

# Facets of Identity

– the Baltic Sea  
Region and beyond



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# Introduction

Bernd Henningsen

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This publication came about on the initiative of the Baltic Development Forum in Copenhagen: this should lead to a paper that deepens the ongoing discussion of what holds a region like the Baltic Sea together. What is the quality of this community? What identity in its own? What is it based on? Can it be broken down into its constituent elements?

Since the German reunification, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet empire, the eastern expansion of both NATO and the EU, and especially the establishment of the Baltic Sea Region as the first European macro-region, the question of whether or not there is something like a regional identity has been brought into focus by – among others – politics, economics, science and the tourism industry. Before 1989, the notion that the Baltic Sea Region was a political and cultural entity was, for a half century, if not longer, unthinkable: the Iron Curtain also ran through the middle of the Baltic Sea. In this region, imagining some unity or community of any kind whatsoever was without basis in reality.

Since then, this has fundamentally changed: discussion forums and publications about the Baltic Sea in general, and Baltic Sea identity in particular – a visit to Wikipedia proves this – have grown immensely.

Our initial hypothesis is that the expansion of the discussion and the increase in publications has not achieved any lasting clarity of terminology. What is ‘identity’, or ‘regional’ or ‘collective identity’ generally, and what consensus exists on this topic? What can one make certain about it?

Do we find it in politics, history, society, or among the people who live here? Is there such a thing as a regional ‘we-feeling’?<sup>1</sup> The more fundamental question is also relevant: do we even *need* a ‘Baltic Sea identity’, and if so, what is it made of, and what will it accomplish?

It was our intention to approach the question of identity from different angles. What do philosophers tell us about identity? What do psychologists? Historians? Ethnologists? Are there different points of view? What can we learn from them about the substance of identity, and ultimately about regional identity? In this sense, these papers do not address Baltic Sea Identity first and foremost, as the authors were not asked about that topic; rather, they focus more on the scientifically researched facets of identity in different fields of knowledge. They address very different experiences in dealing with identity materials: how does one live as a Russian person in a formerly German territory? What can a Lithuanian tell us about Baltic consciousness? What angle does a Finnish historian have, living as they do between Russia and Sweden? And again and again, the question arises of what meaning this has for a person who is an immigrant to strange land, in another ethnic and cultural community...

The purpose of this publication was not to deliver a synopsis on the question of identity, but rather to motivate understanding of what happens when identity is constructed – it appears that on that topic, despite all controversies, there is consensus that identity is not given *a priori*, but built by humans. And even then, when someone

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<sup>1</sup>Bernd Henningsen: On Identity – No Identity. An Essay on the Constructions, Possibilities and Necessities for Understanding a European Macro Region: The Baltic Sea. (Baltic Development Forum) Copenhagen 2011, [http://www.ni.hu-berlin.de/personal/bh/bdf\\_sorr\\_identity\\_2011\\_07.pdf](http://www.ni.hu-berlin.de/personal/bh/bdf_sorr_identity_2011_07.pdf)



claims that identity is pre-existent (all political ideologies survive on the notion that identity belongs to nature and political reality), then the belief in a naturally pre-existing identity itself is part of the construct. Ludwig Wittgenstein, writing from the Norwegian fjords, concisely summarised this in a letter to his friend Bertand Russell on the eve of the First World War: ‘Identity is the very devil!’

Identity is assembled out of disparate parts, but different scientific fields – philosophers, psychologists, historians – also have different processes of analysis and interpretation (this is the motivation for working on this publication) and make different research materials available. Nonetheless, we speak of ‘identity’ as *one* unitary term. Heraclitus, as one of the first to think deeply on this problem, did not yet possess this term; the German philosophers of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century used it in the context of an ancient Roman conception of personal self-identification and turned it into a fundamental problem of human existence. However, it was only in modern Psychology and Psychoanalysis, after the Second World War, that the term ‘identity’ first entered daily use – politically, it has been in use since the seventies, and as ‘national identity’ used as both a slogan and an object of scholarly interest.

Since then, people have talked about national identity; since then, identity has been reduced to coinage and spent in inflationary fashion: one can have an identity, or bemoan its loss (‘loss of identity’); it can experience a crisis (‘crisis of identity’); a business can have an identity (‘corporate identity’). A nation also has an identity, and by the same token a product, since it becomes a tangible, material thing with the advent of the identity card, or PIN code; there are ‘identity construction kits’, ‘prostheses’, ‘standards’, and

‘projects’; certainly, ‘identity work’ and ‘identity politics’ have been discussed and used as phrases for so long that the construction of identity has become a *political*, a *controlled* affair. Practically any quality can be thought of and articulated alongside identity; this is quite relevant in the context of the term ‘identity patchwork’. There is essentially nothing that identity cannot be applied to today.

