arnesson-Ciotti, Rom – globala naturresursfrågor och italienskt lantbruk, Lantbruket i diplomatins korridorer En skrift om Sveriges lantbruksråd, KSLAT (2018), 3:157, 47–62.

16 Curtis, "Georgia", http://countrystudies.us/georgia/; Curtis, "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia", 41–56, 190–205; M. Ellman, M. "Did the Agricultural Surplus Provide the Resources for the Increase in Investment in the USSR During the First Five Year Plan?", *The Economic Journal* , (1975), 85: 340, 844–863; Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan, and Gasparyan, "Armenian vine and wines", 150–202.

17 Nancy Scanell, Judy Newton and Rubina Ohanian, Viticulture, Wine Production, And Agriculture In Armenia:Economic Sectors In Transition, *The Journal of Applied Business Research*, Vol 18, No. 4. (2002), 13–24; Curtis, "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia", 41–56, 190–205; Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan, and Gasparyan, "Armenian vine and wines", 150–202. Interviews A1–10; G1–11; AE1–4; GE1–3.

18 Curtis, "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia", 41–56, 190–205; Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan, and Gasparyan, "Armenian vine and wines", 150–202.

19 D. A. Dyker, Soviet Agriculture Since Khrushchev – Decentralisation and Dirigisme, IDS Bulletin (1982) f3:4. 29–35; I. E. Zelenin, N.S. Khrushchev's Agrarian Policy and Agriculture in the USSR, *Russian Studies in History*, (2011) 50:3, 44–70.

20 Curtis, "Georgia…", http://countrystudies.us/georgia/; Curtis, "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia", 41–56, 190–205; M. Hartvigsen, "Land reform and land fragmentation in Central and Eastern Europe, Land Use Policy", (2014), 36, 330–341; Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan, and Gasparyan, "Armenian vine and wines", 150–202; R. B. Koopman, "Efficiency and Growth in Agriculture A Comparative Study of the Soviet Union, United States, Canada, and Finland", *Waite Memorial Book Collection,* (Washington: Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics, USDA, 1989), https://www.ers.usda.gov/; C. Scott Leonard, and J. Szyrmer, "Agrarian Transition in the Former Soviet Union", *Bulletin de la Société géographique de Liège*, (1997), 33, 31–36; M. de Wit, M. Londo, A. Faaij, Productivity developments in European agriculture: Relations to and opportunities for biomass production, *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, (2011), 5:5, 2397–2412; K. E. Wädekin, Attempts and Problems of Reforming a Socialised Agriculture Case of USSR, Economic and Political Weekly, (1989) 24:42, 2385–2389 and 2391– 2394.

21 Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, "Armenian vine and wines" 150–202; Saladze, "Untamed", 100–190.

22 McGovern, Jalabadze, Batiuk, Callahan, Smith, Hall, Kvavadze, Maghradze, Rusishvili,N., Bouby, Failla, Cola, Mariani, Boaretto, Bacilieri, This, Wales and D. Lordkipanidze, "Early Neolithic 25…", 10309–10318;

23 (Areshian, et al., 2012; Barnard, Dooley, Areshian, Gasparyan, and Faull. "Chemical evidence", 977–984.

24 Akhalkatsi, et al., 2012; de Waal, 2019). M. Akhalkatsi, J. Ekhvaia and Z. Asanidze, "Diversity and genetic erosion of ancient crops and wild relatives of agricultural cultivars of food: implications for nature conservation in Georgia", in Tiefenbacher (ed) Perspectives on Nature Conservation: Patterns, Pressures and Prospects, Rijeka: *InTech Open*, (2012), 51–92; Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, "Armenian vine and wines" 150–202; Saladze, "Untamed", 100–190.

25 Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, “Armenian vine and wines”, 121.

26 Rytkönen, Borg and Vigerland, *Tales of Georgian Wine*; I. Ghaplanyan, and V. Keushguerian, Carving out a new market niche: historic world of wines, BIO Web of Conferences, Economy and Law, (2015), 5 (03002), 1–4, DOI https://doi.org/10.1051/bioconf/20150503002; Interview AE2; Webpages of wineries in Armenia and Georgia.

27 Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, “Armenian vine and wines”,150–208 and 350–361.

28 Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, “Armenian vine and wines”, 205.

29 Saladze, “Untamed”,97.

30 T. Glonti, “Traditional technologies and history of Georgian wine”, *Le Bulletin de l”Organisation internationale de la vigne et du vin*, (2010), 83, 953–955; Saladze, “Untamed”, 100–190.

31 N. J. Cochrane, Agricultural Statistics of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, 1965–1985, *Statistical Bulletin* No 778, USDA, (1989), 1–129. Curtis, “Georgia…”, http://countrystudies.us/georgia/; Curtis, “Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, 41–56; Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, “Armenian vine and wines”, 150–202; R, Paarlberg, Food as an Instrument of Foreign Policy. Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, (1982), 34:3, 25–39; Saladze, “Untamed”, 100.190; D. Tarschys, The Success of a Failure: Gorbachev’s Alcohol Policy, 1985–88. Europe-Asia Studies, (1993), 45: 1, 7–25. J. P. Zoeter, Soviet Economy in the 1980’s: Problems and Prospects, Part Two, Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, (1982); Interview GE1 and AE2.

32 Curtis, “Georgia…”, http://countrystudies.us/georgia/; Curtis, “Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, 41–56, 190–205; Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, “Armenian vine and wines”, 150–202; Saladze, “Untamed”, 100–190.

33 Interviews AE4 and GE1.

34 Curtis, “Georgia…”, http://countrystudies.us/georgia/; Curtis, 1995, 41–56, 190–205; Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, “Armenian vine and wines”,150–202; Saladze, 100–190.

35 Interview GE1.

36 Paarlberg, “Food as an Instrument…”, 25–39; J. P. Zoeter, Soviet Economy in the 1980’s: Problems and Prospects, Part Two, Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, (1982).

37 Cochrane, “Agricultural Statistics…”, 99.

38 D. Tarschys, The Success of a Failure: Gorbachev’s Alcohol Policy, 1985–88. Europe-Asia Studies, (1993), 45: 1, 7–25.

39 Curtis, “Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, 47–56

40 Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, “Armenian vine and wines”, 202–208.

41 Curtis, “Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, 47–56.

42 O. Velikanova, “The First Stalin Mass Operation (1927)”, *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* (2013), 40, 64-89.

43 Interview A9 and webpages of the same company. Similar claims are found in other winery webpages and told by other informants.

44 Curtis, “Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, Preface xxxvi.

45 Interviews, wineries 1–14,

46 Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, “Armenian vine and wines”, 208.

47 See for example Cochrane, “Agricultural Statistics…”, 1–129.

48 Interviews AE1–3.

49 Hovhannisyan, Yesayan, Bobokhyan, Dallakyan, Hobosyan and Gasparyan, “Armenian vine and wines”, 202–208

50 N. Scanell, J. Newton and R. Ohanian, “Viticulture, Wine Production, And Agriculture in Armenia: Economic Sectors in Transition”, *The Journal of Applied Business Research*, (2011), 12:4, 13–24; J. Shend, J., “Agricultural Statistics in the Former USSR Republics and Baltic States”, United States Department of Agriculture, Statistical Bulletin (1994), 863; OIV, Vitivinicultural Statistics 2013–2014 (2015), http://www.oiv.int/public/medias/6292/oiv-world-vitivinicultural-statistics-2013–2014–en.pdf

51 IScanell, Newton and Ohanian, “Viticulture, Wine Production”, 13–24.

52 Cochrane, “Agricultural Statistics…”, 1–129.

53 Interview AE2.

54 Bennett, “Food and Agriculture…”, 185–198

55 Curtis, “Georgia”, http://countrystudies.us/georgia/

56 G. M. Lang, “The Georgians”, (New York: Pregaer, 1966), 245–247.

57 Curtis, “Georgia…”, http://countrystudies.us/georgia/.

58 Lang, “The Georgians”, 247.

59 Lang, “The Georgians”, 248.

60 Lang, “The Georgians”248.

61 Twins Wine Cellar, Our History, retrieved September 2019

62 Lang, “The Georgians”, 249.

63 Interviews GE1; G1–11.

64 Interview G1.

65 Interview G6.

66 Curtis, “Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, 41–56, 190–205; Lang, 1966, pp 245–249.

67 Curtis, “Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, 41–56, 190–205; Lang,”*The Georgians”*, 245–247.

68 Georgian Wine Association, 2011.

69 Mikheil Kobaladze, Interviewed November 2019.

70 Johnson, “Agriculture in the Centrally Planned Economies”, 845–853;

71 Interview, G1 and G6.

72 Khundadze and Avaliani, 2018 T. Khundadze and Avaliani, “The Catalogue: History of Georgian Industry”, https://www.academia.edu/38239451/Short_History_of_Georgian_Industry_catalogue_pdf Accessed 2019–10–27.

73 Curtis, “Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, 41–56, 190–205; G1–11, 2019.

74 https://wineoldtbilisi.com/en/about-us/about-company

75 Interview G6, 2019.

76 Georgian Wine Association, (2011); OIV, Statistical Database. http:/www.oiv.int, Accessed 2019–11–18.

77 Tarschys, “The Success of a Failure”, 7–25.

78 Anastasiya Shtaltovna and Hart N. Feuer, “Modern Resilience of Georgian wines, Geographical indications and international exposure”, in Alessandro Bonanno, Kae Sekine and Hart N. Feuer (eds) *Geographical Indication and Global Agri-Food Development and Democratization*, Routledge (2020), 134–153.

79 Interviews G1–11.

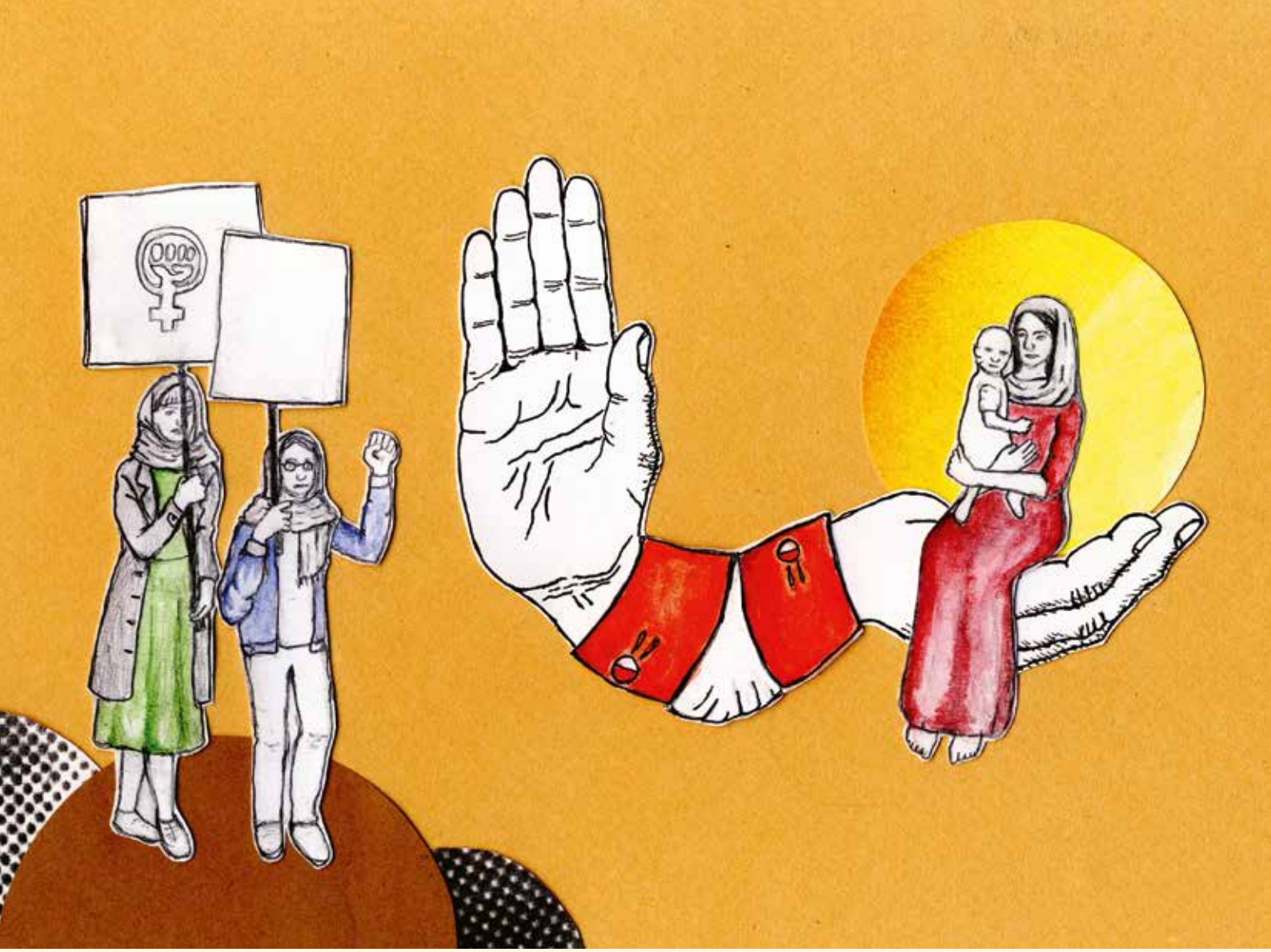


ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

RELIGION AND GENDER POLITICS IN LITHUANIA

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S EFFORTS TO HINDER THE RATIFICATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION

by **Augustė Nalivaikė**

abstract

This paper seeks to understand how the Catholic Church manages its involvement in gender politics in Lithuania and exerts power. Lithuania signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the so-called Istanbul Convention) in 2013 but ratification efforts continue to date. The Convention has become a political "hot potato" and caused ideological confrontations. The Catholic Church is here a political actor, leveraging its influence across multiple levels and cycles of the political decision-making process. NGOs have initiated campaigns in attempt to counter the discourse of oppositional conservative and religious political actors. I utilize anonymous in-depth interviews with various relevant actors to gain a more accurate and nuanced picture of the Church's engagement in holding back the ratification efforts. Ultimately, this case study also enriches theoretical literature on institutional opportunity structures and informal institutions in relation to religious influence in morality policymaking.

KEYWORDS: Gender, religion, qualitative, morality policy.

Religious influences in policy making have remained prevalent despite theories of societal secularization and modernization.[1] Morality policies are of specific interest to religious organizations; therefore, most research on religious influence is based on examining this policy type. Religious bodies care about morality policies because they are connected to values and beliefs. Values are fundamental both to church doctrines and morality policies.[2]

Morality policies have recently received more academic attention.[3] Morality policy has been conceptualized as a unique type of policy.[4] In addition, some scholars attempted to narrow these policies down into categories,[5] or explain their temporal changes.[6] Reproductive rights, same-sex partnerships including marriage, in vitro fertilization, euthanasia, sexual exploitation, pornography, and regulation of drugs all come under the heading of morality policies because they are conceptualized by an established value system which may be challenged.[7]

Research on the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the so-called Istanbul Convention) can mainly be found in legal studies. It also appears in the contexts of the analysis of anti-gender ideology and anti-gender movements; however, I argue that the Istanbul Convention may also belong to the category of morality policies as its main ideas revolve around gender equality and the way societies value and treat women which proved to be a controversial topic to conservative and religious actors many times in the past. Gender roles and stereotypes are related to societal and religious values which are threatened when policies endorsing gender equality and rejecting gender stereotypes are adopted and implemented. Therefore, it can be expected that in some states, churches will strongly oppose the signing and ratification of the Istanbul Convention while at the same time interfering in policy-making processes.

The Istanbul Convention was opened for signature on May 11, 2011 and signed by the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2013 but ratification efforts continue to this day. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the extent to which the Lithuanian Catholic Church had a role in postponing the ratification process. The main interest is not the influence of various factors related to religion, for example, religiosity or religious freedoms, in politics, but how powerful the Catholic Church is in executing its political preferences in each democratic regime. While the hierarchs of the Catholic Church participated in creating certain public discourse about the Convention mainly using various media channels, similarly to the cases of Poland, Croatia or Bulgaria, this research analyses the degree to which the Church intervened in the ratification efforts on the political level.

Informal institutions and institutional opportunity structures

I argue that religious influence in politics in Lithuania, including the delay in ratifying the Convention, can be explained using the concept of *informal institutions*. Informal institutions that sustain religious influence are part of deeper political culture and the way political decisions are understood and interpreted by most political actors. Informal rules and practices that govern state-church relations consequently construct institutional opportunity structures that are further exploited by the Catholic Church.

An institution is a rule or organized practice that has a certain meaning and is quite resistant to external changes or individual expectations.[8] Institutions are "rules of the game" that modify relations among individuals in a system[9], including the world of politics. In addition, institutions can be defined as models of behavior that help predict other people's actions.[10] "Rules of the game" consist of formal rules, laws, social agreements, informal rules, and even common understanding of politics. In other words, institutions "are shared prescriptions about what actions are required, prohibited or permitted".[11]

INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS have long remained in the shadows of neoinstitutionalist research. Scholars concentrated their research on formal institutions because it worked well with narrow concepts.[12] Consequently, informal institutions were not only underestimated but also lacked deeper theoretical conceptualization.[13] Analysis of formal institutions only was not entirely successful at explaining complex processes of policymaking. Most "rules of the game" were the result of informal behaviors and agreements among various political actors which constrained their actions systematically and formally. Therefore, research of informal practices, networks and rules started to gain more scholarly attention.[14]

Informal institutions are different from formal, insufficient, or weak institutions.[15] Helmke and Levitsky offer the following definition: "informal institutions are socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels."[16] And on the contrary, "formal institutions are rules and procedures that are created,

The Vilnius Cathedral is the main Roman Catholic Cathedral of Lithuania. PHOTO: DILIFF/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

communicated and enforced through channels widely accepted as official".[17]

There is some academic discussion on what really constitutes informal institutions. Some scholars consider traditions, habits, religious and ideological beliefs, and path dependency effects to be informal institutions.[18] In this case, informal institutions are analyzed as something that is a part of historical legacy, and in certain circumstances that may be true. Helmke and Levitsky disagree;[19] however, I would like to argue that state-church relations in Lithuania seem to carry the importance of past events and roles that the Catholic Church had in state-forming years and the struggle for independence. Nonetheless, Helmke and Levitsky's conceptualization of informal rules is still applicable in my analysis.

THE CONCEPT OF *institutional opportunity structures* was used in same-sex partnership legislation research by Knill and Preidel who looked at the differences between Ireland and Italy regarding this policy.[20] Although more religious, Ireland adopted same-sex marriage legislation sooner than Italy. The authors concluded that differences in institutional settings between the two countries resulted in differences in policy. Various actors within the policymaking processes were empowered or constrained in communicating and achieving their political preferences. Strong fragmentation of executive power and lack of leadership created institutional access for religious actors who in turn exploited this fragmentation to their benefit and postponed same-sex marriage legislation. The Catholic Church also utilized lobbying and close relationships between politicians and the church. Such political circumstances and access are called *institutional opportunity structures*.[21] In some cases, *opportunity structures* for religious influence in politics come through formal institutional arrangements.[22] Research suggests that more progressive morality policy reforms are usually delayed or even rejected when religious organizations utilize these institutional opportunity structures.[23]

The concept of informal institutions has not previously been used to examine the relationship between religion and politics (to the best of my knowledge). Some scholars have admitted that

further understanding of informal political power and institutional access[24] and the informal relationship between state and church[25] is needed to better understand the dynamics of religious influence in policymaking.

In my opinion, Helmke and Levitsky's[26] definition of informal institutions is a proper conceptual tool to grasp the complexities of religious influence in morality politics in Lithuania. Identifying institutional opportunity structures and informal institutions that sustain the informal state-church relationship is also a novel approach which further develops scientific literature on religious influence in morality policymaking. Institutional access creates and maintains the culture of informality and vice versa. I also have an open mind about the relation between informal institutions and past circumstances or events. The relationship between informal institutions and the past requires more academic attention, especially when we analyze post-communist states.

The Catholic Church in Lithuania after 1990

The Catholic Church suffered greatly from state repressions after the Soviets occupied Lithuania in 1944. The regime wanted to eliminate patriotism and national culture which the church represented for many; therefore, in a sense, the Catholic Church became "enemy number one".[27] Churches and monasteries were closed, real estate was nationalized, and the Catholic community was controlled and repressed.[28]

The Catholic Church played an important role in the events that eventually resulted in Independence for Lithuania in 1990. The church mobilized many people and actively participated in the Independence movement.[29] After the declaration of Independence in 1990, the Catholic Church was re-established, regained its status in democratic Lithuania, and continued religious activities.[30] In addition, the Church also managed to take part in political processes and acquire a great deal of political power and privileges which continue to this day.[31] During the first decade of the democratic political regime in Lithuania, the Catholic Church secured formal institutional access which helped to communicate church's political preferences and in some cases even form the political agenda. The formal relationship between church and state in Lithuania is determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania,[32] the Law on Religious Communities,[33] the Law on National Radio and Television,[34] the treaties between the Holy See and the Republic of Lithuania,[35] and the Law on Education.[36] The Constitution separates state and church in Article 43: "There shall be no state religion in Lithuania".[37] However, "constitutions alone are rather misleading and inaccurate guides to political reality".[38] Research of formal arrangements between the state and religious organizations does not fully explain the variations and dynamics of policymaking because the reality of religious influence is much more nuanced and complex. While state and church are officially separated in Lithuania, the Catholic Church is a *de facto* powerful actor that is often successful at shaping political processes and achieving its political preferences.[39] However, there is little research that examines the dynamics and nuances of religious influence in politics on the micro level. I have previously attempted to explain the Church's influence in sexual education policymaking in Lithuania,[40] but otherwise the research is limited to media representations of such political participation.[41]

HOW CAN RESEARCHERS understand this influence and political power? Some suggested that the Catholic Church in Lithuania is a religious hegemony which has no competition with other religions. Most conflict in determining societal values comes from the confrontation between Catholic and secular organizations.[42] The concept of *moral authority*[43] is also useful in the analysis of religious influence in policymaking. State-church relations in many post-communist states can be better understood if the respect that churches have in the eyes of politicians is considered. In other words, churches are moral authorities regarding many policies, especially those involving morality questions. This moral authority is related to historical legacies[44] which in case of post-communist states is related to fusion of religious and national identities.[45] Moral authority was gained when churches successfully combined national and religious identities. Furthermore, moral authority creates institutional access and opportunities to have power over political decisions.[46] I argue that moral authority creates both formal and informal access or institutional opportunity structures. In case of Lithuania, national and religious identities fused to some extent. While this does not apply to all citizens, the older generation which was repressed by the Soviet regime also tends to be more religious and conservative. National identity and protection of the Lithuanian language has been associated with the Catholic Church and Catholicism for most of modern Lithuanian history.[47] The Catholic Church in Poland is historically believed to have had very similar role and it expresses a great deal of political power as well.[48]

To conclude, in Lithuania religious influence in policymaking can be examined as follows: The Catholic Church is treated as a moral authority by many politicians which in turn created and still creates both formal and informal institutional access and institutional opportunity structures. These are sustained by informal institutions that shape political actors' behavior that favors the political preferences of the Church because of existing "rules of the game".

Ratification efforts in other Central-Eastern European states

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence or the Istanbul Convention became valid in August 2014. The most important goals of the Convention are to eliminate all forms of violence covered by its extent and require that states practice due diligence to prevent domestic violence. In addition, states are required to protect people who have already suffered from violence, ensure smooth recovery, and return to normal lives. Therefore, the Convention has great potential to combat gender-based violence. It defines violence extensively and distinguishes domestic violence and violence against women while emphasizing that the former affects women dispropor-

Protest against the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Zagreb, Croatia, March 24, 2018. PHOTO: BRANKO RADOVANOVIĆ/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

tionately. Despite the fact that this Convention was designed specifically to prevent and eliminate violence against women, the opponents of the Convention were mostly concerned with the term gender and its implications in the context of gender roles and stereotypes.

The attempts to ratify the Istanbul Convention in Croatia were met with hostility which is a part of a broader anti-gender equality context. The Catholic Church authorities and conservative religious civil society groups have succeeded in introducing "a war on gender ideology" not only to public discourse but also in political processes. In 2017 Croatian Bishop's Conference stated that the contents of the Convention oppose traditional gender roles, "natural law" and go against national traditions. The Convention was signed in 2013 and finally ratified in 2018 with a special interpretative statement that the Convention does not contain an obligation for the state to introduce gender ideology. Public discourse about gender equality and the Convention was mainly distorted by the Catholic Church and conservative groups. Therefore, the ratification was postponed for five years for ideological reasons even though the word gender already existed in the Croatian legal system.

"THE ATTEMPTS TO RATIFY THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION IN CROATIA WERE MET WITH HOSTILITY WHICH IS A PART OF A BROADER ANTI-GENDER EQUALITY CONTEXT."

Latvia signed the Convention in 2016 but failed to ratify it in 2018. The ratification in the Latvian Parliament failed because the religious actors have joined the anti-gender ideology discourse in various media. Sensationalism and generating public restlessness were the main tools employed to confuse the public about the word gender and increase public distrust in the Convention. What is more, after the petition against ratification collected 10,000 signatures, the church authorities went to the Parliament and persuaded the majority of MPs to reject the Convention.

The Convention in Poland was signed in 2012, ratified in 2015 after serious political struggles and now may be even terminated. Szocik and Szyja theorize that the delay of ratification had to do with the prevalence and persistence of the Catholic Church's cultural policy which is advocated and implemented by various political actors.[49]

AFTER TREMENDOUS anti-gender discourse and campaigns, Bulgaria failed to ratify the Convention in 2018. A well organized campaign against the Convention coordinated by ultra-conservative civic society organizations was joined by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The powerful anti-gender discourse in public created enough political pressure for the Constitutional Court of Bulgaria to declare the Convention unconstitutional.

A very clear trend in relation to the resistance to the Convention is present. One on hand, there are various conservative religious civic society groups, that in some cases may be what are called churches' satellite civil society organizations; on the other hand, there are churches and religious leaders. Finally, they are joined by conservative and often populist politicians. Together these three groups of actors with the help of various media create a powerful anti-gender discourse which affects and influences more vulnerable societies that are not familiar with the terms like "gender" or "gender equality" and are therefore easily manipulated into refusing the Convention. Religious fundamentalism and interpretation of problematic biblical texts supporting the arguments of "natural law" have become a powerful way to sensationalize and criticize the Convention in more conservative societies. The arguments against the Convention are almost identical in Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the


Head of women's crisis centre in Vilnius calls on Seimas to ratify Istanbul Convention

DELFI / Mindaugas Alvišlis

According to Lilija Henrika Vasiliauskienė, the ratification of this international treaty would define in detail sexual offenses and ensure broader rights for the victims.

Czech Republic, or Poland and probably in other countries that faced hostility and criticism towards the Convention.

Most studies investigate the public discourse that is being created, maintained, and used by the opponents of the Convention in attempts to delay or even eliminate the ratification. In some cases, these attempts succeed on the high political level. Therefore, we need to better understand the cases when the discourse translates into political reaction, and consequently, action.

The efforts to ratify the Istanbul Convention in Lithuania

The Convention was signed in 2013 by the minister of Foreign Affairs, Linas Linkevičius. Before that, in 2011, a working group was formed by the Ministry of Social Affairs to analyze the provisions of the Convention. No documents for the ratification were drafted or submitted for ratification by the Government or President of Lithuania until 2017. Then women's rights activists started several campaigns and public discussions to raise awareness to this issue. A women's rights organization based in Kaunas designed a poster with a hashtag #RatifyIstanbulConvention and asked celebrities and politicians to take photographs while holding the poster. In summer 2016 several members of Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union visited that organization as a part of their political campaign before the parliamentary election which took place few months later, and had their photographs taken with that poster, giving hope to activists that this was a political promise. One person in that photograph later became Prime Minister of Lithuania, and the other took a position as Speaker of the Seimas (The Parliament of Lithuania).

After long political discussions, the responsibility of preparing the documents was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September 2017. A month later the draft of ratification documents was prepared and submitted to other ministries. In November, the Government's Office returned the draft for further improvement.

On March 2, 2018, the Ministry of Social Affairs stated that ratification should be delayed because there was no consensus in society over the Convention and its contents. However, both the minister and vice-minister expressed support for the ratification on several different occasions in the autumn, so the refusal to submit the Convention for ratification came as an unpleasant surprise to activists.[50]

After considerable pressure from women's rights activists, the then incumbent President Dalia Grybauskaitė submitted the Convention for ratification on June 7, 2018 during the Women Political Leaders Summit in Vilnius.

On June 12, 2018 Lithuanian Bishop's Conference (the official body of the Lithuanian Catholic Church) released a public statement expressing concern over the ratification of the Convention. The statement emphasized the "traditional and natural" rights for women and complementary roles between women and men which would be threatened by the Convention. It also claimed that gender is an artificially constructed term which is dangerous because it tries to change the natural roles of men and women. In addition, according to the Bishop's Conference, the Convention has nothing to offer legislation-wise, as it only repeats the laws that already exist in Lithuania.[51]

LITHUANIA IS NOT very different from other countries that had trouble ratifying the Convention because of the term gender. Most of the discussions around the Convention revolved around this term which was already used in many English translations of legal documents and laws, for example, the Constitution. Populist and radical politicians claimed that the traditional family and order would perish if Convention were ratified, while women's rights activists tried to maintain a reasonable and factual discourse. The media was keen to communicate


Lithuania's religious leaders voice opposition to Istanbul Convention and same-sex partnership

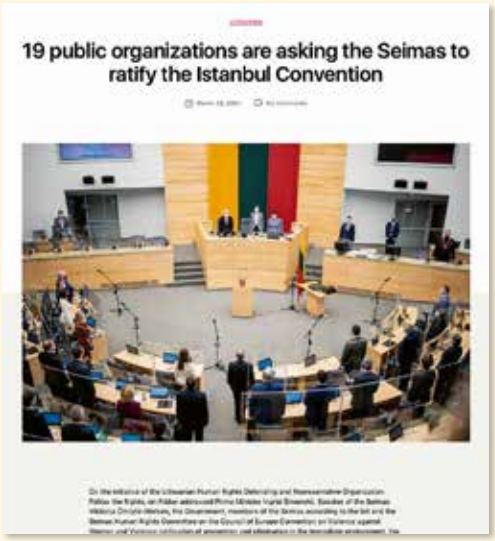
Leaders of Lithuania's Christian religious communities have issued a joint statement, opposing moves to ratify a document on fighting gender violence and to recognise same-sex unions.