Even murkier is addressing identity when it has been attached to related problems: ‘mentality’, ‘culture of remembrance’, ‘collective memory’, and ‘social remembering’. This reduces ‘identity’ to an omnibus term, a hackneyed word that has little to do with its original meaning. In antiquity, this meaning was the notion that a person (or thing) was identical to itself, having therefore a specific, unchanging character.

In the philosophical and psychological literature, the term ‘identity’ is associated with the individual and only with the individual. What is meant by identity is the unchanging, the personal, psychological and habitual contours that separate a person from others. Identity also means a unique personality structure.

How does this broad, vague term come to be applied to nations and regions? The most plausible explanation of how identity came to apply to nations and regions comes from the application of analogy: nations and regions develop identities *analogously* to individuals; nations and regions are similarly anthropomorphised; they receive human characteristics, values and attributes that are decoupled from their human context and mapped to another context, which is that of the region: incomparable features, the human physique, (collective) memory, and (predictably) demeanour. What is unclear in this analogy is the question of actors and interests: *why* are *which* identities

chosen and/or constructed? In a general – and in a political(!) – sense, common parlance sees identity as static and given, not as a process; it's as if there were a national, a regional identity DNA.

Therefore identity should only be discussed with great caution. Frequently, a first glance reveals that something else is intended. Frequently, identity itself is not the focus of considerations and programs – instead, it is the purpose of political, economic or cultural *interests*.

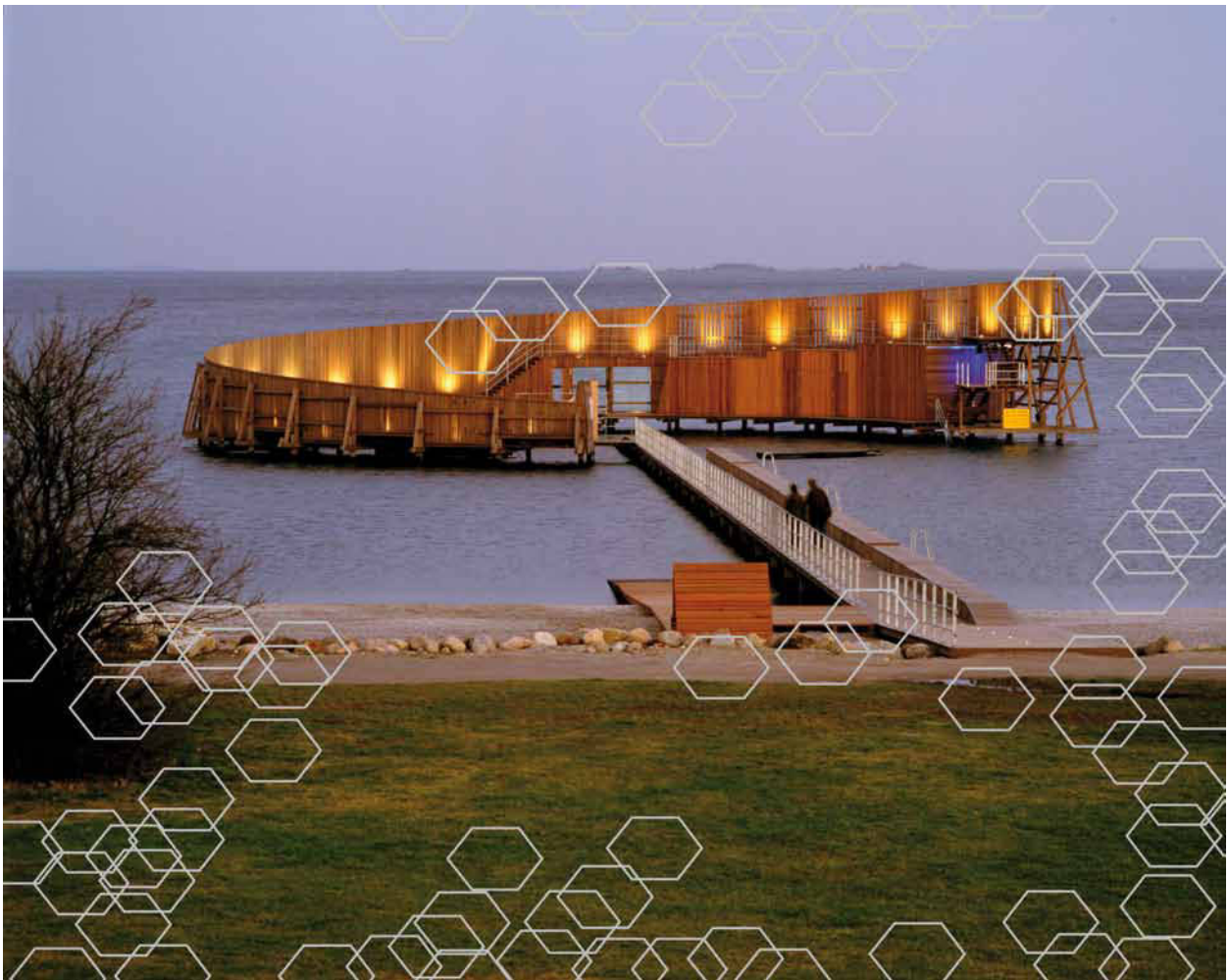
The discussion of identity naturally has a considerably apologetic character – political programs, econo-political decisions, and financial investments must be 'sold' through a kind of marketing strategy: a region, or destination, can be more easily marketed as a tourist attraction if it can be enhanced with a regional identity. IKEA's global success has shown that a company can market their products under the banner of a national identity – this is, however, an identity that has been disconnected from national attributes (if such things even exist) and instead is in line with the ideas that are common in the originating country, Sweden: IKEA serves itself through a strategy of marketing the beliefs that, e.g. Germans have about Sweden.