NGOs Urge Lithuania to Ratify the Istanbul Convention

On average, Lithuania sees one woman killed in a family context each month; furthermore, one in nine calls to the police is a report about domestic violence. In order to more effectively tackle violence against women...

by Human Rights Monitoring Institute

On average, Lithuania sees one woman killed in a family context each month; furthermore, one in nine calls to the police is a report about domestic violence. In order to more


19 public organizations are asking the Seimas to ratify the Istanbul Convention

Headlines from various news media regarding the ratication question.

the messages from both sides, creating chaotic and destructive discourse.

The ratification process should have taken place in parliament's Spring Session in 2019; however, the vote did not take place. The Convention has still not been ratified, and while activists voice their concerns in media and create communication campaigns on a regular basis, they have not been successful. As of October 2020, Lithuania has elected a new majority in Seimas, which comprises one conservative and two liberal parties, and the ratification of the Convention was anticipated by many women's right organizations, especially since the leaders of these parties are women who had previously expressed their support for the Convention. However, when talks about the possibility of ratifying the Convention during parliament's spring session have started, a huge anti-Convention campaign was organized on various media platforms by the same conservative, religious non-governmental organizations that created these campaigns in the past to confuse society and politicians about the Convention once again. After several weeks of intense debate and discussion by opponents of the Convention, various public figures, women's rights activists and, finally, public involvement in those discussions of several Catholic priests on various media channels, the Coalition had made the decision to postpone the ratification of the Convention at least until the autumn parliamentary session.

"POPULIST AND RADICAL POLITICIANS CLAIMED THAT THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY AND ORDER WOULD PERISH IF CONVENTION WERE RATIFIED."

The anti-gender discourse visible in the public sphere and media is practically identical to discourses created and sustained in Latvia, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Poland. The groups participating in this discourse also belong to the same ideological affiliations and are joined by churches and populist politicians, consequently strengthening the impact and presence of anti-gender ideology and religious influence in countries mentioned.

Methodology: In-depth elite and expert interviews

Religious influence in policymaking is a complicated phenomenon to examine, especially when the analysis moves away from formal state-church arrangements. Informal institutions and practices are usually systematically covert and not easily acknowledged or revealed by the actors involved. How does a researcher study processes, rules and practices that are informal and not observable quantitively? How to analyze the informal side of politics?

I am interested in the dynamics and informality surrounding religious influence in morality policymaking; therefore, a qualitative approach was selected. The purpose of the interviews was to learn about the informal institutions in relation to ratification of the Convention, as well as identifying institutional opportunities and access that the Catholic Church utilizes to stifle ratification efforts. In-depth elite and expert interviews were conducted with relevant actors. Qualitative interviews allow scholars to examine and better understand complex political events that usually happen behind closed doors.[52] Some researchers are concerned with the difficulties related to elite interviewing,[53] while others claim that the difficulty of gaining access, for example, has been exaggerated.[54]

The interviewees were carefully chosen to make sure they possess relative knowledge and expertise in relation to the nuances of the Istanbul Convention ratification delay in

Lithuania. I have compiled a list of women's rights activists and politicians who were the most outspoken about or involved in the ratification efforts and most visible in various Lithuanian media. I used the "snowball effect" to identify other potential interviewees. The informants' opinion whether Lithuania should ratify the Convention was not considered before contacting and choosing them as interviewees.

The analysis that follows draws on anonymous open-ended and semi-structured interviews that were conducted with ten individuals in 2018–2020. Some of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, some were conducted using Zoom platform, and one was a telephone interview. Several interviewees refused to be recorded, citing the sensitive nature of the research. Notes were taken during all interviews. The topics covered in the interviews were designed in accordance with the theoretical approach. The informants were asked to share their experience and knowledge regarding the ratification efforts, involvement of the Catholic Church and informal "rules of the game" in morality policymaking.

Results: Religious influence in the delay of the ratification process

I anticipated initially that the interview data would be strengthened by the analysis of official documents like ministries and parliamentary committees' reports in relation to the Convention, but many of those documents are almost impossible to locate online. In addition, special permission in needed to access most of the reports. Therefore, interview data is the main source of information about religious influence in the delay of ratification process.

A high-level politician said that in general there is a tendency to discuss various political questions with the Catholic Church, or in other words, to consult with the hierarchs of the Church on the regular basis. According to this interviewee, the Catholic Church is a very powerful organization not only in Lithuania, but also globally, with vast resources and influence on many matters. There have been attempts to communicate the Catholic Church's position on the Istanbul Convention at the very highest political level. There have also been meetings between high-level politicians and church hierarchs regarding the Convention. It is obvious that the Church did not only communicate its political preferences via official channels. There have been formal attempts like e-mailing or calling representatives of various ministries, and expressing concerns in the media, but most communication happened during informal meetings and through personal networks.[55] It appears that in this case the Catholic Church is regarded as a moral authority to be consulted with in relation to the Convention.

Another politician expressed disappointment in both the government and Seimas regarding the delay in ratification of the Convention. The conversation turned to the state's inability to protect women's rights and work on the prevention of gender-based violence. According to the interviewee, the state should be able to resist religious influence, and the fact that it does not reveals that the state is weak. The interviewee also claimed that "if the Catholic Church had not expressed any interest in the Convention, it would have been ratified long time ago."[56] This individual was more concerned with state's inability to protect women's rights and reject religious authority in human rights issues but agreed that the Catholic Church may have played a role in hindering ratification efforts. Similar concerns were voiced by women's rights activists who said that state officials are to be blamed for delaying ratification.[57]

Another activist working with women's rights in Lithuania revealed that a call from the leader of Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union party was received several days after this party got most votes in 2016 Seimas election. During the conversation, the caller said that the Istanbul Convention was not going to be ratified during the term of this Seimas.[58] This information reveals that the leader of the party which formed the government was personally against the Convention. Several interviewees also mentioned that the ruling party was very much against the Convention, and will probably delay ratification or even try to eliminate the question from political discourse altogether.[59] The Catholic Church gained a powerful ally whose political preferences regarding the Convention aligned with its own. In addition, some party members had close personal relationships with church's representatives. The Church in this case was able to utilize institutional opportunity structures via shared values and personal connections.

"THE CHURCH UTILIZED INSTITUTIONAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES, INFORMAL 'RULES OF THE GAME', AND MORAL AUTHORITY TO SUSTAIN ITS POLITICAL INFLUENCE."

An activist who followed the political processes revolving around the Convention closely said that she felt like "a detective while trying to understand all the political activity and religious influence in relation to the Convention".[60] There was a lot of confusion because at times it seemed that ratification was moments away; however, the government appeared to change its mind. The interviewee speculated that this happened because "someone talked to the Church".[61] According to this interviewee, the presence of the Catholic Church in politics regarding the Convention was felt but the ways in which religious influence manifested were difficult to identify.

TWO OTHER POLITICIANS and women's rights activists similarly concluded that the Catholic Church was behind the delay of the Convention, but they were not able to identify a more precise mechanism of religious influence in this case. They were able, however, to identify institutional access that the Church usually utilizes to make sure their political preferences are heard during

policymaking process. Both interviewees claimed that hearings in parliamentary committees are places where you can often meet church's representatives, most often lawyers and priests who communicate the Catholic message during those hearings.[62] In this case, the Catholic Church uses direct institutional access. All interested parties can participate in committee hearings, but it appears that the Catholic Church has a privilege of knowledge when certain discussion takes place, according to another interviewee.[63] I interpret this privilege of information as part of informal "rules of the game", because the representatives of the Church are often invited or are aware of these discussions, while other interested parties, most often individuals from human rights organizations, are not. When an issue of morality policy is brought up at any stage of policymaking, there is no level playing field, because the Church is seen as moral authority and has more institutional opportunities to achieve its political goals.

I had expected to learn more about informal institutions sustaining state-church relations and religious influence in morality policymaking in Lithuania, but they seem to be elusive even to those directly participating in the process. Interview data revealed that the Catholic Church participated not only in creating and maintaining the public discourse against the Convention but also had a more substantial role on the high political level. Unfortunately, interviewees did not know what exactly was said and done both from the Church's and politicians' sides. All interviewees agreed that the Catholic Church is a powerful and influential organization which can affect political decisions. When it came to ratification of the Convention, the church's preferences coincided with the ruling party's preferences in the 2016–2020 term which helped maintain the status quo. The Convention was sidelined and excluded from the political discourse. The Church utilized institutional opportunity structures, informal "rules of the game", and moral authority to sustain its political influence.

Conclusion

I have attempted to examine the Catholic Church's involvement and role in the delay of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. I have identified certain trends that need further empirical analysis. It appears that the Church has played a role in the efforts to stall the ratification but the mechanisms behind this influence cannot be easily identified because so much communication and practices happen outside of the official channels, thus confirming the existence of informal institutions. Socially shared, yet informal, rules in the case of religious influence comprise the fact that the Catholic Church is the moral authority and should be consulted with, especially when matters revolve around morality policies.

In addition, I argue that religious influence in morality policymaking, including the ratification of the Convention, in Lithuania is related to the informal political culture which sustains certain informal rules and practices associated with the Catholic Church's role and status in politics, regardless of the Parliamentary majority or changes in government. I believe that Esquivel offers an adequate argument that describes the relationship between religion and state in Lithuania well: "While freedom of conscience and absence of discrimination are fully guaranteed, this is not the case regarding the autonomy or neutrality of the state, which exhibits some weakness in relation to religious organizations."[64]

I also agree with Korolczuk and Graff[65] that we should interpret anti-gender ideology as a political rather than religious movement which, given the current backlash against gender equality in many states around the world, needs to meet resistance not only from feminist scholars on the academic level but also from members of wider society.

Augustė Nalivaikė is Lecturer and a PhD-candidate at the Civil Society and Sustainability Research Group, Kaunas University of Technology.

references

1 Milda Ališauskienė and Jolanta Kuznecovienė, "Katalikų bažnyčios vaidmuo viešajame Lietuvos gyvenime: dalyvavimo formų kaita (1990-2010)" [The role of the Catholic Church in the public life of Lithuania: the change of forms of participation], *Filosofija.Sociologija* 23, no. 2 (2012): 102.

2 Christoph Knill, "The study of morality policy: analytical implications from a public policy perspective", *Journal of European Public Policy* 20, no. 3 (2013): 312, DOI:10.1080/13501763.2013.761494.

3 See Mooney, 1999; Mucciaroni, 2011; Knill, 2013; Engeli et al., 2013; Heichel et al., 2013; Studlar and Burns, 2015; Budde et al., 2017.

4 Gary Mucciaroni, "Are Debates about "Morality Policy" Really about Morality? Framing Opposition to Gay and Lesbian Rights", *The Policy Studies Journal* 39, no. 2 (2011): 211.

5 Knill, "The study of morality policy", 312–312.

6 Donley T. Studlar and Gordon J. Burns, "Toward the permissive society? Morality policy agendas and policy directions in Western democracies", *Policy Sci* 48 (2015) 48: 287.

7 Christopher Z. Mooney, "The Politics of Morality Policy: symposium's editor's introduction." *Policy Studies Journal* 27, no. 4 (1999): 675–676.

8 James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "Elaborating the "New Institutionalism"" in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

9 Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

10 Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis and Barry R. Weingast, "A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History", *NBER Working Paper*, No. 12795 (2006): 3.

11 Elinor Ostrom, "Background on the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework", *The Policy Studies Journal* 39, no. 1, (2011): 7.

12 Fiona Mackay, Meryl Kenny and Louise Chappell, "New Institutionalism Through a Gender Lens: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism?", *International Political Science Review* 31, no. 5 (2010): 575.

13 Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda", *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (2004): 725–726.

14 Ibid, 726.

15 Ibid, 726.

16 Ibid, 727.

17 Ibid, 727.

18 Jan Winiecki, "Determinants of catching up or falling behind: Interaction of formal and informal institutions.", *Post-Communist Economies* 16, no. 2 (2004): 138.

19 Helmke and Levitsky, "Informal institutions", 727.

20 Christoph Knill and Caroline Preidel, "Institutional opportunity structures and the Catholic Church: explaining variation in the regulation of same-sex partnerships in Ireland and Italy." *Journal of European Public Policy* 22, no. 3 (2015): 375, doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2014.951066.

21 Ibid, 375.

22 Michael Minkenberg, "The Policy Impact of Church - State Relations: Family Policy and Abortion in Britain, France and Germany." *Western European Politics* 26, vol. 1 (2003): 196.

23 Christoph Knill, Caroline Preidel and Kerstin Nebel, "Brake rather than Barrier: The Impact of the Catholic Church on Morality Policies in Western Europe." *Western European Politics* 37, no. 5 (2014): 845, doi. org/10.1080/01402382.2014.909170.

24 Sophie Schmitt, Eva-Maria Euchner and Caroline Preidel, "Regulating prostitution and same-sex marriage in Italy and Spain: the interplay of political and societal veto players in two catholic societies", *Journal of European Public Policy* 20, no.3 (2013): 439, doi. org/10.1080/13501763.2013.761512.

25 Emma T. Budde, et al., "A matter of timing: The religious factor and morality policies.", *Governance* 31, vol. 1 (2017): 58–59, doi: 10.1111/ gove.12296.

26 Helmke and Levitsky, "Informal institutions", 727.

27 Vytautas Vitkauskas, "Lietuvos Katalikų bažnyčios dvasininkų verbavimas NKVD/KGB agentais sovietmečiu.", *Lietuvos Katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis* 16 (2000) [Recruitment of clergy of the Lithuanian Catholic Church as NKVD / KGB agents during the Soviet era. ", Yearbook of the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Sciences]: 1.

28 Rasa Čepaitienė, "Vilniaus bažnyčių likimas sovietmečiu (1944–1990)" [The fate of Vilnius churches in the Soviet era], *Liaudies kultūra* 86, no. 5 (2002): 32.

29 Arūnas Streikus, *Sovietų valdžios antibažnytinė politika Lietuvoje (1944–1990)* [The anti-church policy of the Soviet government in Lithuania]. (Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2002).

30 Valdas Pruskus, "Katalikų bažnyčios kaita Lietuvoje transformacijų laikotarpiu" [The change of the Catholic Church in Lithuania during the period of transformations], *Problemos* 63 (2003): 46.

31 Ališauskienė and Kuznecovienė, "Katalikų bažnyčios vaidmuo", 109.

32 Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (1992)

33 The Law on Religious Communities (1995)

34 The Law on the National Radio and Television (1996)

35 The treaties between the Holy See and the Republic of Lithuania (2000)

36 The Law on Education (2011)

37 Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (1992)

38 Minkenberg, "The Policy Impact of Church ", 197.

39 Jolanta Kuznecovienė et al., *Religija Lietuvoje: tarp sekuliarizacijos ir (ar) kaitos*. [Religion in Lithuania: between secularization and (or) change] (Kaunas: Vytautas Magnus University, 2012).

40 Augustė Nalivaikė, "Religious Influence in Policy-Making: A Case of Sexual Education in Lithuania". *Public Policy and Administration* 1, no.19 (2020): 126–138.

41 Ališauskienė and Kuznecovienė, 102.

42 Ingo W. Schröder, "Hegemony and the Catholic church in Post-Soviet Lithuania." In *Religija Lietuvoje: tarp sekuliarizacijos ir (ar) kaitos* ed. Jolanta Kuznecovienė, et al. (Kaunas: Vytautas Magnus University, 2012).

43 Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Thy Will Be Done? Religious Nationalism and Its Effects in East Central Europe", *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29, no. 2 (2015): 338.

44 Ibid, 338.

45 Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Weapons of the Meek: How Churches Influence Policy." *World Politics* 68, no. 1 (2016): 3, doi: 10.1017/S0043887115000301.

46 Grzymala-Busse, "Thy Will Be Done?", 338.

47 Streikus, "*Sovietų valdžios antibažnytinė ".*

48 *See* Szocik & Szyja, 2015; Szelewa, 2016.

49 Ibid.

50 Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights, *Time regarding the ratification process of Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Lithuania*. (2018).

51 Bažnyčia - už moterų prigimtines teises Lietuvos vyskupų konferencijos kreipimasis dėl Stambulo konvencijos, [The Church is the appeal of the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference on the Istanbul Convention for the Inherent Rights of Women] https://www.vilnensis.lt/lietuvos-vyskupu-posedyje-pasirengimo-sakramentams-ir-kreipimosi-del-stambulo-konvencijos-klausimai/

52 Darren G. Lilleker, "Interviewing the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield." *Politics* 23, no. 3 (2003): 208.

53 Robert Mikecz, "Interviewing Elites: Addressing Methodological Issues.", *Qualitative Inquiry* 18, no. 6 (2012): 483, doi: 10.1177/1077800412442818.

54 Kari Lancaster, "Confidentiality, anonymity and power relations in elite interviewing: conducting qualitative policy research in a politicized domain.", *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 20, no. 1 (2017): 101, doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2015.1123555.

55 Interviewee R3.

56 Interviewee R11

57 Interviewee R10.

58 Interviewee R20.

59 Interviewee R12, Interviewee R22, Interviewee R9.

60 Interviewee R9.

61 Ibid.

62 Interviewee R26, Interviewee R28.

63 Interviewee R21.

64 Juan Cruz Esquivel, "Religion and Politics in Argentina: Religious Influence on Legislative Decisions on Sexual and Reproductive Rights", *Latin American Perspectives* 43, no. 3 (2016): 142, doi: 10.1177/0094582X16629459.

65 Elżbieta Korolczuk and Agnieszka Graff, "Gender as "Ebola from Brussels": The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 4 (2018): 815, doi. org/10.1086/696691.

UPA members caught by Polish soldiers 1947.

MEMORY BATTLEFIELD ON THE EAST FRONT: UKRAINE AND POLAND

For those interested in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) it is hardly surprising that the first annual report from the new publication series by the CBEES was dedicated to the topic of memory management in the region.[1] Indeed, one could go as far as to say that the post-Cold War Europe is in a state of yet another war: a *memory war* over the historical assessment of two totalitarian regimes that have shaped the political and social landscape of the continent in the past century.
To paint a very simplified picture, it is "West" versus "East," i.e. the collective Western European mnemonic narrative shaped around the Nazi regime and WWII versus its Eastern European counterpart that is constructed around the communist regime and the Cold War. However, since this memory struggle takes place simultaneously on several levels that partially overlap, the line dividing Europe in "West" and "East" is blurry, flexible, and relative.[2] Also, even when identified as a "particular region of memory,"[3] the CEE landscape is far from being uniform.

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT the assessment of historic events have always had their place in the public discourse in democratic societies, whereas totalitarian regimes such as the Communist one preferred an official version of history that is not up for debate. This is why a conflict-prone memory boom in the CEE was to be expected after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The only recently intensified trend is to fight memory wars with the means of *memory laws*, i.e. by using laws prescribing and proscribing certain representations of historic events as a weapon to protect one's national collective memory from divergent interpretation by others. Such approach to governing memory wars are detrimental to the neghborly relations, i.e. turning them into unneighborly ones. There are more adequate ways to engage in mnemonic discussions in order to achieve reconciliation over the common historical past. In the following, the counterproductivity of memory laws as well as the potential and real dangers of memory wars will be demonstrated against the backdrop of intra- and interstate relations of Ukraine and Poland.

Memory laws in West and East

Memory laws are a Western European invention.[4] The term first appeared in France in the 2000s and was used to describe the relatively novel development in

Polish civilian victims of March 26, 1943. The mass killings committed by Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in the village of Lipniki (Kostopol County), Reichskommissariat Ukraine.

PHOTO: LOWDOWN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Monument to victims of Volhynia massacre 1940–1945 at cemetery in Liszna.

law primarily concerned with the provisions penalizing Holocaust denial. The first bill of this kind was passed in Germany in 1985. Understood in a broader sense, memory laws comprise all state regulations concerning the collective representation of the past. Since a certain degree of memory governance is always present in the state function, e.g. public education, official holidays, toponymy etc., a very wide range of legislative efforts could be included. Therefore, in order to be an operable term, memory laws should be applied only to such commemorations that "are aimed at eliminating alternative narratives of the past from public circulation," i.e. they are defined by focusing on the intention of the legal activity rather than its nature.[5]

MEMORY LAWS are problematic from the legal dogmatics point of view first and foremost because they restrict the freedom of speech, and, as the historians point out, also the freedom of research as a consequence.[6] The very idea of the existence of such a category of laws is a highly "contentious normative issue."[7] Particularly the so-called "decommunization" laws, which appeared in CEE after the collapse of the Soviet Union, are criticized throughout the academia. These regulations are characterized by their intention to protect "the good name" of the respective state, to present it in a favorable historic light at all times, "only as victims of major atrocities, never as perpetrators."[8] Thus, the classic Western memory laws are "self-inculpatory," whereas the mnemonic legislation in CEE is "self-exculpatory."[9] This is congruent with the different approaches to history: the novel "non-national, self-critical, and cosmopolitan" in the West versus traditional, treating "the past as a source of collective national identities and values such as heroism or sacrifice" in the East.[10]

The lamented consequences of the recent memory law boom in CEE is the deterioration of public discourse, and as such the rule of law in the new democracies. This in turn leads to the instrumentalization of the historical truth to suit the official historical assessment of events by those in power, support of the far-right populist agenda and growth of nationalism, discrimination of minorities, and, ultimately, the aggravation of intra-national and international conflicts. Thus, the new generation of memory laws changed from being a means of maintaining peace and seeking reconciliation to "one of the preferred instruments of the memory wars within and between many European countries."[11]

Memory wars between Ukraine and Poland

The term memory wars was coined by the historian Nikolay Koposov to describe the phenomena of mnemonic legislation protecting the CEE countries' sovereignty and national identity triggered by the "newfound Russian assertiveness in the area."[12] However, not all memory wars involve Russia. There is a number of historic incidents that have caused tensions in Ukrainian-Polish relations for decades.[13] The two main events that have deteriorated the Ukrainian-Polish relations during and after the WWII, and are still the most important sign of mistrust and disagreement between both nations, are the mass killings of Poles in Volhynia and Galicia in 1943–1945 on the one hand, and the so-called "Operation Vistula" standing for the mass deportations of Ukrainians within Poland in 1947 on the other hand.

In 1943, a prominent member of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Mykola Lebed', "proposed 'to cleanse the entire revolutionary territory

PHOTO: HENRYK BAJEWICZ/N/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Bullet marks on the tower of the Podkamień Abbey, where many Poles sought refuge, which was stormed by the UPA on 12 March 1944.

Ukrainians are forcibly moved from their land by Polish soldiers in 1947.

of the Polish population'."[14] The mass killings in Volhynia and Galicia were carried out by the partisans of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The historical background of the region and its population is very complex, so are the developments that culminated in the atrocities committed there during World War II.[15] Both, Poland and Ukraine present the Volhynian events in the light of their respective nation's suffering and hardships during the war, and blame each other for it. Particularly the number of victims is debated: the Polish side speaks of 100,000 Polish victims, and 12,000 Ukrainian ones, while the Ukrainian statistics puts the number of killed Poles much lower, at 35,000, and the number of the Ukrainian victims higher, at 15,000.[16] Consequently, the respective national interpretations of the mass killings vary: Ukrainians speak of the "Volhynian tragedy," while the Polish side calls it "Volhynian massacre."[17] The qualification of the mass killings as "genocide" by the Polish Parliament in 2016 gave rise to new controversial discussions.

The so-called "Operation Vistula" is sometimes referred to as an "attempted genocide" to underline the declared intent of the Polish government to "solve the Ukrainian problem in Poland once and for all."[18] In September 1944 the Polish Communist government (the Polish National Liberation Committee), and Soviet Union signed an agreement about the exchange of populations along the so-called "Curzon Line." This allegedly friendly and voluntary resettlement agreement turned out to be a forced deportation and displacement of about 700,000 Ukrainians from Poland to Soviet Ukraine between the years of 1945 and 1946. Later on, in 1947, about 150,000 Ukrainian national minorities, such as e.g. Lemkos, remaining on the Polish territory were forcefully displaced by the Polish government from the Southern and Eastern border regions to the North-West of the country in the so-called "Operation Vistula."[19] The Ukrainian minority in Poland was regarded across-the-board as a potentially dangerous supporter of the OUN and UPA. Therefore, charged with collective responsibility, the ethnic Ukrainians were discriminated against in terms of religion, culture, and language.

THE BIGGEST international, biliteral Ukrainian-Polish, and internal Ukrainian controversy developed around the historical assessment of the OUN and UPA organizations as well as their leaders. Particularly contentious is the historical figure of Stepan Bandera, who is presented as a fighter for Ukraine's independency by some Ukrainians, while being seen as a leader of a terrorist fascist organization that has committed numerous war crimes during the World War II by the vast majority comprised of, among others, Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, and Jews.[20] The award of the title "Hero of Ukraine" to Bandera was harshly criticised by the European Parliament,[21] and the respective memory laws caused an outcry of protest in the academic circles.[22] On the one hand, one could argue that any organisation of Ukrainians fighting for independency from Poland before, during, and after the World War II is bound to be

"UKRAINIANS SPEAK OF THE 'VOLHYNIAN TRAGEDY,' WHILE THE POLISH SIDE CALLS IT 'VOLHYNIAN MASSACRE.'"

"THE USAGE OF MILITARY JARGON IN POLITICS IS ALWAYS POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS AS IT CAN LEAD TO AGGRAVATION OF EXISTING AND SPURRING UP OF NEW CONFLICTS."

seen as a terrorist unit by the Polish state. However, on the other hand, accepting and endorsing actions of a Nazi-collaborator implicated in war crimes for the sake of "the wholesale condemnation of the entire Soviet period as one of occupation of Ukraine"[23] goes too far, and cannot be covered by the principles of militant democracy.

Memory laws impacting Ukraine–Poland relations

Both Poland and Ukraine have institutionalized their collective memory governance by establishing respectively the Polish Institute of National Memory (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*) in 1991, and the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (*Український Інститут Національної Пам'яті*) in 2006.[24] These "ministries of memory"[25] act as "mnemonic warriors"[26] on behalf of the respective government "using history to pursue ideological agendas" by "popularizing scholarship, gate-keeping of archives, and instrumentalization of history."[27] The Polish and the Ukrainian Institutes of National Memory are equally well-known for their numerous legislative efforts. This commentary, however, focuses only formal memory laws passed by the respective Parliament (the *Verkhovna Rada* in Ukraine, and the *Sejm* in Poland) that directly impact the Ukraine-Poland relations.

The relevant Ukrainian provisions consist first of all of the posthumous award of the "Hero of Ukraine" title to Stepan Bandera, the leader of the main faction of the OUN, and to Roman Shukhevych, the supreme commander of the UPA in 2004.[28] Secondly, the law no. 2538 "on the legal status and honoring the memory of participants in the struggle for the independence of Ukraine in the 20th century" from the memory package of four laws passed in April 2015 by the Ukrainian parliament is relevant.[29] The first stage of the mentioned memory laws was a controversial back-and-forth commemoration process in Ukraine, depending on the president in power, the region, and the international pressure[30] until the law no. 2538 bindingly "declared the OUN and UPA to be fighters for Ukrainian independence and made it illegal for Ukrainian citizens or foreigners to express public disrespect to members of these organizations."[31] It is worth mentioning that the 2015 memory laws package drafted by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory was "passed with a speed rarely seen in the Ukrainian legislative body and by overwhelming majorities,"[32] which can only be explained with the Russian-Ukrainian conflict over Crimea in 2014.

THE POLISH SENATE reacted to the Ukrainian memory laws by qualifying the Volyn mass killings as genocide in 2016, after the initial declaration of the anti-Polish actions of the UPA and the OUN during WWII to be "ethnic cleansing with signs of genocide" in 2013.[33] Another Polish reaction to the legal glorification of the OUN and UPA in Ukraine is the 2018 Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Memory from 1998. Among other things, the Amendment authorizes the Polish Institute of National Memory to investigate "crimes of Ukrainian nationalists" committed between 1920 and 1950, as well as "crimes and gross human rights violations against Polish nationals and citizens committed between 8 November 1917 and 31 July 1989."[34] Remarkably, the wording of the law juxtaposes "Ukrainian nationalists" and "Polish nationals and citizens" even though the majority of the former held Polish citizenship for the most of the mentioned time period. This could suggest an exclusively ethnic understanding of the "Polish nation."[35] It certainly fits the selective approach of the Polish historical discourse, where e.g. Polish Jews are "silently subsumed into the number of Polish victims of fascism, but at the same time excluded from the Polish nation in ethnic terms."[36]

As a consequence, the mutually exclusive Ukrainian and Polish memory laws lead to a situation where nobody can discuss the historical events in question without being (criminally) liable in one of the countries.[37]

Memory laws as an instrument in memory wars

The negative impacts of the Ukrainian-Polish memory wars can hardly be exaggerated. First of all, the usage of military jargon in politics is always potentially dangerous as it can lead to aggravation of existing and spurring up of new conflicts. Secondly, such memory battles are detrimental to the countries' internal as well as external relations, and security. Memory laws are meant to provide ontological security through the unification of the nation's identity via prescribed collective memory. Yet, they are counterproductive to this goal.[38] Not only memory wars by means of memory laws are "nesting Orientalisms" (using the conceptual variant of Edward Said's Orientalism suggested by Milica Bakić-Hayden) as they try to glorify one's own nation at the cost of demonising the Oriental, i.e. the inferior "other."[39] More significantly, such legalised memory practice takes the controversial historical narrative out of the sphere of political, out of the public discourse by prescribing the one and only acceptable version of the events.[40] Particularly in the post-Communist countries this is a remarkable approach to history as it replaces the totalitarian Communist non-talk by penalising the "other" historical memory with the help of the so-called "decommunization laws." Thus, one could claim that World War II has caused the Cold War, which in turn has caused the present memory wars in CEE.

In the case of Ukraine, the legal glorification of the OUN, UPA, and their leaders

has declared the minority's assessment of the historical past a non-negotiable collective memory, and, hereby, "contributed to the de facto breakup of Ukraine manifested by the secession and the Russian annexation of Crimea and the civil war in Donbas."[41] Poland, on the other hand, is one of Europe's most homogenous countries, whose population is for sure more unified in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion than Ukraine. However, this does not mean that all the Poles subscribe to one and only historical narrative. Thus, in spite of the legal efforts of the ruling PiS party to mainstream "the cognitive patterns of Poles," "the Polish culture is still far from unity."[42] Particularly the efforts to restore and develop "the ethnic-centered version of national histories"[43] are bound to lead to internal conflicts in both countries in the long run.

THE BILITERAL Ukrainian-Polish relations have moved away from the reconciliation and cooperation course held up until the middle of the 2010s. There is a clear decline in cooperation efforts, and lack of mutual interest in each other's affairs apart from the confrontation regarding the memory politics.[44] Previously, the disagreements about the assessment of historical events were significant primarily on the local level, i.e. in the border regions in West Ukraine. While arguably being artificially over-emphasized by the (local) politicians on both sides, these memory debates neither influenced the people-to-people relationships as such, nor the mainstream politics in whole of Poland, and Ukraine. Just over a decade later, the respective memory fronts are significantly hardened, with both countries having memory laws in place, protecting their respective view on the historical events, proscribing and prescribing collective historical narratives for their own people, and the "others."

After recognizing the fact that memory wars cannot be won by means of "memory laws," one should give up on this strategy as counterproductive not only to the ontological but also real security of one's country. Furthermore, one could acknowledge that complete mnemonic security cannot be achieved, and embrace a national narrative that constantly renews itself instead of aiming at an utopic static one.[45] Such a position of being prepared to question oneself and respect the right of the other, fellow countrymen and foreigners alike, to hold different views on important historic events in principle, without having to agree, only appears to be weaker – agonistic political discussion with unlimited freedom of speech, i.e. the very basis of a democratic society, will win in the long run.[46]

Conclusions

Memory wars are potentially dangerous and certainly detrimental to the present Ukrainian-Polish relations. These "wars" cannot be won by means of "memory laws." On the contrary, the latter tend to amplify the conflict and harden the fronts. In case of post-communist countries such as Ukraine and Poland, it is several times harder to observe that the assessment of historic events is being legalised instead of being politicised by the very laws that claim to deal with the totalitarian communist past. In order to achieve true reconciliation over the tragic events in common history, both Ukraine and Poland need to firstly acknowledge the right of the respective other to hold a different view in principle. Secondly, they should seek an agonistic political dialogue intra- and internationally. And, last but not least, they ought to concentrate on the present more than on the past, and work to revive the positive developments of the 2010s in mutually beneficial cooperation recognizing the benefits of good neighborly relations. Surely, this requires strength and a feeling of security, and it is not easy or a fast fix, but there is simply no other way.

Anna Grinberg, Hanken School of Economics, is a student in the interdisciplinary Master's School in Russian and East European Studies coordinated by the Aleksanteri Institute at the University of Helsinki.

references

1 "Constructions and Instrumentalization of the Past: A Comparative Study on Memory Management in the Region," *CBEES State of the region report 2020* (Centre for Baltic and East European Studies, CBEES, Södertörn University, December 2020), accessed June 4, 2021, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1523899/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

2 Maria Mälksoo, "Nesting Orientalisms at War: World War II and the 'Memory War' in Eastern Europe," in *Orientalism and War*, ed. Tarak Barkawi and Ketih Stanski (Oxford Scholarship Online, September 2014), 2, accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199327782.003.0009.

3 Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, "Eastern and Central Europe as a Region of Memory. Some Common Traits," *CBEES State of the region report 2020* (December 2020): 15, accessed June 4, 2021, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1523899/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

4 Nikolay Koposov, "Memory Laws, Memory Wars: The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia" (Cambridge University Press, 2017), Kindle edition, 15–16.

5 Marta Bucholc, "Commemorative Lawmaking: Memory Frames of the Democratic Backsliding in Poland After 2015," *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 11 (2019): 92, accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.1007/s40803-018-0080-7. Bucholc proposes the classification of "memory politics" in three groups: memory laws, applied commemoration, and commemorative law-making.

6 Eric Heinze, "Law and Historical Memory: Theorising the Discipline," *Verfassungsblog on matters constitutional* (07 January 2018), accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.17176/20180108-103453; Grazyna Baranowska and León Castellanos-Jankiewicz, "Historical Memory in Post-communist Europe and the Rule of Law: An Introduction," *European Papers – A Journal on Law and Integration*, 5 (2020): 100, accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.15166/2499-8249/386.

7 Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias, "Memory Laws: Mapping a New Subject in Comparative Law and Transitional Justice," forthcoming in *Law and Memory: Towards Legal Governance of History*, ed. Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 15, accessed June 4, 2021, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3015232. Arguably, the "classical" memory laws on denying or diminishing the crimes of the Holocaust are less problematic. The academic discourse in this area is lead among the lines whether "legally regulating historical truth" is effective or rather counterproductive, see

Aleksandra Gliszczyńska, "Law and Memory," *Verfassungsblog on matters constitutional* (04 January 2018), accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.17176/20180104-103227. Also, there is a fundamental discussion whether freedom of speech is "just another" right or a "condition for both democracy and human rights," see Heinze, "Law and Historical Memory."

8 Heinze, "Law and Historical Memory." See also Florence Fröhlig, "Victimhood and Building Identities on Past Suffering," *CBEES State of the region report 2020* (December 2020): 23–28, accessed June 4, 2021, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1523899/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

9 Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias, "The Remarkable Rise of 'Law and Historical Memory' in Europe: Theorizing Trends and Prospects in the Recent Literature," *Journal of Law and Society* 47(2) (2020): 333, 337, accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.1111/jols.12228. Belavusau and Gliszczyńska-Grabias describe the self-inculpatory memory laws as having "the naïve yet noble purpose of defending historical ruth and the dignity of Holocaust victims." They also provide the best description of self-exculpatory memory laws as "efforts to whitewash problematic and sometimes shameful episodes in national history by politicians currently in power and bent on promoting their own, simplified, black-and-white historical narrative, drawing stark lines between good and bad, guilty and innocent, while ignoring the 'shades of grey' and all of the dilemmas indelibly etched in the history of World War II, and people's actions and choices at that time."

10 Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, "Eastern and Central Europe as a Region of Memory," 17.

11 Koposov, "Memory Laws, Memory Wars," 22–24; see also Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, "Eastern and Central Europe as a Region of Memory," 20.

12 Grazyna Baranowska and León Castellanos-Jankiewicz, "Historical Memory in Post-communist Europe and the Rule of Law: An Introduction," *European Papers – A Journal on Law and Integration*, 5(1) (2020): 95, accessed August 24, 2021, https://www.europeanpapers.eu/en/content/e-journal/EP_eJ_2020_1.

13 Nathaniel Copsey, "Echoes of the Past in Contemporary Politics: the case of Polish-Ukrainian Relations," *SEI Working Paper No 87* (Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex, October 2006), accessed June 4, 2021, https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.352.3802&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

14 Timothy Snyder, "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943," *Past & Present* 179 (2003): 202, accessed August 24, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3600827.

15 Snyder, "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943."

16 Hromadske, "Ukraine and Poland Debate Volyn Tragedy," July 24, 2016, accessed August 24, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XN6UdfvSytw.

17 Georgiy Kasianov, "Ukraine-Poland: Quest for the Past," *Ideology and Politics Journal* 2(16) (2020): 168, 170, accessed August 24, 2021, doi:10.36169/2227-6068.2020.01.00017. To read about the historical assessment of Volhynia mass killings from the Polish point of view: Łukasz Adamski, "Ukrainian 'Volhynian Negationism': Reflections on the 2016 Polish-Ukrainian Memory Conflict," *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 3(2) (2017), accessed August 24, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/37002786/Ukrainian_Volhynian_Negationism_Reflections_on_the_2016_Polish_Ukrainian_Memory_Conflict.

18 Askold S. Lozynskyj, "Attempted Genocide – 'To solve the Ukrainian problem in Poland once and for all'," *Ukrainian Echo*, Mai 10, 2017, accessed August 24, 2021, http://www.homin.ca/news.php/news/17728/group/20.

19 UATV English, "Operation 'Vistula' – Making History," September 28, 2019, accessed August 24, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO93lQlIesQ&t=379s; Lozynskyj, "Attempted Genocide."

20 Ivan Katchanovski, "Terrorists or national heroes? Politics and perceptions of the OUN and the UPA in Ukraine," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 48 (2015): 218, 224, accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.1016/j.postcomstud.2015.06.006.

21 European Parliament, Resolution of February 25, 2010, accessed August 24, 2021, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-7-2010-0035_EN.html.

22 David R. Marples, "Open Letter from Scholars and Experts on Ukraine Re. the So-Called "Anti-Communist Law," *Krytyka*, March 2015, accessed August 24, 2021, https://krytyka.com/en/articles/open-letter-scholars-and-experts-ukraine-re-so-called-anti-communist-law.

23 Marples, "Open Letter."

24 Per Anders Rudling, "Institutes of Trauma Reproduction in a Borderland: Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania," *CBEES State of the region report 2020* (December 2020): 55, 60, accessed June 4, 2021, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1523899/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

25 Rudling, "Institutes of Trauma Reproduction," 58.

26 Rudling, "Institutes of Trauma Reproduction," 56.

27 Rudling, "Institutes of Trauma Reproduction," 55.

28 Katchanovski, "Terrorists or national heroes?," 217.

29 John-Paul Himka, "Legislating Historical Truth: Ukraine's Laws of 9 April 2015," 2015, accessed June 4, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/12056628/Legislating_Historical_Truth_Ukraines_Laws_of_9_April_2015.

30 Katchanovski, "Terrorists or national heroes?," 217–218.

31 Katchanovski, "Terrorists or national heroes?," 218.

32 Himka, "Legislating Historical Truth."

33 Rudling, "Institutes of Trauma Reproduction," 62. However, Rudling notes that "the generous application of the term 'genocide'" is common to both states, Poland and Ukraine.

34 Uladzislau Belavusau, "The Rise of Memory Laws in Poland: An Adequate Tool to Counter Historical Disinformation?," *Security and Human Rights* 29 (2018): 42, accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.1163/18750230-02901011.

35 Jörg Hackmann, "Defending the 'Good Name' of the Polish Nation: Politics of History as a Battlefield in Poland, 2015–18" *Journal of Genocide Research* 20(4) (2018): 602, 603, accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.1080/14623528.2018.1528742.

36 Hackmann, "Defending the 'Good Name' of the Polish Nation," 591.

37 Rudling, "Institutes of Trauma Reproduction," 62.

38 Maria Mälksoo, "'Memory must be defended': Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security," *Security Dialogue* 46(3) (2015): 3, accessed June 4, 2021, doi:10.1177/0967010614552549.

39 Mälksoo, "Nesting Orientalisms at War," 1.

40 Mälksoo, "Memory must be defended," 5.

41 Katchanovski, "Terrorists or national heroes?," 227.

42 Bucholc, "Commemorative Lawmaking," 104.

43 Kasianov, "Ukraine-Poland: Quest for the Past," 166.

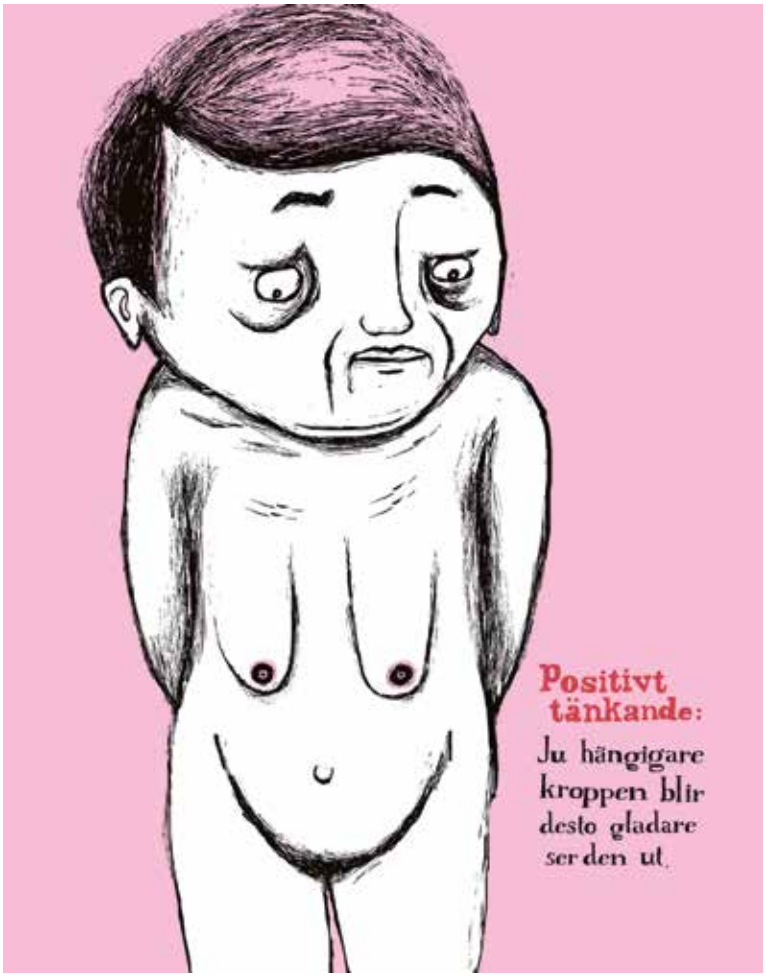
44 Compare Copsey, "Echoes of the Past" to Gabriele Wojdelko, "The Polish-Ukrainian Battle for the Past," *Carnegie Europe* (December 15, 2017), accessed June 4, 2021, https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/75029.https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/75029; see also Kasianov, "Ukraine-Poland: Quest for the Past."

45 Mälksoo, "Memory must be defended," 10.

46 Mälksoo, "Memory must be defended," 20.

Anke Feuchtenberger, Germany.

Kati Kovács, Finland.

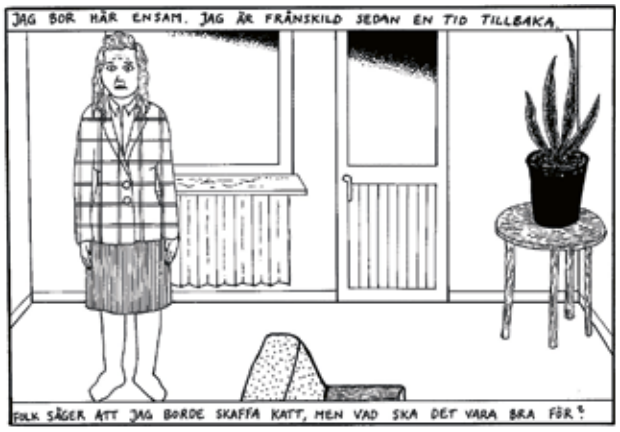


Lotta Sjöberg, Sweden.

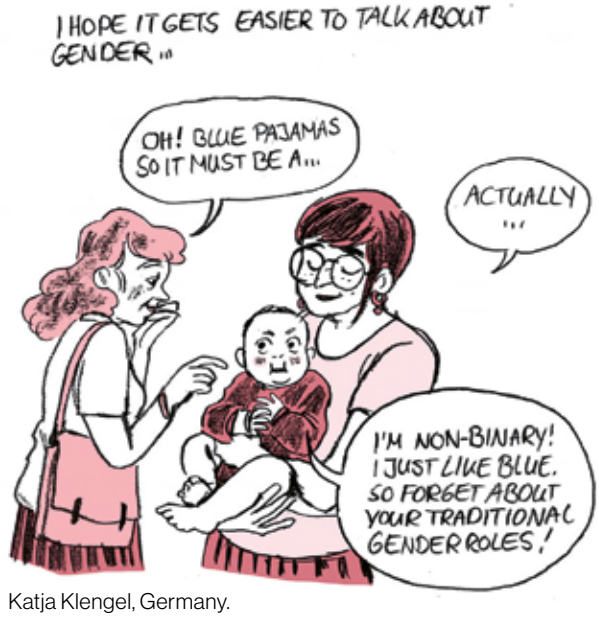
FEMINIST COMIC ART IS SPREADING IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

The comic art industry represents much more than traditional superhero comics and includes genres such as manga, science fiction, horror, autobiography, or history, to name but a few. In recent years, the genre of feminist comic art has distinguished itself on the international comics landscape, thanks in large part to activity in Sweden, where feminist comics had been published in connection with the women's liberation movement since the early 1970s. Swedish feminist comic art, which is characterized by explorations of the political through the personal, has served to establish a growing cadre of comics artists as influential social commentators and powerful political activists, many of whom have garnered mainstream popularity and critical acclaim for their feminist perspectives and scathing but humorous social commentary. Such contemporary Swedish feminist comics artists as Liv Strömquist, Nina Hemmingsson, or Nanna Johansson can thus be considered pioneers with regards to their depictions of female experiences, and to their engagement with topics such as politics, class, gender, sexualities, and other issues of equality, which have both driven and supported the feminist movement in Sweden.

THE SUCCESS, POPULARITY, and momentum of Swedish feminist comics encourage an exploration of local reverberations and transnational trends in feminist comic art both in and around Sweden. In Finland, for example, when female cartoonists started to become more common and visible on the Finnish comics landscape during the 1980s and 1990s, there was a need to categorise their comics as "women's comics" in comparison to the decidedly established norm of



Åsa Grennvall, Sweden.



Katja Klengel, Germany.

Wanda Hagedorn, Poland.

male-dominated comics. The cultural conversation about the necessity of the label "women's comics" continued in Finland until the 2010s, as the main comics festivals discussed the label's positive and negative connotations[1]. As the discussion has continued, the Finnish comics field has also become more diverse and the need for categorising comics based on the artist's gender has become obsolete.

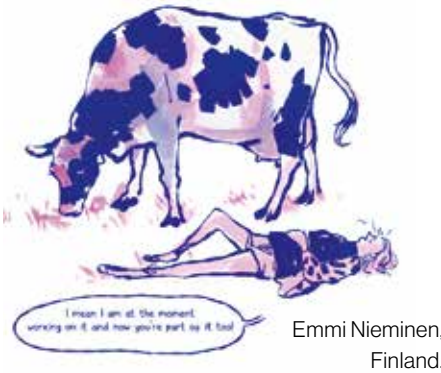
Furthermore, when discussing feminist comics and their distinctive features, it is of utmost importance to consider the differences between genres, artists, and generations of artists, since both the cultural and political contexts for making comics change over time. In Finland, women cartoonists had to defend their new place in the earlier male-dominated industry until the 2000s, when women were no longer a rare sight among the readers, students, or creators of comics. Additionally, the ways in which feminism(s) is(are) understood have changed over time; in Finland, the debates about intersectionality, the rights of non-binary and trans people, mental health, and body positivity have become more important and increasingly relevant topics, especially for many younger comics artists during the 2000s and 2010s. This trend is set to continue into the 2020s, even if the critical aspects and themes may very well change as a reaction to societal and political developments.

AS FEMINIST COMIC ART in Sweden and Finland shows, the surrounding society – with its political situation, gender expectations, legislation, and cultural norms – affects what kinds of feminist ideas creators may choose to tackle in their work. In this sense, both commonalities between and unique characteristics in feminist comics are significant. In many contexts, however, the concept of "women's comics" prevails, threatening to undermine the value of the social and political issues they address.

Feminist comic art in Sweden, Finland,

Joanna Rubin Dranger, Sweden.

Varvara Pomidor, Russia.



Emmi Nieminen, Finland.

In 2016, Femicomix Finland, a network for feminist minded comics artists and activists, co-edited an issue of *Kuti magazine* dedicated to feminist comics.

and the Baltic Sea region raises the question of whether it is possible to find a common denominator for feminist comic art. Are feminist comics connected by certain aesthetic qualities or themes? Is there a shared conception of feminism that is recognizable in the comics produced in the Baltic Sea region? The answer to both questions is "no". As much as there is an exchange of ideas and aesthetic influences between artists in different countries, there are local varieties specific to countries and individual artists. Furthermore, variations in contemporary conceptions of feminism seem to depend on varying historical conditions and experiences in the different countries. There

"IS THERE A SHARED CONCEPTION OF FEMINISM THAT IS RECOGNIZABLE IN THE COMICS PRODUCED IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION?"

is also a great variety of genres, media, and narrative styles represented in the feminist comic art of the Baltic Sea region, as represented by Joanna Rubin Dranger, Åsa Grennvall (Schagerström), or Lotta Sjöberg from Sweden; Kati Kovács and Emmi Nieminen from Finland; Ulli Lust, Anke Feuchtenberger, or Katja Klengel from Germany; Wanda Hagedorn from Poland; or Varvara Pomidor from Russia. Thus, identifying or categorising feminist comic art can be considered an exercise in recognizing variations on shared aesthetic, discursive, and ideological themes.

FEMINIST COMICS around the Baltic Sea region draw their aesthetic influences and feminist ideas from several sources; a transnational perspective highlights practices and characteristics of feminist comic

art which have mobilised to extend across national boundaries. However, there might also be translocal particularities, where forms of global media are adapted to meet the needs of local contexts, which themselves are increasingly linked through practices of adaptation, translation, and mediation. The idea of the Baltic Sea region as a locus for transnational collaboration and exchange also holds true when it comes to artist networks. In 2016, Femicomix Finland, a network for feminist minded comics artists and activists, co-edited an issue of *Kuti* magazine dedicated to feminist comics (*Kuti* #40). The issue included comics from the Baltic Sea region (Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Russia, and Sweden) but also from other parts of Europe and around the world. Femicomix Finland itself was established in 2013, drawing its inspiration from the Swedish feminist network Dotterbolaget, which was founded in 2005 by a group of women who had studied at the Comic Art School of Malmö, Sweden. Central to Dotterbolaget's explicit ethos is creating and upholding a collaborative and supportive network among women and trans people inside the comics industry, an ideology that Femicomix also subscribes to. Similar networks (and important partners for transnational collaboration) include the Chicago-based Ladies Night Anthology and the British collectives Comic Book Slumber Party and Laydeez do Comics, which share the aim of promoting female creators and diversity in the comics industry.

FEMINIST COMIC ART, especially that which reflects the continuous flux between transnational and local influences, has the potential to proliferate, thus not only responding to but also creating political and cultural debate. Transnational connections, that is, aesthetic, social, political, economic, and cultural interaction reaching across national boundaries, shape comics cultures and graphic narratives. Translating works from one language to another is a common way to enable a transnational flow of ideas and narratives; however, not only can translations, festivals, artist meetings, or collaborative works (such as anthologies, zines, etc.) create transnational interaction between artists, but also the Internet, especially via social media platforms such as Instagram, enables transnational networking. One example is Free Comic Book Day (FCBD) aimed at promoting the comic book industry, FCBD showcases both established and up-and-coming creators, ideally sparking an interest in reading comics and providing exposure to alternative formats and lesser-known genres.[2] These different platforms have made it easier for readers to find new comics and artists from other cultures and language areas.

Considering the current state of the world, in which one crisis seemingly succeeds another, we can expect a variety of lived experiences, consequences, and commentary to be documented in many ways, including in the medium of comic art and graphic narrative.

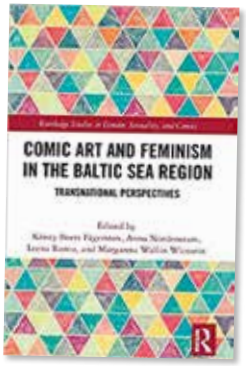
Ulli Lust, Germany.

Kristy Beers Fägersten
Södertörn University

Leena Romu
Tampere University

Anna Nordenstam
Gothenburg University

Margareta Wallin Wictorin
Karlstad University



The authors are co-editors of *Comic Art and Feminism in the Baltic Sea Region. Transnational Perspectives* (2021, Routledge).

references

1 In 2011, Päivälehti museum (a museum dedicated for media) organised an event called Changing the Woman Image which included a panel discussion about women and comics. The participants hoped that, in the future, there would be no more panels dedicated to "women's comics". During the same year, Tampere Kuplii comics festival hosted cartoonist Solja Järvenpää's presentation titled "Women's comics – a curse word?" which was the topic also in a panel discussion at Helsinki Comics Festival in 2013.

2 Free Comic Book Day (FCBD) usually falls on the first Saturday of May; due to the pandemic, it was cancelled in 2020 and postponed in 2021 to August 14.

The Stanisław Lorentz Courtyard of the National Museum in Warsaw.

PHOTO: BURGERERSF/CC

TRAUMATIC CONTEMPORANEITY

REFLECTIONS ON PIOTR PIOTROWSKI'S CRITICAL MUSEOGRAPHY

by **Dan Karlholm**

abstract

This essay analyses two texts by the Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski (1952–2015) articulating theoretical stances towards art museography. Reflecting on how they deal with psychological as well as openly political issues, I interpret and assess their joint contribution to the broader interdisciplinary field of (critical) museography. The texts are "New Museums in New Europe" and "Making the National Museum Critical". Together the texts developed Piotrowski's concept of "the critical museum" as a way of dealing with the challenges of running an old national art museum based on masterpieces while also striving to engage with pressing contemporary issues. which is a prerequisite for critical intervention.

KEYWORDS: Piotr Piotrowski, the critical museum, museography, art museum, traumaphobia, traumaphilia, post-communism.

Theoretical support for large segments of current avant-garde research in art history in general, and research on East European art history in particular, derives from Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski (1952–2015).[1] Notable among his many books and publications are *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe 1945–1989* (in Polish 2005, in English 2009) and *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* (published as *Agoraphilia – Sztuka I demokracja w postkomunistycznej Europie* in Polish 2010, in English 2012).[2] Piotrowski's most widely known and influential contribution to art historiography is his proposal of a paradigm shift towards what he terms "horizontal art history" in contra-distinction to prevailing models, which he argues are vertical, i.e. hierarchical, and by implication, Western. His ambition was to depart from art histories of the Western (West European and American) kind, privileging the West and a Western concept of

art, often veiled as universal, which inevitably leaves Central and Eastern Europe, and the rest of the world, outside the orbit of scholarly attention. The center-periphery binary is at the center, so to speak, of his idea of promoting a horizontal approach to art history, one also in line with "critical art geography" and "alter-globalist art history".[3] These ideas of Piotrowski's were first formulated in response to exhibitions in East-Central Europe.[4] Not least the exhibition *Europa, Europa* (1994), strongly criticized by Piotrowski, became a starting point for his critical suggestion to horizontalize art history.[5] His contributions to museography, on new post-communist museums and "the critical museum", are additional responses to the situation.

In this essay, I will look at two texts by Piotrowski that articulate theoretical stances towards art museography: one devoted to issues of trauma management, contemporaneity and identity, and the other presenting a methodological tactic to deflect the power of the art-historical museum piece in critical and democratic ways. Reflecting on how the texts deal with psychological as well as openly political issues, I will interpret and assess their joint contribution to the broader interdisciplinary field of (critical) museography. The more widely used label is museology, which is about practices of the museum branch, but when the analysis is of a more theoretical nature and/or regards how museums are taken to write or perform history, museography is arguably a preferable term.[6] The texts are "New Museums in New Europe",[7] and "Making the National Museum Critical".[8] The first text discusses four new or newly re-furbished museums in a culture in Eastern Europe characterized since 1989 as "post-traumatic" (203).[9] These museums are contextualized both in relation to the Western museum boom of the same years, and to the new museums' recent history, where sometimes the very architecture and site of these institutions renders trauma tangible. The second text is a case-study based on experience and inside knowledge, from the short period when the author directed and together with Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius oversaw the Warsaw National Museum of Art (2009–2010). Together they developed Piotrowski's concept of "the critical museum" as a way of dealing with the challenges of running an old national art museum based on masterpieces while also striving to engage with pressing contemporary issues.[10]

"THE VERY CONCEPT OF THE PAST IS ANALOGOUS TO THE CONCEPT OF TRAUMA BY HAVING ITS ROOT IN THE BYGONE 'PAST" WHILE REFERRING TO A LINGERING OR PRESENT SITUATION."

Traumatic past?

Before presenting any museums anywhere, the text "New Museums in New Europe" begins by establishing "two reference points", the first on the nature of the past, and the second on the role for art within such a past. According to the first reference, it is alleged that "the past always has a traumatic character" (202), although, the author cautions, this use of the word 'trauma' is not strictly psychoanalytical, but more colloquial. While the 20th century has certainly been fertile soil for traumatic courses of events, it is a little curious to ascribe to the past as such the character of trauma. Presumably, the past is seen as a trauma-generating component, although this is also quickly qualified: the past "almost always" contains hardships the effects of which must be dealt with in the present. To grasp the statement that the past is (almost) always traumatic we may have to understand "the past" here as affiliated with the reality of trauma, in the sense that both of these phenomena are retro-actively constructed (which is in line with psychanalysis, generally speaking, according to which trauma is seen as a deferred (*nachträglich*) phenomenon in time, a temporal drag disturbing the subject today). While trauma theory is a multifaceted discipline today, and psychoanalysis, elaborated by Sigmund Freud, only a part of the complex, this is what Piotrowski loosely refers to.[11]

Importantly, the very concept of the past is analogous to the concept of trauma by having its root in the bygone "past" while referring to a lingering or present situation. This means that *the past* is a present summary of what has happened (regardless of whether we include everything that has ever happened or just some selection fit for history writing), just as trauma (insofar as there is one) is like a wound or scar from a previous event that does not heal and continues to haunt the subject in the present.[12] The reference, in colloquial speech or by Piotrowski in this text, to a "traumatic past" (202) seems to refer to a bygone past which was already "traumatic" in character, but trauma is better understood as neither a cause nor a mere result, but what sociologist Piotr Sztompka designates as a "traumatic sequence". Sztompka further refers to bygone events, which are virtually destined to give rise to trauma in the subjects exposed to them, as "traumatogenic".[13] The key here is that there are always two temporal moments or scenes to distinguish a trauma referring to them both. The expression "post-traumatic", coined in 1980 and referenced here, is thus literally tautological, since trauma always already implies or involves a delayed state after or "post" some previous event.[14] No event is essentially traumatic, only potentially so. Both keywords – trauma and the past – belong with our relative contemporaneity vis-à-vis a time that has passed. Piotrowski contends that "in looking backwards we are addressing a recollection of trauma or approaching the issue from a somewhat different perspective, a traumatization of memory". But we can only recollect trauma once we are no longer traumatized, otherwise this phrase becomes tautological too; recollection and trauma are equally contemporary, both erupting within the subject at a distance from the events themselves. Trauma *is* a form of recollection, although not always a conscious one.[15] For Freud, however, trauma hinges not on memory but on compulsive repetition, where the trauma-generative experience is relived or re-experienced in dreams, rather than remembered:

> **I am not aware [...] that patients suffering from traumatic neurosis are much occupied in their waking lives with memories of their accident. Perhaps they are more concerned with not thinking of it." In general, the patient "is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, remembering it as something belonging to the past.[16]**

Fear or love?

The second reference point concerns how art can assist in processing trauma within "cultural memory" (202).[17] While both trauma and memory are deeply individualized phenomena, these concepts have been extended for quite some time to include collective and cultural experiences, which is how Piotrowski uses them.[18] Trauma not only serves the author to interpret the museum culture of "New Europe", i.e. after 1989 or 1991, a further distinction between two opposite reactions to (potentially) traumatic events is made: one negative (*traumaphobia*, literally a fear of trauma) and the other positive (*traumaphilia*, literally a love of trauma). The latter term derives from Roger Luckhurst, who picked it up from Walter Benjamin, and is the most unconventional of the two.[19] How could something as troublesome and potentially devastating as trauma be embraced affirmatively, in terms of joy or love? It is explained that both terms and both syndromes depart from a "negative legacy" but deal with this differently. The conceptual pair is the tool for the following analysis of the four museums, where some of these could be read as conforming to the first and others to the second form of response.

Having concluded that "museums as institutions thrive in the globalized world", Piotrowski laments that this development has largely "bypassed Eastern Europe". Given the allegedly "low interest in post-communist countries in art museums" (204), it is easy to appreciate the ensuing explanation:

> **In Eastern Europe the neo-liberal cult of money and faith in self-regulation of the markets has created barriers for support of cultural projects, especially public ones. (205)**

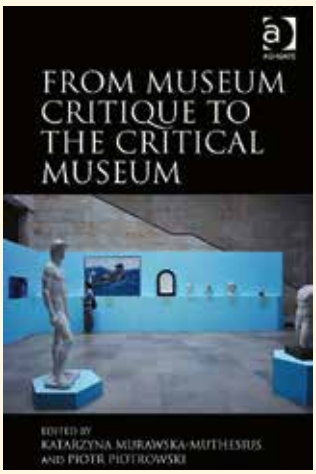
Nevertheless, new museums were erected, although the examples included only opened in the 2000s, and one was still under construction. The first comparison concerns the National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) in Bucharest, housed since 2004 in a small part of the massive People's Palace built by Ceausescu in the 1980s, and the Museum of Art (KUMU) in Tallinn, inaugurated in 2009, without connections to a difficult heritage site, as well as the National Gallery of Art in Vilnius, housed in the former Museum of Revolution erected in the Soviet period.

The argument on horizontal art history is here interestingly transferred to a differentiating *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* within and between the former East European countries. The MNAC

PHOTO: BOGDAN BOROWIAK/PAP

Piotr Piotrowski.

Book cover from 2012.



Book cover from 2015.

PHOTO: MNAC

The National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) in Bucharest is housed since 2004 in a small part of the massive People's Palace built by Ceausescu in the 1980s.

in Bucharest as a literal part of the past (by being incorporated architectonically in the People's Palace) was supposedly determined to avoid all references to the past and aim only for the future (of global contemporary art).[20] By contrast, the first exhibition at KUMU, a brand new museum complex on relatively neutral ground, chose to confront the past head on through the curator Eha Kommisarov's design for the permanent exhibition, including socialist realist art from the period of occupation along with older art and post-Soviet art.[21] The first is an example of traumaphobia, and the other of traumaphilia, in Piotrowski's analysis. We could of course discuss whether the choice of MNAC was really generated by a kind of "fear" of the past, and not by a pragmatic sense of no longer having or wanting to dwell on the past instead of actively departing from it, finally. Or whether KUMU's choice was really one of love or "joy", when they managed to present socialist realist art as in many respects decent art, not always propaganda kitsch, to thereby face the facts of a troubling legacy, i.e. as "a necessary historical reference" (213). Also, although "[n]either the location nor the architecture of KUMU relates in any way to the communist past" (212), is this – the conscious decision to erect a new building in a beautiful, slightly remote park – not to be counted, too, as a way of relating to or at least responding to the communist past? Furthermore, regarding the MNAC in Bucharest, the author acknowledges that the first exhibition of this museum, which operates more like a temporary art space, did confront its troubling past and "had nothing to do with traumaphobia". But the exhibition program that followed is accused of traumaphobia due to it not relating at all to the "post-communist condition", thus abandoning "the critical perspective demonstrated in such a promising way by the inauguration show" (210).

Critical or not?

Does MNAC, then, by choosing to work on global contemporary art now and for the future, really reveal "its flight from history and its trauma [unveiling] the abnegation of a critical attitude towards the past" (210)? It had one exhibition, its first, where the "critical" criteria were met, according to the author, but that is clearly not enough to face up to its traumatic history. We seem to be stuck with a slightly absurd choice, then: either an institution is repressing its past, refusing, supposedly, to deal with it, or it remains faithful to the seemingly insatiable imperatives of critical processing. Repression or repetition is not much of a choice, however. Aiming for a restart may sound naïve, but perhaps it is also constructive and "creative".[22] Perhaps another attitude is warranted in this analysis, one which has been discussed in terms of the "limits of critique" by Rita Felski:

> **Critique is a remarkably contagious and charismatic idea, drawing everything into its field of force, patrolling the boundaries of what counts as serious thought. It is virtually synonymous with intellectual rigor, theoretical sophistication, and intransigent opposition to the status quo. Drawing a sense of philosophical weightiness from its proximity to the tradition of Kant and Marx, it also retains a cutting-edge sensibility, retooling itself to fit the needs and demands of new fields. For many scholars in the humanities it is not one good thing but the only imaginable thing. Critique, as I've noted, just is the exercise of thoughtful intelligence and independence of mind. To refuse critique, by the same token, is to sink into the mire of complacency, credulity and conservatism. Who would want to be associated with the bad smell of the uncritical?**

Felski also points to what she terms a "strong contextualism" in approaches, such as Piotrowski's, where "texts are scanned for signs of sociohistorical fractures and traumas that they studiously suppress".[23] The contextualism at play here comes close to an equally strong, not say forbidding, historicism, according to which institutions are compelled to stay faithful to, not to say repeat, their unique past. The paradox is of course that the point of psychoanalysis is to ultimately work through, successfully mourn or somehow overcome the disturbances from the past to be able to leave them behind.

To play the devil's advocate, KUMU's move, for example, could be seen as a tactical decision to refrain from "critique", in the sense of both critical judgement and conversation-stopping

"abnegation", and of opting, instead, for full "unconcealment", to paraphrase Martin Heidegger, regardless of present aesthetic preferences and museographic conventions. While the term "critical" has been the object of reexamination in recent years, Piotrowski certainly has a point by insisting, as he has elsewhere, that "[b]eing critical is an obligation for every intellectual, not just for scholars, art historians, and artists. No, we all have to think critically. Democracy is not a gift, it is not a given, we have to fight for this every day because there are always enemies. Critical ways of thinking can be used to disarm those who are against democracy."[24] The question is, of course, whether the intensely contemporary (and future-oriented) fight for sustainable democracy must be forever linked to its traumatic past, or to the essentially re-active and negative mode of critique, to which I will return when discussing the next text.

Included in this analysis is a reference to the post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha on mimicry, which is, in my interpretation, a misunderstanding, since it is indeed a critical strategy. By deliberately adopting – mimicking – the modes or mores of the colonizer, one can create a critical difference, which enables forms of resistance to colonial discourse. Piotrowski's allegation of self-colonialization fails to consider that "the effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing."[25] The MNAC in Bucharest, moreover, is not only accused of "self-colonization" (Kiossev), as a kind of mimicry, but also of denying its "local character".[26] The latter allegation, again, seems to imply that institutions should remain true to their roots, whether they like it or not, and stay tied to their ethnic/historical/political origins, that is, never to opt out of it or aspire to form a new identity. Hans Belting is quoted as saying that "all museums are local", which is a bit like saying that all humans are individuals or from some specific place.[27] The point of the observation may be to imply that no museums are "global", to follow this jaded polarity. Local is actually a good general term with which to denote a specific (non-general) place, whereas global is a general concept used to denote a sweeping inter-connectedness of world-encompassing dimensions, which reminds us of the saying that the whole is always a lie. Both terms are descriptive, but they are used normatively about concrete phenomena. The MNAC is faulted for its "policy of adopting a certain attitude of mimicry and [harboring an] uncritical desire to inscribe itself into a more imagined than real art world" (211).[28] But if we cannot even imagine a new art world (in "New Europe"), nor promote imagination in place of a "real", still West-centered or allegedly "global" art world, or what Jacques Lacan termed The Real (basically trauma), we are arguably in big(ger) trouble.[29]

"BY DELIBERATELY ADOPTING – MIMICKING – THE MODES OR MORES OF THE COLONIZER, ONE CAN CREATE A CRITICAL DIFFERENCE."

The KUMU, by contrast, was determined to seriously "work through" (212) trauma not by hiding their troubling past, or trying to forget it, but instead by exposing it in order, supposedly, to relieve itself of the specters of the past.[30] The case of The National Art Gallery in Vilnius is said to similarly work through the burden of the past, although its chief curator Lolita Jablonskiene is mildly criticized for choosing to be "pragmatic rather than ideological", whereas the author as historian argues that the context of the museum, with its Soviet heritage, "cannot be neutral on the deeper semantic level" (215). The site and the building (however reconstructed) are by no means neutral, but the decision to "ignore" this circumstance is not neutral either (or a case of ignorance). In this museum too, as in the KUMU, art from the Soviet period is integrated into the permanent display, although not without frictions.[31] Being pragmatic here, rather than ideological (a tainted word), could amount to acknowledging the heritage and still proceeding (pragmatically) in order not to remain in the past or feel obliged to perpetually reiterate its burdensome character.

In Warsaw, we learn, things are "much more complicated". At the time of writing, the Museum of Modern Art was still under construction. The statement that the "nature of the dialectic relationship between traumaphobia and traumaphilia, which in Poland is simply not as obvious as in the other countries" (216), may be correct, but this is not just the author's country of origin, but a place where he has been involved in directing the national art museum, which means that his bias on this point is not acknowledged. Interestingly, the new building is described as circumscribed by its Soviet environment in Parade Square featuring the Soviet-era Palace of Science and Culture and adjacent Stalin-period housing, but in ways that did not challenge any of this:

> **In historic terms, [the winner Christian] Kerez's project represents neither disavowal, nor an effort to address the trauma. It neither rejects nor wishes to repeat the negative legacy. Instead it functions in terms of coexistence, as a certain correspondence between the present and the past. (217)**[32]

This sounds, indeed, like a smart solution, like deciding to (i.e. remembering to) forget. One reason, of course, not to engage "the trauma" or "the negative legacy", as hinted at above, is that in Poland, Socialist realism ceased to be imposed in 1956, giving a comparable amount of freedom of expression, notwithstanding that a velvet prison is also a prison.[33] In terms of the traumaphilia/traumaphobia model, the Warsaw case is presented as an exception to this binary choice, possibly as a kind of synthesis. The quoted paragraph also connects with horizontality understood as a certain kind of neutrality or short-circuit of options. However this is put, we obviously do not have to choose, then, between forgetting or remembering, denying or embracing, critically confronting or affirming. Museums can very well function "in terms of coexistence" regarding these alternatives, whereby present and past can meet and correspond, which is

one fruitful way of understanding contemporaneity with respect to art.[34] The mission of the good museum, formulated in straightforward terms, also arrives at a kind of co-existence between the local and the global:

> **[…] museums, in particular (though not exclusively) museums of modern/contemporary art, could potentially function as political forums, places where the contemporary condition, whether defined as global, post-colonial or post-communist, could be debated. They could play this role precisely because they span the distance between locality and globality. (212)**

The idea that museums of art may constitute a forum for political debate has a relatively long pedigree in the West, going back at least to the 1960s, when Pontus Hultén suggested it for the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris,[35] but in a museum culture stamped for decades by Socialist/Communist dictatorships, the question is of course of a different weight. An important link is established here between this essay and the following one on "the critical museum".

"THE QUESTION, HOWEVER, IS HARDLY THE NUMBER OF MASTERPIECES BUT WHAT IS BEING DONE WITH THEM."

The critical museum

In the essay "Making the National Museum Critical", Piotrowski draws on his experience of directing the Warsaw National Museum and the collaborations with his co-curator and later co-editor Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius. The reader is invited to follow the journey from the initial offer Piotrowski received in 2009 to direct the museum, to how he, and the two of them, chose to go about it, leading to his premature resignation only a year later. According to the author, to begin with, as:

> **[…] the museum was unable to compete with the world's largest museums in terms of its number of 'masterpieces', the only possibility was to propose an original conception of the museum institution, which would not be reduced to the reproduction of existing western models, but – in contrast – would derive its strength from the specificity of its position on the margins of Europe, challenging and expanding the canon of world cultural heritage. Thus, […] our aim was to turn the museum into a critical agent within the public sphere, an institution capable of taking a stance on the key issues in Polish or East European societies, an active actor in a process of developing democracy. (137)**

What is immediately revealed here is a different notion of critical/critique, compared to the one used in the former essay. No longer is this keyword employed to process a traumatic past, but used, instead, as a "critical agent" for the public to develop democracy in a yet incompletely democratized Poland. The former sense was heavily burdened by the past, whereas this one smacks rather optimistically of the future.

The explicit justification for the curator's choice to turn the museum into an agent for democracy is here of course only that it had so few masterpieces, compared to the largest museums in the world, forcing the curators to propose something new. The question, however, is hardly the number of masterpieces but what is being done with them. Before discussing the critical museum concept, a historical background is provided. While this museum is, indeed, an art gallery, despite its name (analogous to the Stockholm Nationalmuseum), the curators' aim was to avoid maintaining this institution as an old-fashioned temple of art (and only art) as well as resisting the pressures of neo-liberal policies to attain as large a number of visitors as possible, i.e. treating the museum as part of the culture industry. Instead, the goal was to open the museum toward society and seize on urgent issues of the day, again creating an arena for political debate, broadly conceived. This brave new order is quickly brought down to earth with the following surprisingly pragmatic announcement:

> **The museums located on the margins of artistic geography are much more likely to become the avant-garde, since they are provoked to adopt alternative subversive strategies because of their own weaknesses. They cannot just open the door and wait, but must come up with a new vision of the museum. In Warsaw, the idea of the critical museum was such a vision. (139)**

Compared to the Louvre, the Warsaw museum may be relatively weak and marginal (as the Stockholm Nationalmuseum may also be), but why compare them at all? In Poland, this museum of the capital and largest city is a central or "leading" one, indeed "a full-blown Universal Survey Museum" established as early as 1862 (138), but Piotrowski always seeks, it seems, to secure the margin or periphery from which an underdog avant-garde strategy appears as the appropriate response. The above measures, while understandable, however, come close to justifying, no doubt unintentionally, the avant-garde makeover as a market strategy to cover up weaknesses and to respond to the ever-present need to advertise novelties. What was needed, in more concrete terms, was allegedly "a new policy of display" for the permanent as well as temporary galleries. Why was this needed? To "attract the public" or gain more visitors …

The strategy, called "Interventions" here, familiar from other museums of art in the West, to which this museum is consistently compared, was to juxtapose artworks from historical periods with contemporary ones, and vice versa, as "an invitation to consider what a museum exhibition is, how art history is constructed, how the work of art is placed in the standard historical narrative, and how it can be perceived in terms other than historical" (140). A reference to Mieke Bal's "preposterous history"

PHOTO: MARTIN HÖFER/CC

The National Gallery of Art, Vilnius.

PHOTO: MAIT METSUR/AEROFOTOD.EE/CC

KUMU, Tallinn.

follows and although the concept is not used, the idea testifies to a heterochronic or anachronic sensibility, where artworks are liberated from their initial contexts to resonate in other temporal environments, which could be seen as a critical practice, destined to upset the linear and implicitly progressive canon of national art history.[36] To challenge the prevailing canon by "expanding" it, as described in the quotation above, is one way of proceeding, which has to steer carefully clear of challenging the canon or canonicity itself, in order not to deflate the value of masterpieces as such.[37] While the concept of Interventions may have been "a simple method", it did shake up the linear basis of the museum of art, thus forcing the museum to critique its own art historical premises as well as its founding authority or power position. The strategy emphasized that every exhibition in a museum intervenes in a sense into the received orders and established modes of thought, and that they never obey some historical necessity but are chosen deliberately.

Museums and democracy

Piotrowski has elsewhere referenced Jean-Marc Poinsot who alleged that "to organize an exhibition is to write the history of art".[38] How is this practical form of museography compatible with the idea of museums establishing critical public forums for supporting democracy? Can one write history and simultaneously create democratic fora? How does the authoritative museum voice resonate with the public's multitude of opinions? Piotrowski refers to Pointsot claim that the overall idea was to "rearrange the whole permanent display":

> **We believed that the permanent galleries of the museum should be re-hung according to a general rethinking of its holdings in terms of a discussion with the European art history canon. Besides, to face international competition, primarily in Europe, the museum wovuld also have to develop a new and original formula for its displays. Such a new formula would have to take into account the existing artistic geography, as well as the general assumption that the canon of European art has been shaped by artistic centers in relation to the idea of the masterpiece. (141)**

It is clear that creating a political forum to develop democracy was not the only goal here, but rethinking the canon of (Western) European art history as well, which could of course be symbolically associated with democracy as a value, at least as this was enforced (followed by traumatizing terror) through the French revolution. The point about rethinking the canon was particularly forwarded by Murawska-Muthesius, who argued, in Piotrowski's words, that masterpieces are constructed by museums and academic art history.[39] Canons as well as the concept of masterpiece, however, have a relative usage, applicable in the referenced "margins" of the art world, as well as the "centers", i.e. denoting the best within any given order of visual artefacts. The important thing is not to deconstruct, "criticize" or deny the power of the masterpiece, according to the authors, but rather to deflect it, and turn it around critically, which is an interesting strategy. After recounting two successful exhibitions – *Mediators* and *Ars Homo Erotica* – it is concluded that "the museum and the critical function of the artwork" need not be contradictory, which is generally assumed, according to Piotrowski.[40]

> **Instead "the artwork can serve a critical role precisely because of its museum status. The critical status of the art object does not lead to its 'de-musealization,' rather it is critical because of its 'musealization'." (146)**

The precondition, it seems, for museum objects to play a critical role in society is that their status or traditional role as prestigious museum artefacts is maintained but used in such a way by the museum apparatus itself that they can respond to critical demands.[41] In the pathbreaking *Ars Homo Erotica*, curated by Pawel Leszkowicz, works from the collection, such as 19th century paintings of mythological subjects, were brushed up against contemporary art and thematic sections informed by queer politics. This too may look like a rather "simple method", but it flies in the face of ages of museum critique, including the more recent "institutional critique" alluded to in the title of this anthology, which follows Quatremère de Quincy in the early 19th century all the way to Theodor Adorno et al. in the latter part of the 20th century, according to which museums are themselves antithetical to critique since they kill and bury those very objects

through which such a critique could be mounted – the artworks turned into museum exhibits.[42] It turns out then, that "the critical museum" is critical of generations of Western style museum critique, which has failed to understand how museums could in fact employ – rather than symbolically destroy – its richest resources critically. It is not an issue of what you display, but how you do it, and for what purposes. It is neither an abnegation of current criticality nor of the bygone past; rather, literally a post-traumatic strategy in the sense of a reinvention of tradition (partly traumatic) or of amassing concrete and highly valued bits of the past as the contemporary building blocks of the (hopefully democratic) future.

The critical museum concept is based upon an enforced, not "democratically" lessened, power position of the museum/curator. Its reliance upon strong statements and directives of the curators may conflict with the general idea of democratic debate, i.e. among people whose only qualification is to have no qualification, whose entitlement to govern and be governed is to lack such entitlement, to draw on the argument on democracy from Jacques Rancière.[43] The "critical" decision to turn renowned works of art into agents of democracy is not itself democratic, but an elitist one, as it has to be. But if critique and democracy are sometimes an asymmetrical partnership, what about trauma and (contemporary) history in museums of art? Both must be understood in relation to the global and the local as well, since museums, again, are said to "span the distance between locality and globality" (212).

"THE 'CRITICAL' DECISION TO TURN RENOWNED WORKS OF ART INTO AGENTS OF DEMOCRACY IS NOT ITSELF DEMOCRATIC."

The constant comparison with the West, the global, the central and the (West) European museums with real masterpieces is curious given the author's otherwise continuous stress on acknowledging the local, which does sound reasonable in order to create a political forum in a museum of art, but not so much when it comes to writing (art) history, perhaps (unless its most local version). In relational terms, the biggest museum of art in Poland is not "marginal", as Piotrowski has it, except in non-local terms, i.e. when these terms are not adequately understood as a relationship of "co-existence" – as earlier attributed to the "traumatic past" and the recovering present. Piotrowski interestingly also suggests that while Poland had no trauma from communism on a par with Romania or the occupied Baltic states, the Poles could be seen as traumatized in the aftermath of the resolution of the Soviet Union by "the neoliberal policies of the 1990s" (220). From this would follow that Romania and the Baltic states were doubly traumatized, since also prey to these winds of aggressive capitalist speculation and societal change following the long period of Soviet oppression. Each has its own local issues to depart from. In Poland and in Warsaw the National Museum is central *and* local, while Western museums are marginal or even peripheral in comparison. It you want to come to grips with trauma, difficult heritage, current politics, to debate and develop "unfulfilled" democracy, it is clearly irrelevant what goes on in Paris or some abstract global time space. The locality has to be seen as a tangible instance of the global.

Concluding remarks

Critique remains a floating signifier in both of the author's texts, although in the first one it refers primarily to the management of the past, while in the second it is primarily an agent of current and future change. Are they compatible, two sides of the same coin: one devoted to retrospective history and the other to contemporary politics? Although dealt with separately in these relatively short essays, we could try to re-unite them here, following the suggestion from the second text to view them as indeed complementary, as two perspectives that could be seen as mutually enforcing, a double-edged sword, to the war-minded scholar, or a form of peaceful "co-existence", to us pacifists.

While it is easier for museums or centers of contemporary art to be critical and act as fora for political discussion, not least since so much of this art relates openly to contemporary politics, the strategy to devise a similar concept for a museum of (old) masterpieces is brilliant. To take artworks seriously, as a form of living heritage and not just dead memories of themselves, they have to be re-visited, thus re-contextualized and put to work actively and creatively for each new public and each new interest. They may thus be regarded as critical not despite of but because of their musealization, as the argument goes, which makes them powerful, symbolic objects with accumulated cultural weight. When such auratic objects are, moreover, called on to perform or reform current ideas, to illustrate or question issues anachronistic to the pieces themselves, a political dimension is inevitably unleashed (the direction of which is another issue). What all this implies is that for the museum to be or become critical, it must remain un- or, better, acritical. For the museum to intervene, challenge or "disrupt" its own premises or narratives, it must remain a stranger to itself. For the museum to perform critical difference, the split, gap or trauma-like wound must be safeguarded, prevented from ever quite healing.

What Piotrowski contributes to critical museography is a connection between new art history and museum exhibitions, in general. He has also innovatively, if not altogether satisfactorily (even to himself), interpreted museographic decisions to make use of traumaphobic and traumaphilic strategies. A more promising model is the critical museum, which I interpret as a way to perform a double-sided but anti-dichotomous strategy to read historical works as contemporary and contemporary ones as (already or potentially) historical; where recent history is seen as both traumatogenic and as a way to come to terms with this and build a different future (thus a different history) with art and public dialogue and critical debate. However, at the risk of mincing words, I must conclude with a reflection

on terminology. Does not the decision to pin the epithet "critical" to the entire museum run the risk of ossifying the desired criticality of such an institution? Could not the move to institutionalize critique, to make it a permanent part of the building, its site and contents, be counter-productive, or even contradictory? Does not the critical potential and agency of the critical museum rely on the non- or acritical character of its musealized exhibits? Could not a whole critical museum run the risk of becoming uncritically "critical", i.e. critical as a default mode for everything of importance, as Felski raised concerns about? Beyond ancient *museum critique* and *the critical museum*, we might need a constantly responsive *critique in the museum*, which would involve maintaining the friction and differential energy unlocked between a stable material of musealized heritage and the shifting critical interests and needs of the present.

Dan Karlholm is Professor in Art History at Södertörn University.

Note: This paper was written as part of the research project "Art, culture, conflict: transformations of museums and memory culture in the Baltic Sea region after 1989", led by me and involving Associate Professors Johan Hegardt and Annika Öhrner, sponsored by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies.

references

1 "Having been one of the few eastern European art historians whose work became well-known and widely read by international audiences, Piotrowski became the 'leading voice' of what has gradually revealed itself to be a first wave of postsocialist art history writing in the region." Beata Hock, "Introduction– Globalizing East European Art Histories. The Legacy of Piotr Piotrowski and a Conference", *Globalizing East European Art Histories. Past and Present*, ed. Beata Hock & Anu Allas (London & New York: Routledge, 2018), 1.

2 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2009); Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2012). The Polish, actually Greek, title was deemed unsellable in the English-speaking world. Information from Agata Jakubowska, seminar on Piotrowski at the Art History department, Södertörn University, 2019-09-25; Cf. also the bibliography: "Bibliografia Publikacji Profesora Dr. Hab. Piotra Piotrowskiego": https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/aq/article/view/14572/14247 (accessed 2020-11-07)

3 Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal Art History of the European Avant-Garde", in Sasha Bru et al. (eds.) *Europe! Europe? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 49–58; "East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory", *nonsite.org* #12 (accessed October 15, 2020); "From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History": http://rcin.org.pl/Content/59977/WA248_79759_P-I-2524_piotrow-from_o.pdf (accessed November 5, 2020)

4 Jakubowska, ibid.; Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 11–30. An overview of post-1989 exhibitions, cf. Svetla Kazalarska, "Re-drawing the Art Map of 'New Europe'", In: Gheorghe, Catalin & Cristian Nae (eds.) *Exhibiting the "Former East": Identity Politics and Curatorial Practices after 1989. A Critical Reader* (Iasi: University of Arts "George Enescu", 2013), 21-30.

5 The exhibition *Europa, Europa: Das Jahrhundert des Avantgarde im Mittel- und Osteuropa* was curated by Ryszard Stanislawski and Christoph Brockhaus in Bonn, 1994. Cf. also Bru et al. (eds.), *Europa!, Europa?*; Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 17ff.

6 According to Merriam-Webster, museology is "the science or profession of museum organization and management" while museography refers to "museum methods of classification and display". Cf. also Anthony Shelton, "Critical Museology: A Manifesto", *Museum Worlds Advances in Research* 2013, Vol. 1, Issue 1; Anwar Tlili, "Encountering the Creative Museum: Museographic creativeness and the bricolage of time materials", *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 2016-04-15, Vol.48 (5), 443–458; Pedro Llorente, "From the White Cube to a Critical Museography: The Development of Interrogative, Plural and Subjective Museum Discourses" in Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius & Piotr Piotrowski (eds.), *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum* (London & New York: Routledge, 2015), 115–128.

7 The first version of this text was "New Museums in East-Central Europe. Between Traumaphobia and Traumaphilia", in Claire Bishop & Marta Dziewanska (eds.), *1968–1989: Political Upheaval and Artistic Change* (Warszawa: Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej, 2009), 148–166, 418–437, subsequently included in *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 202–21. A shorter version appeared as "New Museums/New Europe: Traumaphilia–Traumaphobia", in Mária Orisková (ed.), *Curating 'EASTERN EUROPE' and Beyond: Art Histories through the Exhibition* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 91–98.

8 In Murawska-Muthesius & Piotrowski (eds.), *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, 137–46. Parts of the essay were previously published in "Museum: From the Critique of Institution to a Critical Institution", in Tone Hansen (ed.), *(Re)Staging the Art Museum* (Henie Onstad Art Center/Berlin: Revolver, 2011) and "Critical Objects: The De-Musealization of Art?" in G. U. Grossmann & Petra Krutisch (eds.), *The Challenge of the Object* (Nuremberg: Verlag des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 2013).

9 These are the National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) in Bucharest, Romania (founded in 2001, moved to its present locations in 2004), KUMU art museum in Tallinn, Estonia (2006), the National Gallery of Art in Vilnius, Lithuania (which opened in new quarters in 2009), and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (still under construction at the time of writing).

10 "The critical museum's mission is to use the aura of the masterpiece to replace its emancipatory potential, and to reintegrate art into the praxis of life." Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, "Masterpieces and the Critical Museum", in Katarzuna Murawska Muthesius & Piotr Piotrowski (eds.), *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, 99–114. Cf. also the untitled preface on her late colleague, who did not live to see the publication of this book.

11 E.g. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1996) (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2016); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2001). Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008); Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012); Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (New York: Fordham U.P., 2016).

12 Etymologically, the Greek word *trauma* means injury or wound, originally in a physical and later psychic sense. Cf. https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=trauma (accessed April 14, 2021).

13 Piotr Sztompka, "The Trauma of Social Change: a Case of Postcommunist Societies", in Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: The Univ. of California Press, 2004), 155–195 esp. 158, 168. Piotrowski refers to this source in note 21.

14 "…an event can only be understood as traumatic *after* the fact, through the symptoms and flashbacks and the delayed attempts at understanding that these signs of disturbance produce". Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, 1, 5.

15 It is of course possible to subsequently recollect our being previously traumatized, but that is hardly the point the author wishes to make here.

16 Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), available at: http://www.openschooleast.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/sigmund-freud-BPP.pdf (598, 602) (accessed April 14, 2021).

17 Cf. Astrid Erll & Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

18 Cf. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992); Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. On Poland, especially, cf. Elzbieta Tarkowska, "Collective Memory, Social Time and Culture: The Polish Tradition in Memory Studies", *Polish Sociological Review*, 2013, No. 183, 281–296.

19 Luckhurst, "Traumaculture", *New Formations*, No. 50 (Autumn 2003), 28–47.

20 The museum's website tells a different story today: "…Romania's contemporary history and art history enter into dialogue through the systematic display of one of our country's most eclectic museum collections. Inherited mostly from other institutions and reflecting, up until 1990, the purchase mechanisms of the former communist cultural propaganda structures, the MNAC collection is able to contribute to a nuanced outlook on Romanian artistic life, from a perspective guided not only by value criteria but also by an overview of the social, economic and political context that influenced its becoming." https://www.mnac.ro/home (2020-11-01).

21 Eha Kommisarov, "The Era of Radical Changes: Estonian Art from the End of the Second World War until the Restoration of Estonia's Independence", Anu Allas et al. (eds.), *Art Lives in KUMU: The Main Building of the Art Museum of Estonia* (Tallinn: Eesti Kunstimuuseum, 2014), 97–112. Cf. also Allas (ed.), *Conflict and Adaptions: Estonian Art of the Soviet Era (1940–1991)* (Tallinn: KUMU, 2016).

22 Tlili, "Encountering the Creative Museum …".

23 Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2015), 7f, 123.

24 Piotrowski, *Art Margins* interview, published January 29, 2015. https://artmargins.com/a-way-to-follow-interview-with-piotr-piotrowski/ (accessed 2020-03-13). A critical issue of democracy, however, is how to accommodate its own critics or "enemies". Cf. Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London & New York: Verso, 2006).

25 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York, Routledge, 1994), 86.

26 Alexander Kiossev, "Otherness Again: Notes on Self-Colonizing Cultures" (1998), *After the Wall*, ed. Boijana Pejlic & David Elliott, exh. cat., (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999), 114–117.

27 The source is Hans Belting "Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age", in Peter Weibel & A. Buddensieg (eds.) *Contemporary Art and the Museum: A Global Perspective* (Ostfildern: Hatje Canz, 2007). More references to Belting are included in Piotrowski, "New Museums/New Europe: Traumaphilia– Traumaphobia".

28 On alternatives to the dichotomy critical-uncritical, cf. Felski, *The Limits of Critque*; Dan Karlholm, "Postcritical or Acritical? Twelve Steps for Art History Writing in the Anthropocene", *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 2020 89/2, 150–164.

29 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London & New York: Norton, 1981), 53–64.

30 On this theme, cf. Izabela Kowalczyk, "Working through Traumatic History in Central Europe", in Orisková (ed.), *Curating 'EASTERN EUROPE'*, 138–151.

31 Cf Linara Dovidaitytė, "Post-Soviet Writing of History: The Case of the National Gallery of Art in Vilnius", *Kunstiteaduslikke uurimusi*, 2010, Vol.19 (3+04), 105–120; Neringa Stoškutė, "Tension Between Everyday Practice and the New Museology Theory: A Case of the National Gallery of Art in Vilnius", *Art History & Criticism*, 2017-12-01, Vol.13 (1), 76–87.

32 Due to a legal fight with city authorities, who accused the architect of being unwilling or unable to accommodate new functions into the building, the project seems currently suspended. "And if the city of Warsaw seeks another leading global architect to submit a new design for the Museum of Modern Art, Kerez says: 'I think it will be impossible to find an excellent architect to take on this risky business.'", https://arcspace.com/article/an-interview-with-christian-kerez/ (accessed 20-11-18)

33 Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, ch. 3; Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy…*, 68f, 86ff, 216ff.

34 "…the riddle that the problem of art sets us is precisely that of the contemporaneity of past and present". Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1986), 46.

35 E.g. Kim West, *The Exhibitionary Complex: Exhibition, Apparatus, and Media from Kulturhuset to the Centre Pompidou, 1963–1977*, Diss., (Huddinge: Södertörn University, 2017).

36 Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999); Keith Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History* (Durham & London: Duke U.P., 2013), 37–50.

37 Cf. Anna Brzyski (ed.), *Partisan Canons* (Durham: Duke U.P., 2007).

38 Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 18. The source is Jean-Marc Poinsot, "Large Exhibitions. A Sketch of a Typology", in Reesa Greenberg et al. (eds.), *Thinking about Exhibitions* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 39–66.

39 Originally, however, they were "constructed" by workshop education in the Middle Ages where the apprentice eventually graduated to master, after his or her proof of excellence or *Meisterstück* was approved. "Masterpieces and the Critical Museum", 100ff. On the modern history of this phenomenon, cf. Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001).

40 On *Arts Homo Erotica* and Piotrowski's "directorial activism", cf. Pawel Leszkowicz, "Piotr Piotrowski and the Queer Revision of East-Central European Art and Museology", in *After Piotr Piotrowski: Art, Democracy and Friendship*, ed. Agata Jakubowska & M. Radomska (Poznan: Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 2019), 143–168.

41 This is analogous to how the author argues that in Eastern Europe, artists needed to defend the dignity of art and elevate whatever they were doing to high or great art. In contradistinction to some Western art movements, like Pop, they could not afford to discredit art which was the goal of the Communist regimes. Piotrowski, "Why Were There No Great Pop Art Curatorial Projects in Eastern Europe in the 1960s", *Baltic Worlds*, Vol. VIII: 3–4 2015, 10–16.

42 Murawska Muthesius & Piotrowski (eds.), *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, 2f; David Carrier, *Museum Skepticism: A History of the Display of art in Public Galleries* (Durham & London: Duke U.P., 2006).

43 Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*.

AESTHETICS AS TECHNIQUE AND SPATIAL OCCUPATION IN HYBRID POLITICAL REGIMES

by **Tihomir Topuzovski**

abstract

This essay is exploring the theoretical approaches on the applications of politics, space, and aesthetics in hybrid regimes in the work of Foucault, Lefebvre, and Rancière. It provides some empirical background by examining various projects in Skopje and Belgrade which can shed light on the use of aesthetics as a technique for spatial occupation. Further, I explore citizens' perceptions of this spatial redefinition. The essay presents a new reflection on aesthetics within the wider understanding of the role of political rhythms in hybrid regimes and further presents an idea of how a political establishment disposes a new set of spatial practices through the field of aesthetics. This theory can contribute to the ongoing debates about the relationship between politics, spatiality, and aesthetics.

KEYWORDS: Aesthetics, spatial occupation, hybrid regimes, North Macedonia, Serbia

Political disputes around different spatial arrangements underline the influence of aesthetics and the way they can extend politics spatially, beyond a strictly conventional deployment. From this perspective, "politics is first of all a battle about perceptible and sensible material"[1] – one that revolves around what can be seen and sensed and by which politics is brought to visibility, so that it "renders an object, event, practice, or person at once visible and available for accountability".[2] Understanding the significance and meaning of a given space has introduced a new wave of power distributions arising from decisions, policies and values driven by governments and other powerful bodies. Political action, as a range of actors operating in order to impose their regimes on visibility and modes of perception, engages aesthetics that simply "provide the political life of sensation."[3]

I use the term "aesthetic-political regime"[4] to refer to this contextual space in which aesthetical manifestations are embedded into politics or more precisely, give concrete shape to a political regime's principles through a series of architectonic buildings, structures, and monuments in public spaces, sponsored by governments and local authorities. In this formulation, aesthetics, or more precisely aesthetics as a technique for spatial occupa-

tion, becomes a means of power and domination. In this sense, aesthetics is politically instrumentalized, takes many forms and versions, and is enacted in different ways. This distinction is important because it defines how organized forms, meanings, and top-down colonization of spaces by power elites to a certain extent disregards the will of the people. The relation between aesthetics and power relations is worth examining in some detail since it can provide important insights, especially in the context of the expression of power in politically authoritarian regimes. The article focuses specifically on hybrid regimes, states that are neither liberal democracies nor closed authoritarian systems, where a strong relationship between transition and the new meaning of the space, in terms of politically marked spatiality, becomes evident. It is worth noting that "the last decade of the 20th century saw the rise of a great number of regimes that cannot be easily classified as either authoritarian or democratic but display some characteristics of both".[5] Furthermore, it can be argued that the visual manifestation of hybrid regimes is shaped through the field of aesthetics. In some cases, the governing elites reinforce contemporary right-wing populist conceptions which involve aspects of the politics of memory that are "materialized through the erection of monuments, a ceremony complex, memorabilia production, and official historiography production".[6]

THESE CONDITIONS can be exemplified by the the Western Balkan countries that are undergoing processes of transition and transformation and can be classified as "transitional governments or hybrid regimes",[7] positioned between democracy and authoritarian regimes. The hybrid regimes that are in power in the region actively produce a certain spatial contextualization and visibility: a mixture of aesthetics, politics and populism. This essay discusses these points in the cases of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia, exploring how the governments strive to change the cultural and historical continuum of public spaces and involve the population in a drive for a new symbolic momentum and identification, mainly by referring to neoclassical architecture and sculptures.

In the context of the frame set out above, this essay is organized as follows. I begin by exploring theoretical debates over the meaning of politics, space and aesthetics and develop theoretical approaches that have a particular resonance with the work of Foucault, Lefebvre, and Rancière who examine how political regimes have intervened in a concrete spatial and historical context. The next section provides some empirical background by examining various projects in Skopje and Belgrade which can be seen as establishing a series of architectonic buildings and monuments in an attempt to materialize a new historic view and promote alternative identity representations. In other words, they shed light on the use of aesthetics as a technique for spatial occupation. Further, I explore citizens' perceptions of this project in spatial redefinition, where the analysis is based on visual methodology and a variety of visual tools.

How can politics be extended spatially?

It is an essential aspect of the political to continually intervene in space. Henri Lefebvre and Michael Foucault have provided theoretical elaborations by resorting to a constitutive ontology of power and spatiality where the act of politics embodies spatial extension and determines what might constitute the spatiality of power. The French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Lefebvre highlights the inherent dynamic of politics and space, noting that "there is a politics of space because space is political".[8] Elaborating further on this point, "in a conference given in 1970, Lefebvre broadened that analysis and argued that space is the ultimate locus and medium of struggle and is therefore a crucial political issue".[9] Further, as he argues, "space is political; it is not a scientific object removed from ideology or politics; it has always been political and strategic".[10] Thus, extending politics spatially means developing "techniques of spatial occupation", which can be viewed as the instruments of social and individual control and which are also mobilized around certain political and historical narratives. Foucauldian studies on the spatial distribution of institutional power in asylums, hospitals, and prisons can be widely extended to consider the political role of space in general, and his insights can be extended to the city and to entire territories. Foucault's work was always "filled with implications and insights concerning spatiality,"[11] and he claims that "a whole history remains to be written of spaces–which would at the same time be the history of powers",[12] and that there is always a dialectical interplay between these two modes that converge so frequently throughout history.

"AESTHETICS AS A TECHNIQUE FOR SPATIAL OCCUPATION, THEREFORE, IS CONCERNED WITH THE CONCEPTUAL AND MATERIAL ACCORD BETWEEN POLITICS, POWER, AND SPATIALITY."

A trajectory towards the spatiality of politics structures my argument about spatial occupation; there is a way to take this forward in thinking aesthetics in this sense, and it raises the question as to how an analysis of the aesthetics of spatiality may be conceptualized. Aesthetics as a technique for spatial occupation, therefore, is concerned with the conceptual and material accord between politics, power, and spatiality. A step towards broadening the notion of aesthetics to the concrete context is close to Rancière's notion of the distribution of the sensible.[13] Rancière argues that politics can be understood, most generally, to be "[...] the configuration of a specific space, the delimitation of a particular sphere of experience, of objects established in common and coming from a common decision,"[14] which delineates a specific political presence. Rancière goes on to state, "if aesthetics is understood in its broad sense as a distri-

bution of the sensible rather than the domain of artistic practice in the restricted sense, then the realm of the political (le politique) is fundamentally aesthetic in nature".[15]

If we accept that the politics of space means developing techniques of spatial occupation driven by a powerful combination of factors, then aesthetics is part of "the function of politics as a worldbuilding activity".[16]

In some transitional historical contexts, aesthetics in the sense of various artistic forms, styles, and architectonic objects creates a new spatial significance and historical connotations which are triggered by moving from one political condition to another. Under political change the entire field of aesthetics is at stake. As noted above, the notion of aesthetics relates to the outcome of geopolitical changes and the processes involved in (re)arranging territories. The effects of such transitional changes contribute to establishing the criteria for the new culture, art and "forms of correspondence that designate both the nature of perception and what counts as a subject of perception."[17] In this interpretation, aesthetics can be a mode of populist politics of identification available to any political actor operating in a particular public sphere. The (re) arranging of the spatiality and "the marking of historical sites means that we equip them with memorials, signposts and other informative symbols"[18] and refers "to the spaces and processes of negotiation about whose conception of the past should prevail in the public realm".[19] This suggests the importance of aesthetics in providing a particular political contingency of the spatial and shows how political imaginaries work to produce historically and geographically distinct aesthetics or bring new ones into being. As such, aesthetic technique is mainly evident in the account of authoritarian regimes. This shift has been important in redefining what it means in the case of "the hybrid regimes [that] are often labelled by the flaws in democracy, such as the concept of defective democracies or competitive authoritarianism",[20] where aesthetics is characterized with authoritarian features and embedded nationalistic narratives.

PHOTO: TIHOMIR TOPUZOVSKI

Statues in front of the Archaeological Museum of the Republic of North Macedonia.

A comparative note on the capital cities in North Macedonia and Serbia

In approaching these aspects of aesthetics and political contingency, the specific focus of this study is on the recent history of Western Balkans, which has been marked by ongoing processes of transition. As a result, the countries of the Western Balkans have remained hybrid regimes or unconsolidated democracies.[21] Under the conditions of hybrid societies, the political regimes have used the cultural domain in order to gate-keep the view of history. The significance is that according to the political representatives of governments, a new narrative needs to be visualized through the field of aesthetics and it is important to say that most figurative imagery from historical architectural styles has been implemented in the capital cities, in which "constructed statuary, memorials, museums, grand boulevards, public squares, and ornate buildings ... function as 'theaters of memory' where selective histories about the state could be ritually enacted".[22] In the context of the overall transitional restructuring, a strong relationship between the reframing of public spaces and the hegemonic authoritarianism narrative of hybrid regimes is evident in Skopje, capital of North Macedonia, and Belgrade, capital of Serbia. The most debated and visible of these projects were commissioned under the right-wing and populist governments between 2006–2016 in Skopje, North Macedonia, and throughout 2021 in Belgrade, Serbia.

FOR EXAMPLE, in the case of Skopje "the visual manifestation of nationalism, corruption, and authoritarianism came in the launch of the Skopje 2014 project".[23] The project is designed to strengthen national identity using neoclassical and baroque architecture and numerous sculptures and by renaming public spaces and streets. This illustrates how aesthetics can be used as a technique of spatial occupation. The project reflects the exercise of power in framing a new meaning for urban spaces and also involving the population of the Republic of Macedonia in the drive for identification[24] in which the Government wants to remove all traces of the past and rewrite history in Macedonia's capital city and the nation. The combination of architectural styles is an important signifier of the political and ideological allegiance of this period, given historical connotations and the discursive aspects of cultural production. This project consists of 137 urban structures (buildings, a triumphal arch, façades, sculptures, bridges, fountains and public squares) and the cost is around 700 million euros.[25]

The plan not only created new buildings but also involved considerable revamping, or reshaping new façades

The monument to Stefan Nemanja in Belgrade. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

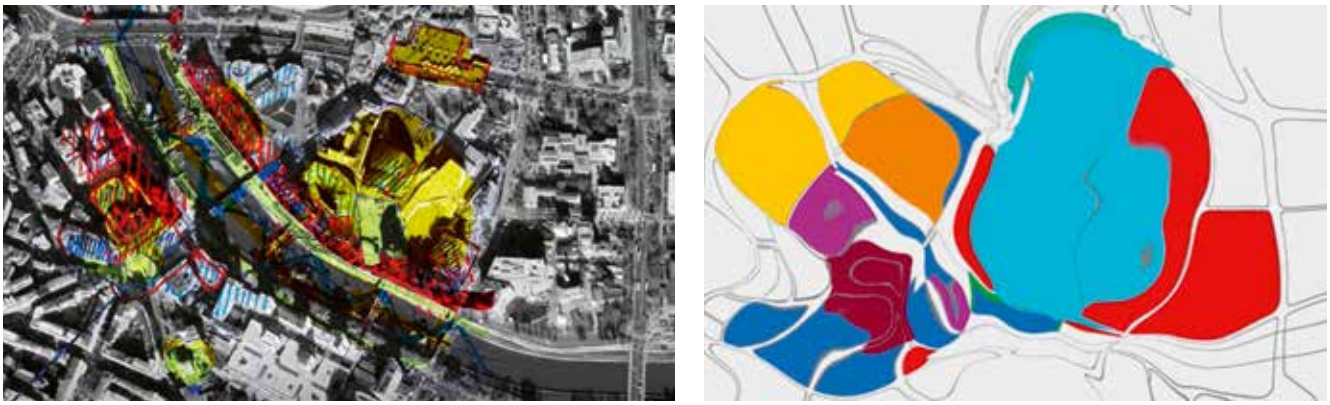
over old modern buildings. Thus, "the new façades form part of the wider government-sponsored plan known as Skopje 2014, which aims to give the neglected-looking capital a more monumental appearance by drawing inspiration from the styles of classical antiquity".[26] The process started with the replacement of building façades in 2011, targeting some of the most iconic modern buildings in Skopje. For example, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia building was revamped with a new façade that changed it from a modern building to a structure that contained components from classical antiquity. This act was contrary to the legal and formal procedures of the country. The architect of the original building, Petar Mulickovski, recognized in former Yugoslavia for his work, "has opposed the idea of a new façade, citing his rights, as author of the original design, to be put in charge of any revamp if officials are determined to go ahead".[27] This case suggests a drive to eradicate traces of modern architecture in Skopje, or what could be identified as part of the Yugoslavian legacy. Such destruction involves the demolition of the cultural values of a previous historical epoch of the country. In the case of monuments and sculptures in Skopje, most of the structures have commemorative functions, referring to certain historical periods, or situating them in the new narrative of Macedonian's identity. Through monuments, officials evoked myths of a timeless nation;[28] thus the project adopted historical figures and symbols from various epochs such as Macedonian's revolutionaries from past centuries, as well as sculptures that represent the Byzantine and Christian period. This symbolism includes other figures from antiquity, including the statue of Philip II in a victorious pose, with a statue of Alexander the Great nearby, captioned Warrior on horse. The intention of these various monuments and statues displayed in public places is to serve as a medium through which a new historical narrative is made tangible in the everyday lives of the citizens.

THE RULING PARTY in Serbia has also attempted to change the narrative of its public spaces. In Belgrade, the Serbian capital, there has been a significant increase in the use of monumental sculpture in public places, sponsored by the government. This project has often been compared by critics to examples from Skopje, as noted above; it includes monuments and sculptures and is intended to serve the interests of the populist and autocratic government in Serbia.[29] This new nationalist imaginary and the associated political narrative can be illustrated by considering the monument to Stefan Nemanja, Grand Prince of the Serbian Grand Principality in the 12th century. The monument in Belgrade is coupled with a statement by allies of President Aleksandar Vučić , declaring that "the 23-meter-high (75-foot-high), 70-ton bronze sculpture of the legendary founder of the Serbian state will be a new landmark of the Serbian capital and a symbol of Serbian statehood and unity".[30] A similar example in Belgrade is the monument of Stefan Lazarević and related comments by the head of Serbian foreign affairs, Selaković, that the new monument represents a true celebration of the capital of Serbia, since Belgrade became the royal seat for the first time during the reign of Despot Stefan.[31] These monuments, unveiled in Serbia in 2021, are coupled with several other similar statues erected in Belgrade, and the government plans to introduce other similar monuments and sculptures. At this point it is worth noting that these monuments can be considered in conjunction with the controversial urban project launched as Belgrade Waterfront (Beograd na vodi) by Vučić soon after taking office in 2014 which involves multiple large urban projects along the Sava river. This belief in the political capacity of aesthetics has taken many forms and visualizes the relationship between populism and nationalism in Serbia.

Is aesthetics spatially violent?

In order to illustrate the main argument and empirically understand how these projects are considered by citizens of Skopje and Belgrade, I make use of the Forensic Architecture group concept and its methodological focus that allows us to "follow these spatial, institutional, and epistemic designations, namely, collect evidence in the field"[32] and make sense of the present. Their work, based upon architectural knowledge and novel technological and aesthetic methods, acknowledges that "the relations between a large multiplicity of images made viewing spatial",[33] examining cases of state violence and spatial violation in general. Thus, the spatiality echoes various forms of political violation and, in this particular context, my main aim here is to use images and maps including citizens' reactions and experts' opinions to illuminate how this "aesthetic project" is a kind of spatial violation in terms of the radical changes that are being made to the characteristics of public spaces and urban environments, and that violate the law and the will of most of citizens.

For this purpose, I used a visual questionnaire consisting of images and maps, and carried out the survey at the faculty of architecture at Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje in 2019 with ninety-two students. Further, I also conducted these questionnaires with 24 experts in urban studies, architects, and



Notes and cartogram of spatial violence. Author's own animations.

citizens of Skopje. The visual questionnaires originated from the idea of developing an effective visual research instrument. Those involved in this survey were asked to indicate their responses on maps and mark aspects that they considered to be spatial violations of public spaces. In most cases, they indicated similar locations of spatial violations. Along with their graphic responses, they were asked to include brief explanations. I also combined respondents' explanations with statistical data from the official institutions concerning the Skopje 2014 project schedule from 2007 to 2016. To illustrate these points, I created a cartogram which included brief examples of spatial violations in the city center which illustrate the use of aesthetics as a technique for spatial occupation. A cartogram is a map in which thematic problems are spatially presented or visualized in terms of distortions, sometimes extreme, to present data and various issues in their particular geographical and spatial context. The cartogram created for this purpose presents how the project Skopje 2014 violates the city center. It is made by using different colors for time periods and distortion of spatiality (see images 3 & 4).

"MOST OF THE STRUCTURES HAVE COMMEMORATIVE FUNCTIONS, REFERRING TO CERTAIN HISTORICAL PERIODS, OR SITUATING THEM IN THE NEW NARRATIVE OF MACEDONIAN'S IDENTITY."

USING VISUAL methodology opens new possibilities for tracing spatial violence and allows for perspectives from photos, images, drawings, and visual investigations, thus presenting a new form of public truth as in one of the Forensic Architecture collective's cases.[34] This particular visualization aims to illustrate how politics is distributed spatially, embedded in certain aesthetic styles and material structures that violently disrupt the previous meanings of public spaces.

Further evidence supporting the view of spatial violation emerged when citizens of Belgrade protested against the local authorities on April 16, 2021, claiming that the monument of Stefan Nemanja is a megalomaniac and expensive token of Vučić's populist and autocratic rule that should be removed. The monument was unveiled in Belgrade, causing delight among the regime and disgust among many artists and activists because of its size and location – just outside the old railroad station in Belgrade.[35] The banner presented by the protesters read: "Stop the destruction of the city'', referring to the phenomenon of spatial violence.

It is important to realize that these aesthetic political projects lack transparency and quality and are widely considered as a form of systemic political corruption, where political interests and private benefit have significant influence on their realization. Furthermore, the range of criticism against these projects can be summarized in the statement that identity representation under certain political conditions as an illusion, leading us to the core idea of instrumentalism, that identity representation "is neither inherent, nor intrinsically valuable, but masks a deeper core of interests",[36] or that the projects are useful for gaining political power or for drawing resources from the state[37] and shaping certain policies. Local authorities are involved in the creation and mapping of new cultural memories in public spaces, simultaneously creating a new form of identification for the citizens. It can be seen as a kind of material commodification of a political view that definitively breaks with the previous logic of historical perception and introduces a new configuration of aesthetics using combinatory artistic forms with particular historical connotations.

Conclusion

The essay presents a new reflection on aesthetics within the wider understanding of the role of political rhythms in hybrid regimes. Aesthetics and politics "are not two permanent and separate realities about which it might be asked if they must be put in relation to one another".[38] On the contrary, the argument

I have proposed in this essay presents an idea of how a political establishment disposes a new set of spatial practices through the field of aesthetics. This theory can contribute to the ongoing debates about the relationship between politics, spatiality and aesthetics. Given the formulation of aesthetics as a technique of spatial occupation, this type of analysis considers how aesthetics in public spaces functions as a political tool, and how it can be used to reshape issues of identity and history by combining them with populism and nationalism. Skopje and Belgrade offer evidence of how spatial violence plays a constitutive role in the formation and sustenance of hybrid regimes. These projects are the outcome of new cultural policies, new models of spatial organization, different historical connotations and instrumentalization of the past. I suggest that in complex political and historical circumstances, the field of aesthetics can be employed to practice politics spatially where the meaning is always in flux: Where aesthetics as a parameter of the political has entered a novel stage.

Tihomir Topuzovski is Interdisciplinary Programme Director at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, North Macedonia, and editor-in-chief of the journal *The Large Glass*.

references

1 Jacques Rancière: "Literature, Politics, Aesthetics: Approaches to Democratic Disagreement" (interviewed by Solange Guénoun and James H. Kavanagh)'. *SubStance* vol. 29, no. 2, Issue 92 (2000), 3–24, 11.

2 Davide Panagia. *The Political Life of Sensation*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 12.

3 Ibid.

4 See T. Topuzovski and L. Andreas, "Political protest, temporary urbanism and the deactivation of urban spaces", in *Transforming Cities Through Temporary Urbanism – A Comparative Overview*, eds., L. Andres and Y. Zhang, Y, (Springer, 2020).

5 Marina Ottoway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington, D . C . : Carnegie Endowment for International Peace , 2003) 3.

6 M. Velikonja, "Titostalgia – A Study of Nostalgia" for Josip Broz Peace Institute, Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies, (2008), 25.

7 See "Nations in Transit 2021: The Antidemocratic Turn", *Freedom House* (2021). Available at https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/NIT_2021_final_042321.pdf.

8 H. Lefebvre, "Reflections on the politics of space" *Antipode* (1970) vol. 8 no. 2), 33.

9 S. Elden, S. "Between Marx and Heidegger: Politics, Philosophy and Lefebvre's 'The Production of Space'", *Antipode*. vol. 36 no. 86 (2004):, 93

10 H. Lefebvre, "Reflections on the Politics of Space", *Antipode* : *A Radical Journal of Geography* (1976) vol. 8 no. 2, 30–37 .

11 S. Elden and W. Jeremy Crampton, *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, (Ashgate, 2007), 1.

12 David Harvey, "The Kantian Roots of Foucault's Dilemmas", in *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault* and *Geography*, eds., S. Elden and W. Jeremy Crampton (*Ashgate*, 2007):45.

13 Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: on politics and aesthetics* (Continuu: London. 2010).

14 Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, transl. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press©, 2012), 24.

15 G. Rockhill, "Radical History and the Politics of Art. New Directions" in *Critical Theory Series*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 144.

16 L. Zerilli, *Feminism and the abyss of freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

17 D. Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation*, (Duke University Press, 2009), 13.

18 Petri J. Raivo, "Politics of memory: Historical battlefields and sense of place" in *Nordia Geographical Publications* (2015) vol. 44 no. 4: 97.

19 Karen E. Till, "Places of Memory" in *Companion to Political Geography*, eds., John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell and Gerard Toal (2003), 290.

20 F. Bieber, *The Rise of Authoritarianism in the Western Balkans* (Palgrave, 2020), 4.

21 Ibid.

22 Till, "Places of Memory....", 289–290.

23 Bieber, "The Rise of Authoritarianism...", 58.

24 Topuzovski and Andres, "Political protest, temporary urbanism...."

25 See in particular the official database of the research project "Skopje 2014 Uncovered". Available at: http://skopje2014.prizma.birn.eu.com/en. Accessed March 11, 2020.

26 S. Jakov Marusic, "Mass Revamp of Skopje Façades Continues", *Balkan Insight*, August 17, 2016. Available at: https://balkaninsight.com/2016/08/18/mass-revamp-of-skopje-façades-continues-08-17-2016/ Accessed June 5, 2020.

27 S. Jakov Marusic, "Macedonians To Choose Government HQ's New Look", *Balkan Insight* January 13, 2012. Available at: https://balkaninsight.com/2012/01/13/macedonian-government-building-awaits-skopje-2%C3%A5aa4-revamp/ Accessed May 14, 2020.

28 Till, "Places of Memory ....", 292.

29 Dusan Stojanovic, "Kitsch or artwork? Controversial monument unveiled in Serbia", *AP News* January 28, 2021. Available at: https://apnews.com/article/stefan-nemanja-controversial-statue-998c811cec3f31bda94db2411d1212dd Accessed June 20, 2021

30 Ibid.

31 "Monument to Despot Stefan Lazarević Unveiled in Belgrade Today" Republic of Serbia Ministry of foreign affairs April 19, 2021. Available at: https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/press-service/news/monument-despot-stefan-lazarevic-unveiled-belgrade-today. Accessed June 20, 2021.

32 Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture*: *Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*, (Zone Books, 2017), 66.

33 Ibid., 186.

34 See, in particular, Eyal Weizman and Anselm Franke "Forensic Architecture" in *FORENSIS: The Architecture of Public Truth*, (Sternberg Press, 2014).

35 See "Protest na Dorćolu protiv spomenika Despotu Stefanu" [Protest in Dorcol against the monument to Despot Stefan, NDM BGD: Monument to Vesić]. Available at: https://rs.n1info.com/vesti/protest-na-dorcolu-protiv-spomenika-despotu-stefanu-pavicevic-spomenik-vesicu/ Accessed June 21, 2021.

36 A. Varshney,"Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 282.

37 Ibid.

38 Gabriel Rockhill, "Radical History and the Politics of Art. New Directions" in *Critical Theory Series* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014),163.

PHOTO: UN PHOTO

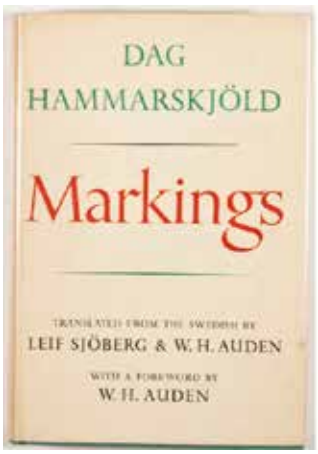
60 YEARS AFTER THE PLANE CRASH: A NEW READING OF DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD'S DIARY *MARKINGS*

by **Birgit van der Leeden**

Dag Hammarskjöld was born on July 29, 1905 in Jönköping, Sweden. In 1953 he became the second Secretary General of the United Nations and gave a new profile to the world organization by establishing the UN Emergency Force with its concept of "blue helmet" troops in 1956. Like most top-ranking politicians he was both admired and attacked. While Belgian Congo had gained its independence in 1960, its Southern province Katanga split off. Because of the escalation of this crisis the UN were asked to help. Hammarskjöld, a dedicated advocate for decolonization, tried to mediate again and again but did not succeed in preventing the shocking murder of Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected president of the Republic of the Congo, in early 1961. He had to operate against many stakeholders both on the Western and the African side and was aware of the high risk of his mission. He died in the night of September 17, 1961 after a crash land-

PHOTO: UN PHOTO

Dag Hammarskjöld paid a visit to a kindergarten class in the school of Givath-Jearim, a village for new immigrants in the Jerusalem hills, in May 1956.



Dag Hammarskjöld 's book *Markings* (*Vägmärken*) was first published in 1963.

PHOTO: UN PHOTO

Premier Patrice Lumumba of the Republic of the Congo and Dag Hammarskjöld at United Nations Headquarters on July 24, 1960.

ing in the border area between Katanga and Nothern Rhodesia, when he was on his way to negotiate with Katanga's president Tshombé. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize immediately after his death.

Even 60 years later the circumstances of the crash are still unsolved. Although many people believe it was not an accident and international investigation commissions were set up, the official version currently maintains that the Swedish Transair machine, which had already been shot at during its approach to Leopoldville the previous morning, had a technical fault.[1] After the release of witness statements that had been held under lock and key for decades, documents that once again raised suspicions of a murder conspiracy were made available to a South African investigation commission led by Desmond Tutu.[2] New enquiries also got different results: A Swedish investigation led by Sven Hammarberg (2013) supports an accident as the cause.[3] In contrast the documentation *Cold Case Hammarskjöld* (2019), produced by the Danish filmmaker Mads Brügger, confirms the thesis of assassination by an attack and relies on an inofficial confession. This version corresponds to the first statements of eyewitnesses – police officers and some charcoal burners – and to security officer Harold Julien, who was the only passenger who survived the crash for some days. The backers remain unknown, but suspicion is directed against those countries involved in economic colonial-era mining interests in the secessionist province Katanga[4] that Hammarskjöld obstructed. In autumn 2019 an extensive report by the highly respected Mohamed Chande Othman, former Chief Justice in Tanzania, was published. It came to the conclusion that the aircraft either may have been attacked by another plane or that it was prompted to a fateful low flight.[5] Meanwhile Othman has become head of a new UN investigation commission established by Secretary General Guterres.

After the Secretary General's death , his diary was found in his house in New York City. According to Hammarskjöld's will ("[...] now you reckon with possible readers, even, perhaps, hope for them")[6] it was published 1963 in Sweden under the title *Vägmärken* [Markings], one year later in the US with a direct translation of the title *Markings* (1964) and the following year in Germany as *Zeichen am Weg* (1965). It has been translated into many languages, became world-renowned by inspiring hundreds of thousands of readers, and still remains of great interest for people all over the world. Hammarskjöld called it "a sort of white book concerning my negotiations with myself – and with God".[7]

***MARKINGS* OFFERS THE READER** an unexpectedly intimate encounter with a man who was considered to be reserved and private. And yet the personal diary constantly points beyond itself, and its poetic denseness, like the confessions contained in the metaphors, giving his observations a sense of distance – at times even a hermetic character – despite all their frankness. Thoughts stand, shortened ellipsis-like, without any narrative or explicative context and often without any obvious personal connection that can be determined. As he repeatly addresses a "you", the boundaries between the "you", by which another person is meant, and "him", by which an alter ego is meant, are fluid. The side effect of this rhetoric is that the professions can be attributed to an unnamed person, and they thus give the reader an opportunity to identify with them. In its essence, the inner dialogue of the diary is reminiscent of Martin Buber's "I and you" philosophy (Hammarskjöld studied his work *I and Thou* intensively in later years).[8]

The lyrical passages of the diary particularly prove how important the return to nature was for Hammarskjöld, whether to the isolation of the island of Tjärö in the archipelago next to the province of Blekinge, that of his country house in Backåkra in the province of Skåne or that of the nothern mountains in Sweden. And nature means much more than a source of calm and an antidote to reality: it becomes an allegory. The poetic images that Hammarskjöld chooses are often followed by a disil-

lusioning break, sometimes reminiscent of expressionist poetry: "Midge dance. Blast-furnace smoke/ Adder asleep/ Near the wild strawberry patch",[9] then they come together again to create meaning. "Landscape: only your immediate experience of the detail can provide the soil in your soul where the beauty of the whole can grow.[10] Through his orientation of pictorial analogies, the experience of nature becomes an integral component in Hammarskjöld's untiring search for insight.

A significant cornerstone of the diary is the connection between personal observations with quotes from the Bible and Swedish and international literature, as well as allusions to trends in philosophy, theology and the history of ideas. What is important for Hammarskjöld here is more than the search for insight – he is looking for a trail-blazing ethic beyond all cultural and religious differences.

THE MORAL CONCEPTS that the diary entries unite in this way betray the significant influence of medieval mystics such as Meister Eckhart and Thomas à Kempis. In two prayers – one written in 1954 and the other in July 1961[11] – these fundamental values are expressly united in the plea for a "pure", "humble", "loving", and and "devout" spirit.[12] Yet, it is not only here that Hammarskjöld's closeness to mysticism is expressed. In contrast to the strict rationality for which he is known as a politician, he sets an "inner knowledge, a philosophy of premonition".[13] "In the faith which is 'God's marriage to the soul', you are one in God."[14] This "unification of God with the soul"[15] leads to an inner freedom that makes possible "a union in self-surrender without self-destruction"[16] and a fundamental thankfulness for life. Here too Meister Eckhart's ideas are obvious: "[...] we who for every service have long ago been overpaid?"[17] And not least, the concept of sacrifice, which bears crucial significance in mysticism, characterizes the diary from the very first page – dated 1925. Hammarskjöld takes the Pauline postulate of giving one's life for others in emulation of Christ as the maxim for his own conduct: "The only value of life is its content – for others".[18] The concept that every man has God within him was imposed on him when he was a young man, with a view of life that was "Ready at any moment to gather everything/ Into one simple sacrifice", [19] although he constantly doubted his ability to meet his owns standards:

> **You asked for burdens to carry – and howled when they were placed on your shoulders. Had you fancied another sort of burden?**[20]

Yet, he was able to see his duty to humanity in relative terms. Here Meister Eckhart's spirit is noticeable once again:[21] "The great commitment is so much easier than the ordinary everyday one – and can all too easily shut our hearts to the latter",[22] and "It is better for the health of the soul to make one man good than to sacrifice oneself for mankind".[23]

"HE IS LOOKING FOR A TRAIL-BLAZING ETHIC BEYOND ALL CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES."

His politics, just as much as this book, which he described as a sort of "white book of his negotiations" with himself and with God, demonstrate that he was guided by high ethical standards. "Yet, through me there flashes this vision of a magnetic field in the soul, created in a timeless present by unknown multitudes, living in holy obedience",[24] he writes, hoping for a workable spiritual community of seekers before he took up office as Secretary General of the United Nations the following year.

His attempts to find supporting pillars for this spiritual force field are reflected early in his career. Before concentrating on economics and politics, Hammarskjöld devoted himself to the study of the arts. Lyric poetry, sculpture and music played an important role for him even in his early years. Later, he tried to create spiritual and cultural links to the reality of politics, which all too often stood in oppositon to the arts. His initiatives to set up a meditation room at UN headquaters, arrange exhibitions and concerts, and make reference in his speeches to his spiritual models may serve to illustrate these attempts.

RARELY DO WE SENSE in the diary entries as much faith in his own abilities as during his early days as Secretary General: "Goodness is something so simple: always to live for others, never to seek one's own advantage",[25] he writes, suggesting the concept of a world determined by transparent dualistic structures that man faces:

"It did come – the day when the grief became small. For what had befallen me and seemed so hard to bear became insignificant in the light of the demands which God was now making", and "To say Yes to life is at one and the same time to say Yes to oneself".[26]

Here we can see ho w close he is to Albert Schweitzer, who demands this affirmation despite all his realistic assessments of a reality characterized by tragedy:

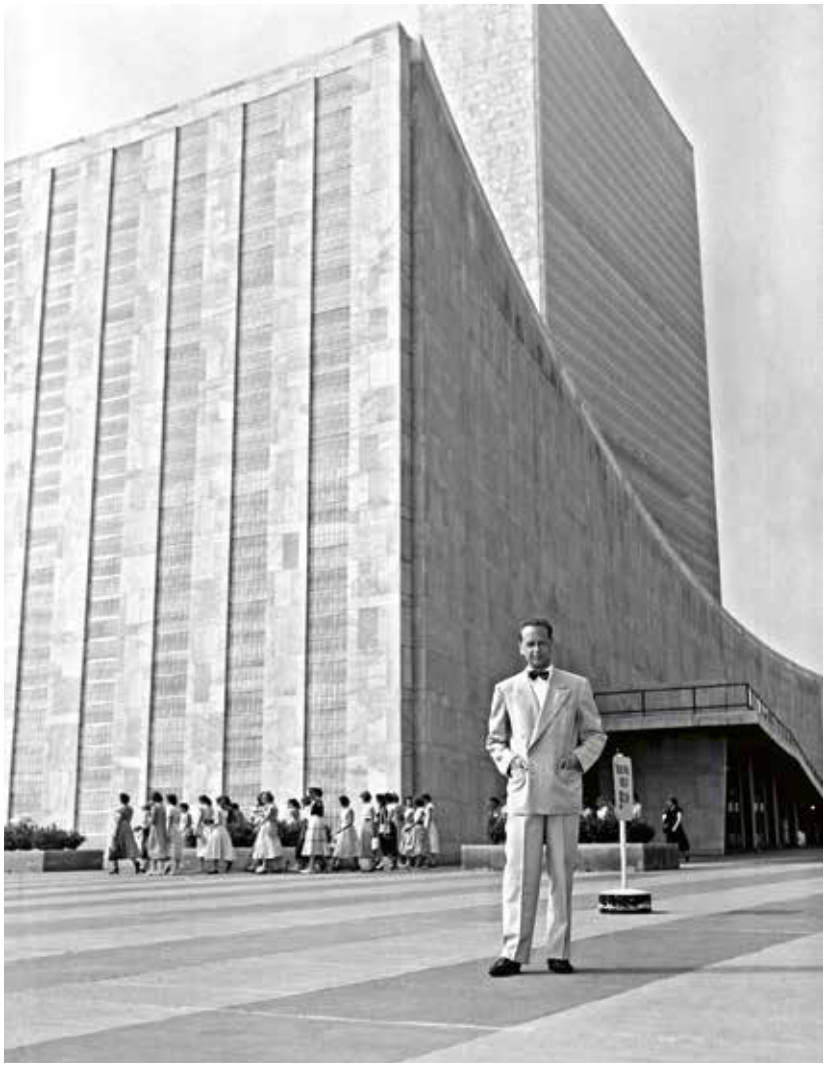
> **[...] Affirmation of life and the world is more comprehensive and deeper than optimism and pessimism; it is not a way of judging things but a certainty of the will".**[27]

And yet his thoughts stray again and again, as in this previous years, to inner monologues and hint at brief arguments between the ego and a critical alter ego:

> **Did you choose your words carefully enough, what impression did you make, did they think you were trying to be ingratiating, etc.? Are you no longer confident that your instinctive reactions will guide you right? If so, you know why. You have allowed your hunger for "justice" to make you selfconscious [...]**[28]

Attributes that Hammarskjöld accuses himself of having are arrogance, excessive ambition, self-pity, baseness of reactions, jealousy, and "lust of the flesh",[29] as if it were a personal lack of restraint. Hammarskjöld makes no secret of his personal vanity,

PHOTO: UN PHOTO



Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary General of the United Nations, photographed in front of the Headquarters' buildings, 1953.

that mixture of narcissism and self-justification, of a euphoric and desperate sense of self, that is specific to man. Sometimes he makes truly frightening revelations and accusations:

> **The arète that leads to the summit separates two abysses: the pleasure-tinged death wish (not, perhaps, without an element of narcissistic masochism), and the animal fear arising from the physical instinct for survival.**[30]

As a man who has to become a public figure facing expectations corncerning both his actions in the field of world politics and his ability to assert himself, he believes that often he does not fulfil his claims of truthfulness and personal authenticity:

> **It is not the repeated mistakes, the long succession of petty betrayals – though, God knows, they would give cause enough for anxiety and self-contempt – but the huge elementary mistake, the betrayal of that within me which is greater than I – in a complacent adjustment to alien demands.**[31]

In this way the courage to change transforms itself into a seemingly insurmountable dialectic world insight:

> **The most dangerous of all moral dilemmas: when we are obliged to conceal truth in order to help the truth to be victorious.**[32]

Not only does such taboo-breaking honesty reveal self-doubt, however; it also shows reciprocally that productive self-critcism and appropriate self-awareness are mutually dependent. For Hammarskjöld, despite many an elite tendency that can be discerned, this means "not to brood over my pettiness with masochistic self-disgust, nor to take a pride in admitting it – but to recognize it as a threat to my integrity of action, the moment I let it out of my sight".[33]

Inner dialogue becomes difficult and not uncommonly melancholy when it is really intended for a "you". Relationships with other people seem to have been more important than many of his contemporaries suspected, but they probably took place more in his mind than in face-to-face meetings.

> **Perhaps a great love is never returned. Had it been given warmth and shelter, by its counterpart in the Other, perhaps it would have been hindered from ever growing to maturity. It gives us nothing. But in its world of loneliness it leads us up to summits with wide vistas – of insight.**[34]

Hammarskjöld cultivated contacts with public figures such as Martin Buber, the French author Alexis Leger (alias Saint-Jean Perse), the Swedish painter Bo Beskow, and the Sami human rights activist Andreas Labba. Since the end of the 1950s, not only a lively exchange of ideas but also a deepening friendship connected him with the British artist Barbara Hepworth (whose works among others are exhibited in the Hammarskjöld house, now a memorial site, in Backåkra in the south of Sweden, and who created the bronze sculpture *Single Form*, which stands in front of the New York UN building). Nevertheless, the diary entries bear witness to the dominating feeling of a loneliness that Hammarskjöld both felt as a burden of life and also accepted as an opportunity: "The vista of future loneliness only allows a choice between two alternatives: either to despair in desolation, or to stake so high on the 'possibility' that one acquires the right

to life in a transscendent co-inherence"[35] and "Pray that your loneliness may spur you into finding something to live for, great enough to die for."[36]

He clearly could not escape this feeling right up to his death. A few weeks before the plane crash he noted: "Tired/ And lonely,/ tired/ The heart aches",[37] but the next day he wrote a letter to Barbara Hepworth that expressed closeness and harmony.[38]

His observations about closeness and distance between people stray into philosophical discourse about insight and establishing the truth. Similarly, he turns the experience of others not being able to understand him into a reminder to accept this form of being abandoned as a matter of necessity.

FROM 1958, THE LYRIC CHARACTER of the diary entries becomes more intense. On the other hand they gain a further dimension of universality. They can be interpreted as saying that he would like the personal to remain even less known, and that the poeticizing is a means of concealment. Both may be equally true. If *Markings* were a fictional diary, one might say that the foreshadowing of death was a structural feature: "Red evenings in March. News of death",[39] he writes, and on Christmas Eve 1960, in martyr-like exaggeration: "[...] For him who looks towards the future, the Manger is situated on Golgatha, and the Cross has already been raised in Bethlehem."[40] To an extent these observations are disconcerting; he appears to have the elitist attitude that he has been called – as a kind of Messiah. As an authentic perspective they seem too visionary – some even interpret them as suicidal.[41]

As a young man Hammarskjöld already tackled the problem of the decline of life, both deliberate destruction and unavoidable transitoriness. Thus, on the very first page of his diary he wrote: "Tomorrow we will meet/ death and I/ He will thrust his rapier/ in a man who is awake."[42]

Observations of this kind are comfortingly taken up in images in country/pastoral companion pieces:

> **Autumn in the wilderness: life as an end in itself, even in the annihilation of the individual life, the distant vistas clear, the neighborhood calm, at the moment of its extinction – this evening I would say Yes to the execution squad, not out of exhaustion or defiance, but with an untroubled faith in the co-inherence of all things.**[43]

In the last years of his life the reminders of death can be understood as a realistic estimate of the potential for danger to which the Secretary General was exposed. On the fatal flight, the aim was obviously to fly in a roundabout route over the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, which belonged to Tanzania, to avoid flying over Katanga.

It is striking that there are hardly any personal observations between December 1960 and Whitsun 1961. There are just a few sparse quotes from literary works and undated notes such as:

"Asked if I have courage/ to go on to the end,/ I answer Yes without/ A second thought. Dumb, my naked body/ Endures the stoning, dumb/ When slit up and the live/ Heart is plucked out",[44] and finally, on June 8, the question "Sleepless questions/ In the small hours:/ Have I done right?... Over and over again/ The same steps, /The same words:/ Never the answer".[45] The last as always without context.

When the Norwegian Trygve Lie, first UN Secretary General, resigned, he received Hammarskjöld before he took office with the sentence: "You are going to take over the most impossible job on earth".[46] Those words gained an unexpected explosive effect and a new dimension of truth during the Congo crisis and since the Iraq war. The speech that Hammarskjöld made in an emergency session in the UN Security Assembly on February 15, 1961 reads like an apology for the United Nation's attempt to prevent a proxy war of the great powers in Congo in the shadow of the cold war. But between the lines you can read the acknowledgement of limited possibilities and helplessness as if Hammarskjöld says:

"AS A COSMOPOLITAN HE WAS A PIONEER OF A WAY OF THINKING THAT STILL IS CENTRAL TO ALL ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION: RESPECT FOR THE DIFFERENT."

> **I can't offer new solutions. But still I'm absolutely convinced that the only possibility for the African continent to fight a tragic development towards an international conflict is to remain a part of the United Nation's common aims".**[47]

A former "marking" already shows the burden that he felt in his duty. "Your responsibility is indeed terrifying.[48]

As a cosmopolitan he was a pioneer of a way of thinking that still is central to all economic globalization: respect for the different. The spiritual substratum of his doing, of his diary and of his speeches could be of existential importance for a substainable peace. The nucleus of global terrorism that overshadows today's world is also based on the fact that ethnic and religious groups were not noticed in their identity, oppression and disadvantages. Kofi Annan, who had an affinity to Hammarskjöld – not only because of his second homeland Sweden – paid tribute to him on the 40th day of his death in 2001:

> **His wisdom and his modesty, his unimpeachable integrity and singleminded devotion to duty have set a standard for all servants of the international community [...] which is simply impossible to live up to"**[49]**. The respect that was shown to Hammarskjöld was for example expressed in a program in Zambia to train young African people as messengers of peace.**

HAMMARSKJÖLD'S IDEALS SEEM to be more strange than ever in an ego-centric society, whose spirit is just the opposite of a life

as sacrifice. In his inaugural speech as UN Secretary General on April 10, 1953 he said: "I'm here to serve you all ... It is for you to correct me if I fail."[50] For Hammarskjöld humility is both important before nature and as a social maxim. "Humility before the flower at the timber line is the gate which gives access to the path up the open fell."[51] By that he doesn't mean the negative connotations of submissiveness, but that kind of freedom that equally means to be free from other people and *for* other people. "Humility is just as much the opposite of self-abasement as it is of self-exaltation .../Praise and blame, the winds of success and adversity, blow over such a life without leaving a trace or upsetting its balance.[52] There are differing voices as to whether those "winds" actually left any traces: "In reality he had been completely paralyzed. The Russians and the French didn't talk to him any longer, and a large number of other people no longer wanted to have anything to do with him. At the end of his mandate he was done". On the other hand Hammarskjöld had "faith in the future of mankind, as he had trust in the moral compass of people". The last speech he made at the UN General Assembly on September 8, 1961 seems to be borne by hope:

> **Let us work in the conviction that our work has a meaning beyond the narrow individual one and has meant something for man.**[53]

In remembrance of Dag Hammarskjöld Sami architects and artists – among them Andreas Labba – built a chapel in the small village of Kaitum. The altarpiece consists of a glass window wall through which you can look into a birch forest – for a devotional dialogue with nature during the change of the seasons. In its simplicity and silence it reminds one on the UN Headquarters meditation room in New York that was designed according to the ideas of Dag Hammarskjöld and that is accessible to all visitors in the Public Hall. At least the most nothern part of Sweden's famous trail "Kungsleden" was named after Hammarskjöld on the initiative of Bishop Rune Backlund. Beside this trail there are verses of the diary carved in many stones both in the Swedish and in the Samish language. So Hammarskjöld's markings have become *pointings of the way* even in the literal sense.

Birgit van der Leeden is a German author with an interest for Scandinavia and Sweden in particulair.

references

1 Berliner Zeitung, August 20, 1998.
2 Cf. Dagens Nyheter, July 16, 1995 and February 16, 2005.
3 Hammarberg, Sven. Accident Investigator's report to the Hammarskjöld Commision. August 15, 2013.
4 DDF – Det Danske Filminstitut 2019.
5 The New York Times, Oct 8, 2019.
6 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 144.
7 Hammarskjöld, ibid., letter on the first page.
8 Before the plane crash, Hammarskjöld was working on a Swedish translation of this work.
9 Hammarskjöld, 185.
10 Ibid., 78.
11 Harry Ferngren, "Tio värdeord", in Kaj Falkman, *Ringar efter orden: Femton röster kring Dag Hammarskjölds Vägmärken* (Riga 2005), 36.
12 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 58 and 112.
13 Anders Björnsson, "Mellan mystik och modernitet", in Falkman, *Ringar efter orden*, 48.
14 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 165.
15 The Ethics of Dag Hammarskjöld. Hammarskjöld Foundation. (Uppsala 2010), 27.
16 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 110.
17 Ibid., 39.
18 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 166 ; noted on July 29, 1958.
19 Ibid.,bid, 17.
20 Ibid., 36.
21 Cf. Johan Huizinga. Herbst des Mittelalters (Autumn oft he Middle Ages), (Stuttgart, 1975).
22 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 131.
23 Ibid., 133.
24 Ibid., 84.
25 Ibid., 89.
26 Ibid., 90/92.
27 Ulrich Neuenschwander, Denker des Glaubens (Gütersloh 1974), 55.
28 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 160.
29 Ibid., 139.
30 Notes are missing in "Markings"; they should be on page 43.
31 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 159.
32 Ibid., 147.
33 Ibid., 150.
34 Ibid., 42.
35 Ibid., 70.
36 Ibid., 85.
37 Ibid., 212.
38 Development Dialogue 1987:1, page 54.
39 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 175.
40 Ibid., 198.
41 *Der Spiegel*, July 28, 1965.
42 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 80.
43 Ibid., 48.
44 Ibid., 206/207.
45 Ibid., 209.
46 Trygve Lie. UN General Assembly, April 10, 1953.
47 Speech, UN, February 15, 1961.
48 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 156.
49 Development Diagogue 2001:1, page 5.
50 D.H. UN General Assembly, April 10, 1953.
51 Hammarskjöld, *Vägmärken*, 79.
52 Ibid., 174.
53 D.H. Last speech to the staff at the UN General Assembly Hall, September 8, 1961. In: D.H. remembered, Uppsala 2011, 127.

REFORMING CHILD WELFARE IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN RUSSIA

How are global social policies transferred and adopted in non- democratic settings such as Russia? The deinstitutionalization of child welfare as a coherent reform was introduced abruptly across Russia constituting almost experimental settings to study the process and outcomes of such ambitious policy reforms. The interdisciplinary research project on the recent child welfare reform and its implementation, led by Meri Kulmala, PhD in Social Studies, resulted in the book *Reforming Child Welfare in the Post-Soviet Space. Institutional Change in Russia* addressing three key questions. First, how has global ideology based on the idea of a child's rights to a family been adopted and applied in the Russian context? Second, how did the new policy alter the institutional design of childcare and grassroots practices in Russian regions; and what factors mediated the policy change? Third, what are the key consequences of the deinstitutionalization reform and what accounts for them? The book embraces sociological, anthropological and political science perspectives brought together by the neo-institutionalist framework to target multi-layered processes revolving around the reform.

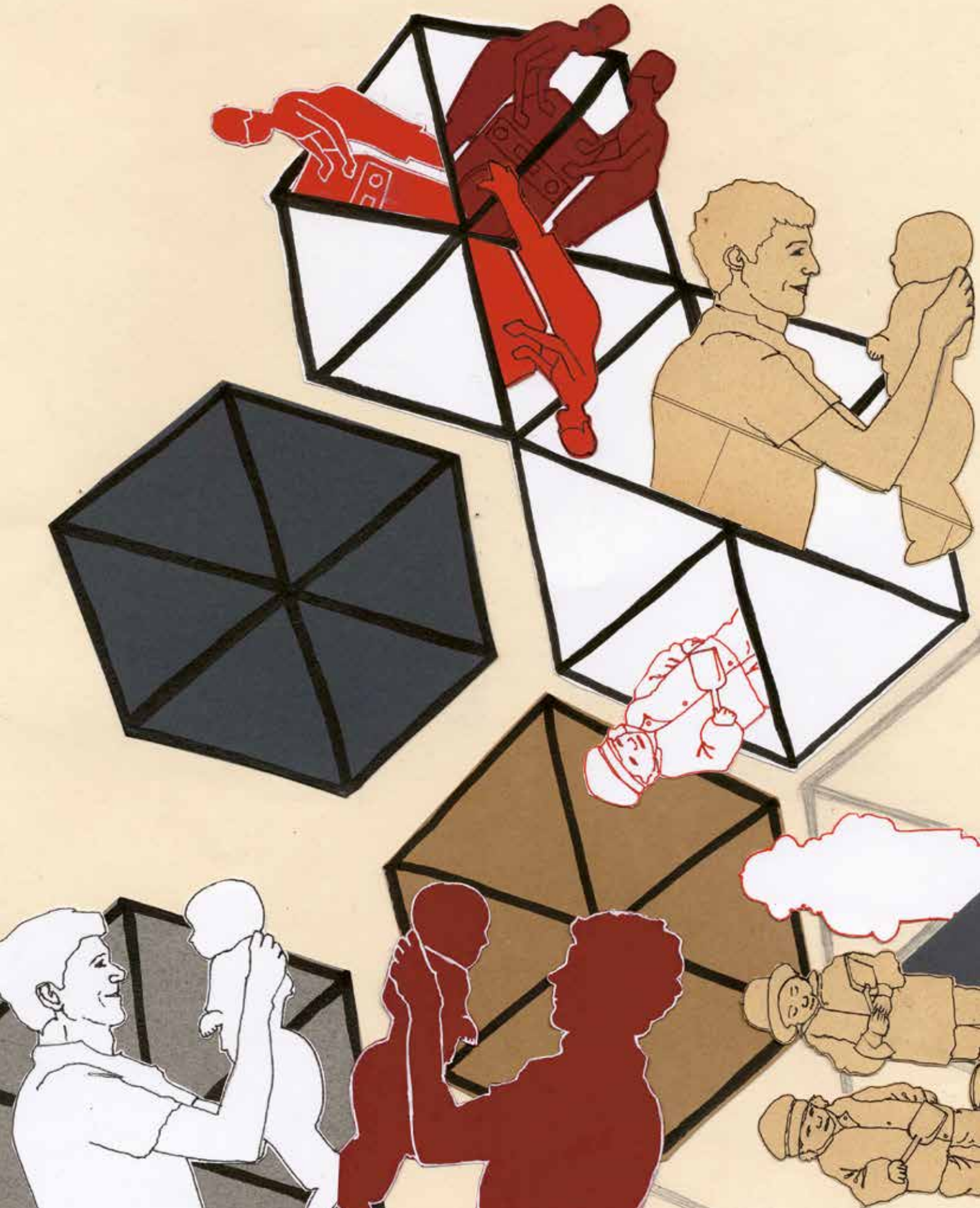
Deinstitutionalization as a "paradigmatic shift"

The deinstitutionalization as a policy shift introduced an entirely new principle of care in contemporary Russia. According to Meri Kulmala[1], it can be seen as a "paradigmatic shift" since it challenged an understanding inherited from the Soviet era of state organized institutional care as being the best for children left without parental care. The deinstitutionalization reform brought the right to live in a family to the center of the care system, seeing residential, collective care as being harmful to children. In practical terms, the reform aimed to diminish a huge system of residential care for children and replace it with community-based services and foster care, short-term temporary placement in home-like units and develop a range of services for birth parents. The deinstitutionalization of child welfare in Russia happened as a result of two evolving tendencies. The Russian expert community had been promoting these principles of care long before the reform was launched[2] preparing the environment and enabling the policy shift. Further governmental programs of support for families and children have been among the most important aspects of social policy in Russia. The political will to restructure the massive system of children's homes was in line with other family-centered policy measures and reflected the political rhetoric of a caring, paternalistic government. The Dima Yakovlev law (December 2012) served as a "focusing event" (exogenous shock) and opened up a window of opportunities[3] which enabled professional NGOs working with children and families to become involved in decision-making.[4]

Evidence of fragmented deinstitutionalization

The research conducted in this project demonstrates that at the level of ideals of care, the deinstitutionalization has been absorbed by the public system of care and its practitioners, the rhetoric obviously shifted towards a priority of family in contrast to institutions. However, a closer look at the actual institutional change reveals peculiar practices which combine elements of the previous system of care with newly adopted but limited or distorted deinstitutionalization principles. The analysis shows that children left without family and placed in institutional care are mainly "social orphans", [5] meaning that their parents are alive but deprived of parental rights. Considering the family care as the ideal for children whose parents' right were terminated, the deinstitutionalization reform triggered placement of children in foster care or adoption. However, little endeavor has been made to reunite children with their birth parents. There are two reasons for this. First, the birth parents are highly stigmatized in society in general and in the residential system of care in particular.[6] This biased attitude produces a barrier between them and social workers who are expected to assist birth parents in finding a job, gaining financial, judicial or psychological support, etc. Second, preventive care and supporting services are marginalized in the reform process having no financial and professional support to be provided at the sufficient level. Moreover, these services are provided on a demand basis so that a family must be already in trouble in order to have a right to apply for them.[7] As a result, the policy goal is mainly achieved by means of placing children from institutional care into foster care which technically reflect the deinstitutionalization principles.

As Kulmala, Shpakovskaya and Chernova[8] demonstrated, the policy implementation became a battlefield for resources among the state institutions and professionals, NGOs



and families (including birth and foster parents). Being subject to the pressure of a new institutional design, public institutions and welfare managers manipulate the figures through "temporary placements" and justification of institutional care for children with disabilities, contributing to the uneven implementation of the reform.[9] Modest or zero incentives for public institutions to pursue deinstitutionalization is complicated by the fact that the existing infrastructure and social provision legislature do not encourage the restructuring and reorganization of care. On the contrary, they dictate replication of existing rules and practices which partly contradict the deinstitutionalization principles. As Jäppinen and Kulmala[10] showed, the legislative environment still serves the old ideal of care, reenforcing the persistence of old institutions.

THERE ARE TWO dimensions of resistance to the deinstitutionalization reform in the Russian context. First, various regional governments reacted differently to the political and administrative pressure that was created to place children in foster care. As Kulmala and Jäppinen argued, the political demand to raise the number of children placed in foster families and minimize the number of them left in residential facilities as well as decrease the number of existing residential institutions created political pressure for governors who are held responsible. However, not all of them pursued reform goals, depending on specific socio-economic contexts which are not necessarily favorable for the development foster care or the reduction of public institutions. Consequently, there were a variety of regional responses produced: while Siberian and the Far East regions managed to maintain residential facilities, the central regions of Russia proved to comply with the reform goals.[11]

Second, residential institutions tend to inhibit policy implementation, inventing ways of keeping children in residential care. The analysis by Jäppinen and Kulmala[12] revealed a number of "status-less children" who are neither officially left without parental care and cannot be adopted nor placed in foster families. They end up in institutional care due to their non-status and actually are in many ways in a very vulnerable situation with a vague perspective to leave the institutional care only in case their birth relatives will be capable of taking care of them or they lose their parental rights. As the reform so far lacks real efforts of preventive work, this situation is unlikely to be solved for these children, contributing to an obvious violation of a child's right to a family and resistance to reform at the institutional level.

"THE LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT STILL SERVES THE OLD IDEAL OF CARE, REENFORCING THE PERSISTENCE OF OLD INSTITUTIONS."

The aftercare of the young adults is usually omitted in empirical studies and therefore an analysis of this stage of care and the reform appeared to be extremely valuable.[13] Overcoming the stigmatizing dichotomy "success vs failure", the analysis reveals two modes of agency, including pragmatic and life-course one in terms of educational choices made by young adults. The authors found enabling structures to foster the agentic ability at the macro and meso level. However, their impact depends on the micro-level environment, such as the presence of a significant and trusted adult, an encouraging foster parent or an accompanying teacher, for example.

TO SUM UP, the fragmented policy implementation is displayed in the simultaneous functioning of new institutional design and old rules, norms and practices. From a theoretical point of view, the neo-institutional perspective suggests the existence of "nested newness" which is characterized by the persistence of inherited practices in the new policy design.

Political and societal factors

The conclusions of the book trace four main reasons for the fragmented deinstitutionalization reform, including political regime, limited child rights perspective, kinship-based understanding of care and a low level of societal trust. The four factors impact the deinstitutionalization reform at various levels, reenforcing each other and contributing to the fragmented implementation.

The electoral authoritarianism that has developed in Russia, shapes specific incentives for regional governors who are politically and financially dependent on the federal government. As Jäppinen and Kulmala argued,[14] the federal government signaled the priority of the reform by requiring governors to deliver numeric indicators, including the overall number of children deprived of parental care and not placed in guardianship or foster families; the number of children placed in foster families; and the number of residential institutions after closures, which intertwine with the goals of the reform. Such a purely technocratic approach that lacks various types of support which would encourage the welfare system of care for children to be reformed, translates into manipulation of statistics, faking or falsifying the actual performance.

AS DEMONSTRATED above, the logic of the policy implementation is driven by bureaucratic and practitioners' interests and a fight for resources, marginalizing the child's rights. Due to the pressure from the central government to demonstrate that more and more children have been placed in foster care annually, a child's right to choose and adapt to foster parents is often neglected. The surviving strategies of residential care, including keeping "status-less" children and those with disabilities in institutions, directly violates a child's right to live in a family. Even though a child's rights are expected to be the guiding principle of all actions, our research demonstrates little involvement of children in decision-making regarding their placement in residential or foster care, education or work paths.[15]

A strong kinship-based understanding of care permeates the experience of everyone involved in policy implementation. As Iarskaia-Smirnova, Kosova and Kononenko[16] demonstrated, foster care

ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

is mainly represented with a reference to the concepts of kinship and relatedness, rather than as paid work though paid guardianship is actually becoming increasingly popular.[17] Since foster family care is seen as a permanent solution[18] in many cases it completely replaces the birth family. As a result, children lose their ties with their birth parents and ultimately are deprived of their right to know their family of origin.

A LOW LEVEL of societal trust proved to be a fundamental factor permeating social policy in Russia, displayed at a personal level, as well at the institutional level. Such a lack of trust was found to be a distinctive feature of many interactions regarding the deinstitutionalization reform. As Iarskaia-Smirnova et al. and Shpakovskaya and Chernova showed,[19] the public opinion towards foster parents is highly suspicious because their care is rewarded financially while underlying expectation about kinship relations contradict this practice. Birth and foster parents are mutually distrusted partly due to the stigmatization and distorted expectations. The mistrust of both birth and foster parents by the child protection officials makes them hesitant to seek assistance. Overall, the state institutions are considered as agents of control rather than a potential source of support.[20] Professional NGOs and associations of foster parents only partly assist and restore the miscommunication at both the personal level and at the institutional level, [21] while the overall mistrust persists in all communications.

Conclusion and discussion

The systematic and multilayer study of the deinstitutionalization reform in Russia by the authors proved that the shift in the ideal of care is real and has occurred at the levels of policy and programmes. However, the implementation of the new principles and policies remains fragmented and distorted. Challenges in the execution of deinstitutionalization reforms in Russia are not unique. Other contexts, especially the experience of post-Soviet countries, might be plausible to compare and reveal those distinguishing features and factors which account for the policy transfer of global ideas. What are the perspectives and limitations of top-down reforms in autocracies? How has the Soviet legacy, including a lack of trust or managerialism in running a policy, been overcome in other post-Soviet contexts? How do different actors rethink and adopt the deinstitutionalization principles in various local contexts? Are there any universal practices in which institutions persist? These questions obviously deserve scholarly attention and a comparative perspective to this multilayered policy transfer.

Anna Tarasenko
Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and International Affairs, National Research University Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Meri Kulmala
Senior researcher and Director at Helsinki Inequality Initiative, University of Helsinki.

references

1 Meri Kulmala, Michael Rasell and Zhanna Chernova, "Overhauling Russia's Child Welfare System: Institutional and Ideational Factors Behind the Paradigm Shift," *The Journal of Social Policy Studies* (2017) vol. 15 no. 3: 353–366.

2 S. An and M. Kulmala, "Global deinstitutionalisation policy in the post-Soviet space: A comparison of child-welfare reforms in Russia and Kazakhstan", in *Global Social Policy*. Online First (E-pub ahead of print), May 19, 2020: 1-24.; Eleanor Bindman, Meri Kulmala and Elena Bogdanova. "NGOs and the policy-making process in Russia: The case of child welfare reform" in *Governance*. Vol. 32, no. 2, April 2019: 207–222.

3 Ibid.

4 Bindman et al., 2019; An & Kulmala 2020.

5 S. Biryukova and A. Makarentseva, 2021. "Statistics on the deinstitutionalisation of child welfare in Russia", in *Reforming Child Welfare in the Post-Soviet Space. Institutional Change in Russia* eds., M. Kulmala, M. Jäppinen, A. Klimova and A. Tarasenko. (Routledge Studies in Health and Social Welfare, 2021), 23–46.

6 M. Jäppinen, "No longer parents or parents in need of support? Views of child welfare experts on birth parents," in: Reforming Child Welfare in the Post-Soviet Space. Institutional Change in Russia, eds., M. Kulmala, M. Jäppinen, A. Klimova and A. Tarasenko. (Routledge Studies in Health and Social Welfare, 2021). 161–v178.

7 A. Tarasenko, "Institutional Variety Instead of the End of Residential Care: Regional Patterns of Deinstitutionalisation Reform in Russia," in: *Reforming Child Welfare in the Post-Soviet Space. Institutional Change in Russia*, eds., M. Kulmala, M. Jäppinen, A. Klimova and A. Tarasenko. (Routledge Studies in Health and Social Welfare, 2021). 95–118

8 M. Kulmala, L. Shpakovskaya and Z. Chernova, "The Ideal (Re)organisation of Care: Child Welfare Reform as a Battlefield Over Resources and Recognition, in: *Reforming Child Welfare in the Post-Soviet Space. Institutional Change in Russia*, eds., M. Kulmala, M. Jäppinen, A. Klimova and A. Tarasenko. (Routledge Studies in Health and Social Welfare, 2021). 71–94.

9 Ibid.

10 Jäppinen and Kulmala, 2021.

11 Tarasenko, 2021.

12 Jäppinen and Kulmala, 2021.

13 M. Kulmala, Z. Chernova and A. Fomina, "Young Adults Leaving Care: Agency and Educational Choice," in: *Reforming Child Welfare in the Post-Soviet Space. Institutional Change in Russia*, eds., M. Kulmala, M. Jäppinen, A. Klimova and A. Tarasenko. (Routledge Studies in Health and Social Welfare, 2021). 198–220.

14 Jäppinen and Kulmala, 2021.

15 Kulmala, Chernova and Fomina, 2021.

16 E. Iarskaia-Smirnova, O. Kosova and R. Kononenko R, "The 'last-minute children': where did they come from, where will they go? Media portrayals of children deprived of parental care, 2006–2018", in *Reforming Child Welfare in the Post-Soviet Space. Institutional Change in Russia*, eds., M. Kulmala, M. Jäppinen, A. Klimova and A. Tarasenko. (Routledge Studies in Health and Social Welfare, 2021). 47–68.

17 Biryukova and Makarentseva, 2021.

18 L. Shpakovskaya and Z. Chernova, "The Successful Transition to Foster Care: the Child's Perspective," in: *Reforming Child Welfare in the Post-Soviet Space. Institutional Change in Russia*, eds., M. Kulmala, M. Jäppinen, A. Klimova and A. Tarasenko. (Routledge Studies in Health and Social Welfare, 2021). 181–197.

19 See Iarskaia-Smirnova et al., as well as Shpakovskaya and Chernova, 2021.

20 Kulmala, Shpakovskaya and Chernova, 2021.

21 Kulmala, Shpakovskaya and Chernova, 2021.

Exploring modern urbanity through the public-private dichotomy.
The case of a divided Berlin

At the Edge of the Wall: Public and Private Spheres in Divided Berlin

Hanno Hochmuth, (Berghahn Books: New York, 2021), 358 pages.

Hanno Hochmuth is an influential researcher in the fields of contemporary urban and public history. In *At the Edge of the Wall*, he examines the interrelationship between the private and public spheres in two of the major working-class inner city areas of Berlin. Focusing on the period of the Berlin Wall (1961–1990), Hochmuth uses a comparative approach, exploring both the divergencies and entanglements of two districts that were split by this dividing wall – Friedrichshain in the east, and Kreuzberg in the west.

The book is centered on an important spatial and cultural divide in Berlin. This divide is, however, not the physical wall dividing the two districts as well as the rest of Berlin – but *the divide between the private and public spheres*. Hochmuth's point of departure is a conceptualization of urbanization as constituted to a significant extent by the very expansion of the public-private sphere demarcation. In non-urban social modes, the private and the public are intertwined, too thinly separated socially and spatially to constitute separate spheres. Modern urban space introduces this defining limit and thus the separate social spheres: "The division between a public and a private sphere is a hallmark of the 'bourgeois' century", writes Hochmuth (p. 72). Although Hochmuth draws from established theoreticians in his conceptualization of urbanization, particularly Hans Paul Bahrdt and Jürgen Habermas (p. 6-16), he displays a notable ingenuity in the way he systematically understands urban history through this lens, making original and cohesive analyses of a varied empirical field. Clearly, this approach is set to carry a wider relevance way beyond the empirical boundaries of this book. The book will be of interest to urban historians investigating any type of modern urban space, but especially those interested in post-socialist postwar urbanities in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Sea area.

THE THEORETICAL framework is coupled with a micro-historical investigation drawing from an impressively rich set of empirical sources: interviews with contemporary inhabitants, files from municipal authorities, fictional films, local surveys and photographic documentations, address books, letters and complaints to authorities, news journals, and more. Hochmuth

Kreuzberg in the west and Friedrichshain in the east, during the cold war. Kreuzberg 1981 and Friedrichschain 1967.

covers the two neighboring districts as he analyzes three main pieces of the city's social fabric: housing, religion, and entertainment.

Regarding housing, Hochmuth shows how the postwar construction boom came to offer tenants in both areas an unpreceded level of private space with the gradual emergence of large-scale modern housing. Kreuzberg's public space was claimed by a dynamic counterculture with radical demands for the protection of the qualities of both private and public life. In Friedrichshain, on the other hand, the authoritarian discipline of the dictatorship severely infringed upon possibilities for similar public experiments and upheavals. The practice of squatting, for instance, was often tolerated but never allowed to take a collective public form, such as the political squatting movement with its own subcultural expressions in Kreuzberg.

Continued.
Exploring modern urbanity through the public-private dichotomy

The author outlines a similar pattern regarding religion and two prominent protestant churches in each area. The Samaritan church in Friedrichshain arranged gatherings and musical events like the popular "blues masses". These events provided a significant part of a demarcated semi-countercultural sphere, a *surrogate public sphere*, not quite reaching the point of a public sphere based on free public deliberations. Yet it provided some space for social activities beyond the state-controlled public territory. According to Hochmuth, it offered "the freedom and communicative spaces for dissident activities to unfold" (p.206). It played a meaningful part in fostering the political space that would bring about a revolutionary change in 1989. Nevertheless, it was never the hot bastion for subversive bottom-up democratic deliberations that existed in Kreuzberg, where St. Martha's church became a center for activism and critical debates about urban renewal.

HOCHMUTH'S BOOK investigates the historical entanglements of East and West Berlin. The author situates the book in a research field that has come to emphasize an intertwinement of the history of the divided city, despite the obvious physical and political barriers (p.18). An important conclusion of the book is, however, that these entanglements appear to be less pronounced than the author had expected based on previous research. Moreover, this entanglement has been markedly asymmetric: While the inhabitants of Friedrichshain were affected by the increasing appearance of Kreuzberg's individualism and private lifestyles, inspiration in the opposite direction was much more limited. This is linked to Hochmuth's analysis of the poorly researched area of urban entertainment culture. The author shows that much of the public entertainment culture retreated to the private sphere, especially through the advance of audiovisual mass media. The availability of mass media from the West affected the culture and private imaginations in the East. In other ways, Hochmuth shows that there were some significant similarities between the two areas. Entertainment cultures tended to evade any top-down ambitions to overtly politicize them in both the West and the East. Urban festivals and bar culture remained distinctly popular

Kreuzberg 1988 and Friedrichschain 1987.

rather than politically arranged events, despite efforts to the contrary.

Again, the bar scene in Kreuzberg tended to be entwined with a more dynamic counter-public sphere where urban development and direction could be affected. Resistance to a large-scale transformation of the old stone city centers and its possible displacement of the local working class and its cultural sense of self was effectively organized through local initiatives, resulting in a *cautious urban renewal* – slightly more accommodating to local cultural desires than what the authorities originally planned. In Friedrichshain, too, there was a significant, albeit less vociferous, discontentment with the modernist planning, bulldozing the old dense stone city. Accordingly, Friedrichshain gave way to a more *complex reconstruction* rather than a more unmitigated demolition as the authorities pursued increasing construction of prefabricated large-scale housing but were kept in check by local resistance.

After the unification of Berlin, neoliberal policies increasingly permeated the city. Hochmuth shows how the struggles for preservation of buildings, inhabitants, and culture could be exploited to opposing ends and incorporated into a neoliberal logic. In the symbolic upgrade of these working-class areas, the protagonists of the vibrant and attractive counterculture, of Kreuzberg especially, could be of service. Increasingly, they came to play the role of the creative urban *pioneers* that are so emblematic in the early phases of gentrification. The historical counterculture became part of the gentrification and subsequent displacement and homogenization of Kreuzberg as well as Friedrichshain after their unification. One of Hochmuth's aims with the book is to illuminate the historical roots of this present-day gentrification and privatization of public space. The book provides a fascinating *thick description* of the cultural background to these processes. The nuances of the contemporary mechanisms and dynamics around these problems are arguably less elaborated. Hochmuth emphasizes the cultural aspect as a cause behind contemporary gentrification, the subversive culture of the 1960s and 1970s being turned to the advantage of financial profit. There is a kind of soft polemic against theories that emphasize more economic mechanisms behind gentrification, though they are scarcely discussed at length. Gentrification's main theoretician Neil Smith, for instance, is never cited.[1] It could also be discussed whether it is helpful to presume a strict dichotomy between cultural and economic mechanisms, rather than exploring their overlaps and interconnections.

WHILE HOCHMUTH does describe the vigorous resistance to gentrification and privatization as historically rooted in the very same counterculture, it is mainly theorized as cultural force inadvertently facilitating gentrification. Gentrification is viewed as a quite organic process rather than something socially produced. A more thorough discussion of possible internal contradictions and fissures between the different socioeconomic segments inside this countercultural milieu would be interesting. I am left uncertain as to whether a more complex and ambiguous, yet equally valid, genealogy of the causes, actors, and processes involved could be constructed. Furthermore, while Hochmuth repeatedly describes the imagined picture of Kreuzberg's bohemian culture and history as highly *mythologized*,[2] he views the cultural force behind subsequent gentrification as more obvious, direct and unmediated. In this context, a discussion regarding the use of history and historiographical concepts such as *myth* and *nostalgia* might have been interesting and productive. To what extent was the actual culture of Kreuzberg the driving force behind this gentrification process, as opposed to a production of myths and imaginations in a place-making process mediated by political and economic interests? It seems to be a complex and yet unsettled matter.

At the Edge of the Wall is principally a historiography of the dynamics of the private and public sphere in the time when Berlin was divided, and it also offers a valuable background to analogous present-day problems. Furthermore, it provides a rich account of the dual history of cultural change and economic restructuring in post-socialist Europe. The methodological and theoretical framework is fascinating and productive. The book will be of interest to students and researchers in the field of urban history in post-socialist Europe as well anyone engaged in modern urban historical research in general. It will be interesting to see how it might come to influence future studies of public and private spheres in urban history.

Samuel Faber
PhD-candidate in History,
Stockholm University.

references

1 Neil Smith, *The new urban frontier: gentrification and the revanchist city*, (Routledge: London, 1996).

2 See Hochmuth, 6, 127, 240, 242, 246, 307.

Conservative national narratives in Poland, Russia and Hungary.
"We are the norm!"

New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe

Eds. Katharina Bluhm and Mihai Varga (London: Routledge, 2019) 309 pages

With conservatism and nationalism growing in popularity across the globe, explanations for authoritarian developments in Central and Eastern Europe which rely on the region's exceptionalism - the anti-democratic after-effects of socialism or a supposedly greater susceptibility to ethnic conflicts - appear less plausible. This situation may prompt students of the region to engage more directly with those social and political processes as well as ideologies that have accompanied the rise of authoritarian practices in other parts of the world. Meanwhile, scholars of authoritarianism and populism might be well-advised to engage with the Russian and East Central European experience as a lens to make sense of similar developments elsewhere. This may engender a more profound understanding of the ideological texture and the economic strongholds of the transnational authoritarian right.

The anthology *New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe* makes for an important stepping stone in this direction. It's main strength lies in its combination of general political sociology with a sensitivity to local specificities that comes with an area studies approach. As such, it stresses the differences between conservative politics in Poland, Russia and Hungary. Conservative national narratives in the three countries diverge significantly in their framing of the socialist past and fascism during the 1930s and 40s. Moreover, the countries' national economies are positioned very differently in terms of their transnational influence and key industries. These differences notwithstanding, the anthology's umbrella focus on post-socialist states in Eastern and Central Europe is justified: In all three cases, the "new conservatives" derive their legitimacy from a widespread and profound disenchantment with the consequences of the post-1989 economic and social transformation (p. 2). Moreover, in all three cases, conservatives have responded to this disenchantment by replacing political liberalism (not capitalism) with authoritarian nationalism. In contrast to the international orientation of socialist and liberal ideologies, "new conservatives" preach the importance of preserving the supposedly unique national traditions and authentic national character of the constitutive people. The new conservatives regard such emphasis on "one's own" national unique selling proposition as a means of strengthening the national economy in the face of global capitalist competition. The new conservatives' turn towards nationalism and authoritarianism is therefore is not to be understood as a backlash against global capitalist competition, but as a novel way to frame this competition before the eyes of the world and the electorate as a "special path of development".

THE MOST PRONOUNCED insistence on a special path of development can be found in Russia. Already in the early 2000s, this trope became central to government policy through the euphemism of an economically, culturally and politically "sovereign democracy". As Katharina Bluhm points out in her contribution, new conservatives in Russia portray all those who stand up for personal freedoms, equal rights, or environmental protection as enemies of this "sovereign democracy". They interpret such commitment to liberal values, human rights and equality as a deviation from an alleged true human nature and a social order that would organically correspond to it. Against this backdrop, they attempt, among other things, to control women's reproductive decisions and reinforce a binary view of sex and gender (p. 45). They refer to declining birth rates among "ethnic Russians" and those ethnic groups that have traditionally settled on the territory of the Russian empire and its successors, to underscore the urgency of a special Russian path that safeguards the nation, understood as a cultural and biological entity.

In her contribution, Ewa Dąbrowska impressively shows a similar tendency for the new conservative discourse in Poland. New conservatives claim that the Polish economy and society are in need of moral renewal. The 1990s are portrayed by the governing party PiS ("Law and Justice") as a time of decline. In the light of this apparent decline, Polish new conservatives seek to modernize the economy according to what they call a genuine Polish-Christian benchmark. They portray Poland in analogy to a person, a subject that must regain its own personality (podmiotowość) and agency (sprawczość) in the world (p. 105).

Alongside Ewa Dąbrowska, Aron Buzogány and Mihai Varga elaborate on how new conservatives seek to morally justify economic concepts in relation to the common national good. In their contribution on Hungary, they show how the politics of the ruling party Fidesz seek to establish a moral state, based on traditional and authoritarian values. Such a "moral state" is not only supposed to strengthen Hungary's national economy, but also to overcome the "immoral" heritage of socialism and liberalism (p. 81–82). Hungarian new conservatives refer back to the anti-modernism of Western conservative intellectuals such as Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin and Carl Schmitt to normatively bolster their idea of a moral Hungarian state. Interestingly, while they support the course of Viktor Orbán – to revive Hungarians' "Eastern roots" and counteract those cosmopolitan values allegedly damaging Hungary during both the communist and the postcommunist liberal democratic history of the country – they

ILLUSTRATION: MOA THELANDER

do not even come up with an "Eastern imprint" on these basically Western ideational foundations (p. 85).

HOWEVER, ANOTHER inherent contradiction of Orbán's rule seems to be missing from the analysis. While the authors highlight Hungarian new conservatives' critique of neoliberal market-orientation, which has allegedly served mainly foreign business interests and damaged the Hungarian national interest, they do not mention that despite such criticisms – which were central to Orbán's election campaign – the government has continued to implement neoliberal policies. As Ágnes Gagyi and Tamás Gerőcs show in an *LeftEast* article, published on January 1, 2019, while Orbán used anti-neoliberal rhetoric to come to power, many of his economic policies did not break with neoliberalism. Evidence can be found in the government's tax policies – only a 3.6% tax rate is effectively paid by the largest manufacturers in Hungary (mostly German companies) while a universal income tax of 15% is paid by employees. Even more drastically, labor policies such as the Overtime Act, better known as the "Slave Law", which requires employees to work 400 hours overtime per year if their employers demand it so and wait for their payments up to three years, testify to continued flexibilization and deregulation rather than to the proclaimed break with neoliberalism. It seems that as Irina Busygina and Mikhail Filippov show for Russian new conservatives in this volume, "'conservatives in power' (that is, in government) will continue

Continued.
Conservative national narratives in Poland, Russia and Hungary

to use conservative ideas for politics, while at the same time promoting liberal economic policies" (p. 173).

IN ALL THREE COUNTRIES discussed in the volume, the new conservatives focus their attention on the alleged and real dependency of their respective national economy on a dominant economic center. In this respect, their debates recall the Wallersteinian distinction between dominated peripheries and a hegemonic economic center. Their critique of liberalism thus often displays a counter-hegemonic style. Moreover, new conservatives in all three countries criticize liberalism as a dangerous political ideology, including liberal freedoms. Liberalism's underlying values are portrayed as endangering both their countries' national economy and alleged national uniqueness. When new conservatives advocate for a strong, authoritarian state, they do so also, as Bluhm and Varga rightly point out in the conclusion, to strengthen the national economy in international capitalist competition (p. 283). The demand for an authoritarian state is thus also to be understood as an economic policy aiming to strengthen the local economy vis-à-vis dominant economic centers and global corporations. At the same time, a strong state is supposed to safeguard the uniqueness of "the nation". Preserving national uniqueness is so central to new conservatives because they regard this uniqueness as being threatened by the aim of economic development. The demand for a strong state is connected with a revival of "national traditions" (p. 281).

Thus, new conservatives in all three countries promote an allegedly idiosyncratic and "sovereign" national development in opposition to the supposed erasure of national uniqueness through universal liberalism and Western-led globalization. For this purpose, they use neocolonial expressions to highlight both their genuine concern for an allegedly threatened national sovereignty and their declared readiness to defend it (p. 2). They frame this alleged foreign threat to national sovereignty not only in economic and power political terms, but also as a moral emergency: The authoritarian state is portrayed as having the moral task of preserving the constitutive people's ethnic composition, the traditional gender binary and sexual morals, if national sovereignty is to be successfully defended. The theme of a struggle for national liberation against a liberal, neocolonial economic and value system runs through new conservative discourses in all three countries, as the volume's contributors show. Against this backdrop, establishing a strong authoritarian government appears to be a necessary national act of resistance against dubious anti-national efforts. Regardless of whether opposition members at home or competing economies are suspected of being "behind" such efforts: An authoritarian state is supposed to prevent "its nation" from disappearing from the world's cultural and economic map.

What is the added value of uniting the contributions of this volume under the concept of a "new conservatism"? Concretely, the editors follow Karl Mannheim's influential conceptualization of conservatism as a "reflexive political ideology", i.e. as the product of purposeful intellectual work (p. 10). It follows from this that new conservatism is more than a "style of thought". It is, as the editors argue, a countermovement to liberalism that has a social basis. As such, new conservatism rests on identifiable "knowledge networks" that attempt to reinterpret liberalism. For instance, new conservative knowledge networks portray the postsocialist 1990s as a period of both economic and moral decline.

COMPARED TO EXISTING analyses of what could be called the region's anti-liberal turn or democratic backsliding, the volume's approach has several advantages. The framework of new conservatism reveals the narrative that is shared by new conservative protagonists in all three countries. According to this narrative, social change is only justified if it restores a supposedly "natural order" (p. 11) which is imagined as being enshrined in a country's traditional national character. The chosen approach thereby makes it easier to detect the transnational dimension of new conservatism within Central and Eastern Europe. However, it also enables researchers to trace political networks across continents. An apt example of such a trans-continental network is the World Congress of Families, where US-based evangelicals meet with representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church. A conceptualization centering on nationalisms and nationalists in Central and Eastern Europe would obscure this international dimension of the phenomenon. New conservatives pursue a decidedly international agenda.

Second, the editors' approach helps to distinguish between new conservative ideology production, government policies and new conservative mobilizations. This distinction is crucial, because new conservatism should not be equated with the authoritarian practices pursued by the Polish, Hungarian and Russian governments. The second part of the volume examines such "translations" of new conservative thought into social and economic policy agendas. It shows that new conservative agendas are usually more radical than the government policies they ultimately shape. The approach taken here avoids the common

PHOTO: KREMLIN.RU/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Hungary's prime minister Viktor Orbán and Russia's president Vladimir Putin, 2017.

PHOTO: KANCELARIA SEJMU / PAWEŁ KULAV/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Viktor Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński, deputy prime minister of Poland.

pitfall of overestimating both the power of individual new conservative ideologists and that of authoritarian leaders who seem to be infatuated with new conservative agendas. The contributions show that they seldom succeed in actually producing the political outcomes they wish for on the drawing board or in public speeches. Concrete government policies often feature only a watered-down variant of new conservative programs. This may be connected with the fact that longstanding liberal economic beliefs among government advisers – as Irina Busygina and Mikhail Filippov show – often make it difficult for new conservatives to shape their government's economic policies.

IMPORTANTLY, THIS SECOND part highlights the unintended consequences of new conservative and neotraditional agendas as well as the – often economically motivated – limits to their implementation on the federal and local level. Anthropologist Tobias Köllner's contribution stands out here. It shows how even citizen initiatives may demand a more radical new conservative politics than actors close to the state and local government. His contribution discusses a local protest against the construction of a pharmaceutical plant in the pilgrimage town of Bogoliubovo (in Vladimir Oblast, Russia). The plant was designed to produce toiletry products – and condoms. Astonishingly, the protests against the production of condoms in Bogoliubovo (the city name translates as god-loving), which were mainly organized by local Orthodox activists, were not supported by the responsible eparchy. The latter did not want to interfere in economic decisions (p. 249). Here again, readers are cautioned not to overestimate the degree to which new conservative actors influence outcomes. When matters of economic development and growth appear to be at stake, new conservative actors closer to government organs may pursue a less radical agenda so as not to provoke government and business officials – who often work closely together or pursue both careers at the same time.

Thirdly, in connection with the previous point, the volume underlines the importance of shifting the focus of analysis to new conservative institutions and actors beyond government. Central institutions of new conservative ideology production such as think tanks, foundations, clubs, civil society actors, and media outlets become the object of analysis. This approach also helps to distinguish between different new conservative factions. In particular, the first part of the volume, which traces the "genealogies" of new conservative thought, highlights the lines of division between different actor coalitions. The focus on "new conservatism" makes it possible to study the current rise of authoritarian practices in Eastern and Central Europe as a political program that seeks to create a new order. In that respect, it offers one way to overcome the tendency to *explain* authoritarian developments by collecting evidence of democratic deficits. By analyzing the agendas and visions of new conservatives, the volume may not explain, but certainly suggests which political utopias motivate think tanks and government advisers in this region and beyond. Katharina Bluhm's contribution to this first part of the volume reconstructs the visions that new conservative actors have of Russia and the world. She positions herself strongly against the tendency to treat the work of ideology producers as a mere "façade", created to conceal "real" power-political ambitions. She argues that we should take conceptual ideologists' proposals for societal transformation seriously (p. 46) – even though their translation into policy programs

Continued.
Conservative national narratives in Poland, Russia and Hungary

entails adaptations to apparently and actually existing socio-economic realities.

One might object that the term "conservatism" downplays the authoritarian and nationalistic character of the aims pursued by self-proclaimed new conservatives. While conservative leaders of liberal democracies, such as Konrad Adenauer or Margaret Thatcher, sometimes serve as examples for conservative political modernization agendas in the region,[1] it is crucial to be aware that conservatism as a school of thought and a political movement is rooted in the Counter-Enlightenment. Thus, when new conservatives place the collective right to national self-determination above personal freedoms and human rights, they continue an anti-democratic line of conservative tradition that places national belonging and deeds for the nation above individual human rights and individual integrity. As the well-known thinker of the Counter-Enlightenment Joseph de Maistre wrote in 1797:

> **The Constitution of 1795, just like its predecessors, was made for man. But there is no such thing as man in the world. In the course of my life I have seen Frenchmen, Italians, Russians etc.; I know, too, thanks to Montesquieu, that one can be a Persian. But as for man, I declare that I have never met him in my life; if he exists, he is unknown to me.**[2]

It is precisely from this tradition, rejecting the reality of a pre-national human being, that the new conservatives take their cue.

One aspect which is neglected by the volume reviewed here is the centrality of patriarchal rule for new conservatism. While several contributions discuss misogyny as an intrinsic component of new conservative thought, above all Agnieszka Wierzcholska's engaging chapter on the Polish gender and abortion debate, the volume omits to theorize the gender dimension of new conservative ideology. It remains unclear to what extent both conservatism in its general form and in its specific new manifestations in contemporary Poland, Hungary, and Russia depends on and reproduces a gender order that is hostile to women. While the volume intelligently discusses how new conservatives paint a picture of crisis, including a crisis of the nation, of the family, and of the population (p. 229), a thorough theoretical incorporation of this gender dimension into the concept of new conservatism, as elaborated and used by the contributors and editors, would have been useful. If more attention had been paid to conservatism's gender dimension, this might also have facilitated a discussion of the central role played by folkish frames in new conservative agendas. To give an example, in all three cases new conservatives portray immigration as a threat to the ethnic composition of the constitutive people. This also applies to Russia, where advocacy for a multiethnic state and people is accompanied by severe restrictions on immigration (p. 288). All new conservatives deem women to be responsible for securing the survival of the nation's constitutive people, whether defined in multiethnic or in ethnically homogeneous terms. To be sure, this is not a regional specificity. Many branches of conservatism promote the subordination of reproductive freedoms to the apparent needs of the people and the fatherland.

The analyses in this volume, discussing new conservatism in its Polish, Hungarian and Russian varieties, are crucial for a better understanding of the global rise of authoritarian and nationalistic practices and politics. *New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe* makes for a compelling read not only for area studies scholars, but also for students of political science, sociology and gender studies. They might profit from seeing authoritarian developments elsewhere through Russian and East Central European eyes.

Anna Schwenck

Cultural sociologist in the Collaborative Research Center "Transformations of the Popular" at Siegen University. Her postdoc project deals with the nexus between popular music, populism and political violence in Germany and South Africa. Drawing on the results of her PhD, she is about to complete a book on Russia's flexible authoritarian regime and its legitimacy among promising youth from the provinces.

references

1 Olga Malinova, *Konstruirovanie smyslov. Issledovanie simvolicheskoi politiki v sovremennoi Rossii* (Moscow: INION RAN, 2013), 181.

2 Cited and translated by: Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. Second Edition, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 104.

A homage to the beauty of two hundred Baltic Sea lighthouses.

A coffee table book rich with photos

Fyrar runt Östersjön

[Lighthouses around the Baltic Sea] Magnus Rietz, (Stockholm: Lind & Co, 2019), 415 pages

PHOTO: MAGNUS RIETZ

Vormsi (Saxby) lighthouse is situated on the island of Vormsi in Estonia. It was built in 1864 and is 24 meters tall.

Swedish veteran photographer Magnus Rietz has produced an exquisite coffee-table album featuring lighthouses in all nine countries around the Baltic Sea with superb color photographs and itemized annotations in Swedish for each and every Baltic Sea lighthouse.

The pricey volume, displaying almost 300 photos from more than 200 Baltic Sea lighthouse sites, is introduced as a "magnificent homage to the beauty of lighthouses, both the interiorand the exterior, and to the scenery where they have been built". Magnus Rietz analyzes and compares not only the exterior design of Baltic Sea lighthouses, but in many cases also examines details of the interior. Strikingly, he makes the point that sometimes the interior may even be more interesting than the exterior.

Magnus Rietz, whose previous experience includes publishing comprehensive documentation of Swedish lighthouses, spent roughly four years completing this impressive task. According to the author, nowhere in the world are there as many big lighthouses in a limited geographic space as the network around the Baltic Sea. In addition, nowhere else in the world do so many countries surround a limited sea area as in the Baltic. All nine countries on the Baltic Sea – Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden – have their own lighthouses.

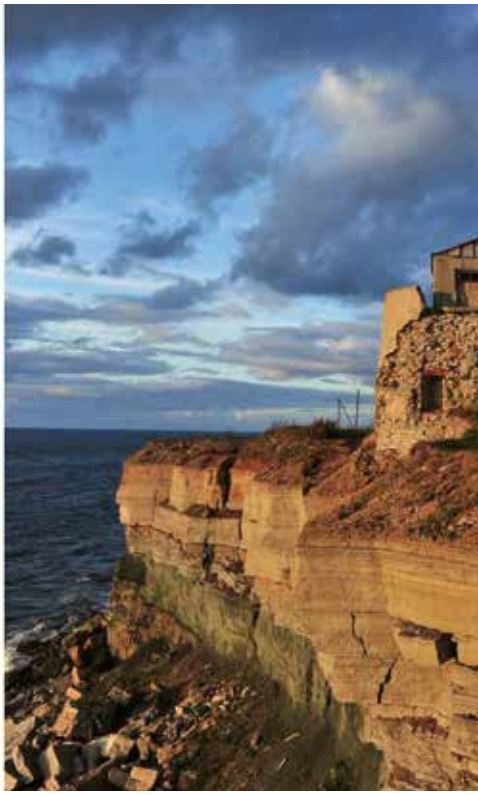
All told, Magnus Rietz has recorded and photographed 181 Baltic Sea lighthouses. Sweden, with the longest Baltic Sea coastline, has by far the most, 52 in total, Denmark and Finland have 22 each, Estonia has 21, Russia 18 (of which 6 lighthouses are in the "Kronstadt cluster" by Saint Petersburg, each one jokingly nicknamed by the author), Germany and Poland 17 each, Latvia 10 and Lithuania 2 lighthouses by the Baltic Sea.

HAVING EVOLVED GRADUALLY during several centuries, Baltic Sea lighthouse construction accelerated in the 19th century. After just a couple of decades of intensive lighthouse building, the network was largely complete. Since then, these lighthouses make up an invisible web of vital Baltic Sea regional cooperation.

On the basis of his long familiarity with lighthouse matters, Magnus Rietz explains the overall historical context, provides

Continued.
A homage to the beauty of two hundred Baltic Sea lighthouses

PHOTO: MAGNUS RIETZ



Lighthouse built 1913 at the ilsand Bonden [The Farmer], Ångermanland, Sweden.

a regional economic perspective, compares evolving building practices, clarifies key lighthouse technologies and highlights the current environmental crisis in the Baltic Sea.

Historically, lighthouses have often enjoyed an aura of poetry. Curiously, at least in Sweden, many lighthouses benefit from exotic-sounding or fairy tale-like geographic names that have become household terms known to the general public thanks to the daily maritime weather report on public radio.

SOME, BUT FAR FROM ALL, lighthouses are open to the public; a few even provide hostels to offer overnight accommodation. In Poland, all but a couple are open to visitors five months a year. A few Baltic Sea lighthouse sites include a minor museum. In Germany, most lighthouses provide the setting for weddings. Some lighthouses are incorporated in tall buildings with other purposes, such as castles or churches. The Travemünde Maritim is possibly the world's second highest lighthouse, mounted at the top of a 117 meter high hotel complex by the Travemünde beach. Top of the list is the legendary fortress island of Sveaborg by the Finnish capital Helsinki, where the cupola of the Suomenlinna church has a bright rotating crystal ball lighthouse lens.

Sandhammaren lighthouse is situated in the very south of Sweden, 30 kilometers from the city of Ystad.

All in all, it is sheer enjoyment to look at Magnus Rietz' selection of amazing photographs of Baltic Sea lighthouses, accompanied by his perceptive and informative remarks.

Manne Wängborg
Former Consul General of Sweden
in Kaliningrad, Russia.

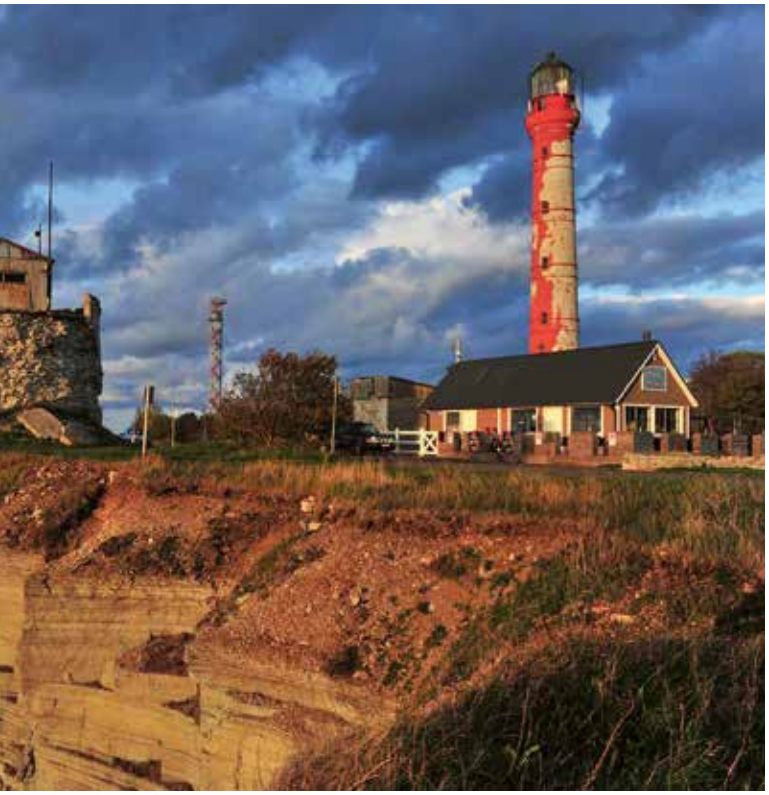
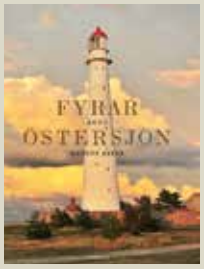


PHOTO: MAGNUS RIETZ

The lighthouse on the island of Pakri, Estonia.



Magnus Rietz is a photographer, seaman and pharologist. He was granted permission to visit and photograph the lighthouses on all Russian islands in the Gulf of Finland, where the lighthouse keepers are still active.

To reach the lighthouses, Magnus Rietz has used a number of different modes of transport, such as pilot boat, helicopter, snowmobile and rubber dinghy.

The coffee table book *Fyrar i Östersjön* displays almost 300 photos of lighthouses.

Inside Russia.
The Finnish dimension

Kivinen, Markku & Humphreys, Brendan (eds.). (London and New York: Routledge 2021). xxv and 368 pages.

There used to be Sovietology. Today there is Eurasian studies. Both are Western fields of research. Although based on Russian self-descriptions these research traditions approach, describe and analyze Russian culture, history and society from the outside. They are characterized by positivist-scientistic premises, i.e., by the notion that Russian society follows the same trajectory as other societies.

The counterpoint to the positivist stance is the Russian 19th century poet Fedor Tiutchev's famous dictum: "Russia cannot be understood by reason alone/Common measures cannot be applied to her/She has a special character/One must simply believe in Russia." This is a view from the inside. It is solipsistic and refutes the very idea of trying to analyze Russian society. This is the attitude of the present Putin regime.

Whereas other scholarly non-Russian perspectives are from the outside, the Finnish perspective is from the inside. Russia and Finland have a shared history. They constitute an agency in history. Such an understanding and conceptualization of history has been obscured by the "Western invention of the nation-state"[1] – and by the projection of the nation state backwards in history.

THE PRECEDING PARAGRAPH has its bearing on the bold declaration by the authors of *Russian Modernization* that they offer a "new paradigm". The volume is not an anthology. It is a collective work by 34 almost exclusively Finnish and Russian scholars. The whole project bears the imprint of the insights from a life-long research work on Russia by one of the two editors, Markku Kivinen. In 1996 he founded the Aleksanteri Institute, the Finnish Centre for Russian and East European Studies. He remained its director for twenty-three years. This project and the book are his legacy.

Why "Aleksanteri", i.e., Alexander? From 1809 to 1917 Finland was a Grand Duchy that was ruled by the Emperors of Russia. The name of this Finnish institute is a homage to those rulers of the Russian Empire that are viewed favorably in Finland, Alexander I, II and III.

In 1809, Finland was separated from the Kingdom of Sweden and became part of the Russian Empire. During the 19th century, Finland became a (bi-lingual) nation in its own

Continued.
Inside Russia

right. When the Russian Empire evaporated in 1917, Finland became a sovereign state.

The rulers of the Soviet Union did not think that the Finns were entitled to their own state. In 1939, the Soviet Union attacked Finland. Finland survived the two wars with the Soviet Union but became linked to the Soviet Union through the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in 1948.

From 1948 until the present day, leading historians and social scientists in Finland have nurtured hopes that Russia would emulate Finland and become a law-based democratic market economy. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, a number of Russian scholars demonstrated that they shared the Finnish hopes. All this may be summarized as the dream of the modernization of Russia. There was an element of teleology and belief in human progress concerning Russia when the Aleksanteri Institute was launched. Its purpose was to conduct research that should promote modernization in Russia through the joint forces of Finnish and Russian scholars.

THE TENETS BEHIND the Aleksanteri Institute and the volume under review are *angst* and wishful thinking. The angst is caused by the fear that Russia will remain a lawless autocracy and an existential threat to Finland. The wishful thinking is based on the hope that Russia will be modernized and change into a decent civilized nation like Finland. The research project *Russian Modernization* is designed according to mode B, to enhance the "accountability of science, which would ensure more responsiveness to the needs of society" (28). In plain language: the aim is to produce knowledge in Finland of developments in Russia, a knowledge that will enable Finland to pursue a risk minimizing policy towards Russia, and, ultimately, promote modernization in Russia.

This is a serious issue. *Modernization in Russia* offers an elaborated analysis of the interplay of structure and agency in Russian society. The emerging picture is that of a society without clearly defined social classes, which is characterized by anomie.

The very last paragraph of *Modernization in Russia* reads:

> **The main message of this book is that if Russia is to develop politics in positive directions, these need to be developed with the help of social science. But, the latter must be bold enough to maintain a dialogue across the locked borders, and intellectually ambitious enough to discuss even the most significant paradigmatic foundations (p. 294).**

"The new paradigm" is based upon "a generic theoretical approach found in Anthony Giddens' structuration theory" (p. 2). This means that social change is caused by the interplay of agency and structures within a matrix of challenges from the unexpected and unintended consequences of purposeful actions. Russian modernization is characterized by "structuration antinomies". The five challenges to Russian modernization that

Tsar Alexander I, Alexander II, and Alexander III.

PHOTO: JOHN WELSH/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Aleksanteri Institute, Helsinki.

are treated in chapters 2–6 in the book are: diversification of the economy; democratization; the welfare regime; culture and ideology; and foreign and security policy.

The first chapter presents the modernization paradigm à la Gidddens. In chapter 2, Pami Aalto and Anna Lowry discuss the role of fossil fuels "as a blessing and a curse" for Russia. The huge export incomes function as disincentives for diversification. The issue is the same as in Soviet times. It is intimately related to foreign and security policy. This dimension is treated in chapter 6 by Tuomas Forsberg et al. Here Vladislav Surkov is a main actor as "chief ideologist in the Kremlin" in the early 2000s. He coined the slogan "sovereign democracy" in order to describe "the fundamentally modernizing character of his national project, whose mission is to guarantee Russia 'the nationalization of the future'." (p. 259–260).

WHEN DMITRII MEDVEDEV succeeded Vladimir Putin as president of Russia in 2008, he signaled that Russia had found a model for modernization: the Silicon Valley. He launched a project for Russia that would emulate the Silicon Valley.

PHOTO: NETBUG/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Skolkovo Innovation Center is situated outside Moscow.

PHOTO: KREMLIN.RU/CC

Vladislav Surkov.

PHOTO: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM/CC

Vladimir Putin.

Skolkovo outside Moscow should become a science center that would focus on applied research in high-tech companies.[2]

The first director of the Skolkovo project was Vladislav Surkov. On May 1, 2013, he declared that "The Skolkovo Innovation Center" should push Russia into the international market of ideas and innovation. So far, Russia's economy had been based on the export of raw materials and the import of finished goods. Now Russia would become an "open economy". Foreign partners were to be welcomed in Skolkovo.[3]

Two weeks after Surkov's speech, the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* reported that he had been dismissed and the foreign partners in Skolkovo expelled.[4]

The fate of Skolkovo is an eloquent expression of the gist of the results of the numerous solid empirical case studies in *Russian Modernization*: the two words express an oxymoron.

Chapter 3 is devoted to democratization. It bears the revealing title "Authoritarian modernization in post-Soviet Russia." It is written by Vladimir Gel'man et al. In her contribution to the chapter, Marina Khmelnitskaya presents the 'hollow paradigm'. It is "a general policy idea devoid of the essential instruments and settings of policy" (p. 93).

In the first paragraph Khmelnitskaya manages to summarize the basic finding of the whole book:

> **The non-democratic nature of Russia's political system, the unaccountable and corrupt public administration with diverse departmental interests, and the unresponsiveness to the command of the central executive, all structure the process in which the Russian state produces its policy plans of socio-economic modernization and carries out policy-making (p. 91).**

The chilling message is that in contemporary Russia the Soviet past is not dead. It is not even past. Marina Khmelnitskaya demonstrates that the contemporary Russian state is a version of the late-Soviet state. It stands to reason that the ruler of today's Russia, Vladimir Putin, is a former Soviet Chekist. Khmelnitskaya ends her essay on the hollow paradigm with a sad understatement:

> **Yet, despite being a good match with the institutional context and its functionality in terms of procedure and substance, the hollow paradigm's impact on the policy *process* is a less than happy one. As an outcome of a goal-setting stage of policy, it appears vague and all-inclusive. Policy documents feature**

Continued.
Inside Russia

> **inconsistent policy objectives and incoherent/or mutually exclusive policy instruments. Having such a strategic policy plan does not add clarity to the confused and drawn-out subsequent stages of policy-making by the bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic agencies (p. 94).**

In the introduction I quoted the declaration by the editors that Russia can develop in a positive direction only with the help of social science. I must end with a reference to a note by the Russian journalist, Andrei Kolesnikov. Commenting on the Russian law on foreign agents in 2012, which branded the independent sociology institute the Levada Center as such an agent, he argued that the Russian regime had sawed off the branch it was sitting on. It had deprived itself of a trustworthy feedback link. What would be allowed to remain was Orthodox Sociology: "And what does it mean?" – "To the Orthodox security forces (*Pravoslavnym chekistam*), an orthodox sociology!".[5]

Russian Modernization demonstrates that there really is a modern version of Russia. Its name is Finland. The Aleksanteri Institute is an intellectual repository for a future better Russia.

Kristian Gerner
Professor Emeritus in History,
University of Lund.

references

1 Fara Dabhoiwala, "Imperial Delusions", *The New York Review of Books* LXVIII:11, 2021.

2 "Innovation in Russia. Can Russia create a new Silicon Valley?", *The Economist*, July 14, 2012.

3 "Russia's ruling United Russia party needs real political alternative – Surkov", *ITAR-TASS*, May 2, 2013.

4 "Kislyj innograd. Skolkovo teryaet partnery, dengi, reputatsiyu" (Sour innovation city. Skolkovo loses partners, money, reputation) *Novaja Gazeta*, May 21, 2013.

5 Andrei Kolesnikov, "Sotsiologiya dvoyechnikov. Levada-Tsentr unichtozhayut stalinskimi metodaemi" (The Sociology of Losers. The Levada Center is being destroyed by Stalinist methods) *Novaja Gazeta*, May 20, 2013.

contributors

Kristy Beers Fägersten

Professor of English Linguistics Head of English Department at Södertörn University. She is a member of the networks SwiSca (Swearing in Scandinavia) and NNCORE (Nordic Network for Comics Research).

Samuel Faber

PhD-Candidate in History at Stockholm University. His research is focused on modern urban history and the neoliberalization of housing policies in Sweden and Denmark.

Kristian Gerner

Professor Emeritus in History, University of Lund. His research and journalism has focused on 20th century Russian (Soviet) Central and East European history and historical culture. He was Professor of East European History and Culture, Uppsala University in 1994-2002.

Anna Grinberg

Hanken School of Economics. Student in the interdisciplinary Master's School in Russian and East European Studies coordinated by the Aleksanteri Institute at the University of Helsinki.

Dan Karlholm

Professor in Art History at Södertörn University. His research interests include art historiography, political aesthetics and repercussions of the Anthropocene on the humanities.

Meri Kulmala

Senior Researcher and Director of Helsinki Inequality Initiative at the University of Helsinki. Research interests: social in/justice, in/equality, a welfare state, social policy, child welfare, co-creative research methodologies.

Birgit van der Leeden

Author of short prose and non-fiction such as country portraits of Sweden and Romania. Special Advisor for Germans in Romania (2013-2020).

Augustė Nalivaikė

PhD-candidate and Lecturer at the Civil Society and Sustainability Research Group, Kaunas University of Technology.

Anna Nordenstam

Professor History of Ideas, and Religion, Department of Literature, Gothenburg University. Current Project "Feminist Swedish Comics as Medium for Political Activism and Critique" (project leader), financed by the Swedish Research Council 2019–2022.

Leena Romu

PhD-candidate in Translation and Literary Studies, School of Language, Tampere University.

Påhl Ruin

Journalist and freelance writer based in Stockholm. Previously spent five years in Vilnius reporting for Swedish publications.

Paulina Rytkönen

Associated Professor in Economic History and Senior Lecturer in Business Studies at Södertörn University. Her research focuses on a wide variety of historical and contemporary topics concerning global, national, and local food systems, rural entrepreneurship, innovations, self-employment and economic growth in rural areas.

Anna Tarasenko

Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and International Affairs, National Research University Higher School of Economics (St. Petersburg, Russia) and Visiting Researcher, at Aleksanteri Institute (University of Helsinki). Research interests: a regional dimension of social policy reforms in Russia, new public management reforms and non-profit sector development, outsourcing of social services.

Tihomir Topuzovski

Interdisciplinary Programme Director at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, North Macedonia, and editor-in-chief of the journal *The Large Glass*. His research is at the intersection of philosophy, politics and the visual arts.

Martina Urbinati

Holds a MA in social sciences at the University of Bologna and was a trainee at the Centre of East European and International Studies (ZOiS). Her main research interests include urban memory and conflicting interpretations of the historical past in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States.

Margareta Wallin Wictorin

PhD in Art History and Visual Studies, Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies , Karlstad University. Current research interest: popular prints and imagery, press images, book illustrations, comics and graphic novels, and contemporary art, often with educational, feminist and postcolonial perspectives.

Manne Wängborg

A Swedish diplomat and writer, former Consul General of Sweden in Kaliningrad, Russia, and Deputy Secretary-General of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission.

KLIMATKOMPENSERAD CO_2 AV TRICORONA
MILJÖMÄRKT TRYCKSAK 3041 0417

The print journal is distributed in 50 countries. It is also published open access on the web.

BALTIC WORLDS

1991–2021

THE USSR. THIRTY YEARS AFTER

IN DECEMBER 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist, but its material and symbolic legacies still appear powerful enough to obliterate perspectives on the present and the future that have lost their utopian force.

Throughout the year 2021, CBEES arranges a series of roundtable discussions to make sense of this longue durée of "afterness". With its various definitions from a range of vantage points (such as transition, transformation, trauma, post-Soviet, post-communist, post-socialist, etc.), these 30 years require proper critical reflection. Such a discussion will be relevant in the context of multidisciplinary area studies and has been conducted at CBEES throughout almost the whole of the 30-years period in question.

The roundtable discussions focus on a wide range of topics related to the legacies of the past, such as an economic analysis of the 30 years after the USSR; memory and legislation; the environmental impacts after Soviet industrialization; Russia and the European far-right; art, gender, and political protest; urban space in transition and collapse; Russian literature after 1991; new regionalisms in the Baltic and East European area; the production of critical memory and the strategic re-use of the past in the construction of new realities.

The series of international multidisciplinary roundtable discussions are organized by CBEES in collaboration with Institute of Contemporary History, Södertörn University.

PhD-candidates at the Baltic and East European Graduate School report on the roundtables on the *Baltic Worlds* webpage balticworlds.com/tags/ussr-30-years/

ILLUSTRATION: MOA THELANDER

on the web

CRISIS IN RUSSIAN STUDIES AND WAR IN UKRAINE

SIMO MANNILA COMMENTS on the *Baltic Worlds* website on Taras Kuzio's book *Crisis in Russian studies?* (2020) in which Kuzio addresses some problems of Western research in relation to Ukraine and the ongoing war.

According to According to Mannila, Kuzio suggests that there is path-dependency in the contemporary Russian approach to Ukraine largely denying the country its history and right to independent existence. The colonialist attitude – "orientalism" to utilize Edward Said's concept – to emergent nations such as Ukraine is also typical of many Western researchers. This is because academically the tradition of Ukrainian studies is marginal compared to the long history of Russian or Soviet studies, not to mention the international prestige of Russian arts and literature. The bias is also reflected in the approach to the "conflict in and around Ukraine," where Ukrainian regional, national, and linguistic differences are misinterpreted as a simple dichotomy and the external instigation of the war by the Russian Federation is disregarded. Taras Kuzio does not see any way out of the conflict in the foreseeable future. Recent opinion polls, writes Mannila, also show that this is well understood by the population of Ukraine, who now widely support convergence with the EU and NATO membership. However, they feel close to Russians as a nation – they differentiate between the people and the government.

Read the full article: http://balticworlds.com/crisis-in-russian-studies-ukrainian-russian-relations-and-what-to-think-about-them/

elections

BALTIC WORLDS Election Coverage has hitherto published over 100 comments on elections in over 20 countries. The comments and analyses present the parties, the candidates and the main election issues, as well as analyzing the implications of the results. Visit http://balticworlds.com/category/elections/