No later than the nineties – therefore, after the political shift of 1989/90 – identity creation and construction aimed at accentuating distinct national qualities; this in the presence of the structural shift, Europeanisation, and globalisation. 'Identity', whether national or regional, is thus enhanced, creating a *boundary* against the other; identity has been made fundamental in political discourse, yet it remains vague: it is something(!) that separates *us* from *them*. Consistently, this difference also means that *we are better than others*.

The attribution of a particular national or regional 'identity' goes hand-in-hand with the denigration of others; *difference* becomes a political deciding factor – 'cultural racism' becomes the collateral damage of the search for identity. This movement can be observed in the

rise of right-wing populist – in fact, right-wing extremist – movements in all European countries; the condemnation of the 'other' has become routine.

We are thankful that our colleagues from very different scholarly cultures were prepared to contemplate their understanding of identity, on the basis of the scholarly materials available to them. The observant reader may also experience the unique appeal that arises due to this publication housing works from authors of different national and scholarly cultures. You may agree that the term 'culture' is more appropriate than 'identity' to the problems discussed within. In any case, it is not at all presumptuous to hold firm to the idea that 'identity' is a badly behaved child, deprived of a clear definition. If this writing can contribute to sowing doubt into the debate on identity, then it has accomplished a good end.





## A new complexity of identification

Thomas Hylland Eriksen

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Some words typically used to characterise our present age – Western or non-Western – are flux, mobility, identity politics and multiculturalism, hybridity and the ongoing contestation of social and cultural boundaries. Issues which bear mentioning in this regard include minority rights, citizenship, the dilemmas of multiculturalism in liberal societies, the often tense relationship between state and civil society, and questions to do with the substantial content of national and regional identities and their interrelationship. From this cluster of contentious and intellectually challenging questions I take my cue, and let us keep in mind that the main underlying question concerns possible meanings of the word ‘we’ in the contemporary world: that is, to what extent a usually understated, geographically-based identity, such as the one associated with the Baltic Sea Region, may constitute a community of ‘we-hood’.

The word ‘we’ is situational in that it can refer to a variety of collectivities depending on the context. It implies both inclusion and exclusion: by logical extension, the word ‘we’ implies ‘they’. Of particular interest is the question why certain ways of delineating a collective identity become empirically predominant while others are forgotten. This is not an issue of mere academic interest in a world which is witnessing an upsurge of ethnic, religious and national identities – sometimes from below, in opposition to the state, sometimes from above, in defence of the state – while other forms of identification (based on, say, locality or class) tend to be less visible. Regarding the contemporary state, the issue at hand concerns who is to be included in the state, and what it entails to be included.

In the following, I shall approach the question concerning subjective identity, or ‘we-hood’, from a perspective emphasising rapid change. In such

a situation, it is uncertain and contestable which identities will be dominant in the near future, since all identities are, to varying degrees, destabilised and contested.

### A new world

The world has changed in perceptible ways since the end of the post-war years. Nonetheless, it would be inaccurate to simply claim that social and cultural complexity has become greater. Ethnic diversity and encounters across linguistic and cultural boundaries were more widespread in many traditional communities than in modern nation-states, who have often pursued policies of active homogenisation and exclusion in order to create cultural similarity. Meanwhile, it is far from certain that contemporary societies are linguistically and culturally more diverse than some of the cultural crossroads – market and trading towns, ports, etc. – which existed in premodern or early modern times.

Many have proposed new terminologies tailored to help conceptualise the current era, partly replacing the ‘zombie concepts’ of old in the process. Among the most radical bids is John Urry’s proposal to replace the term ‘society’ with ‘mobility’ (Urry 2000). What if, he reasons, we study social life through a lens of mobility rather than stability? The result would doubtlessly be quite different from a conceptualisation (still common in social science) assuming, almost in an axiomatic way, that stable societies are the stuff that social life is made of. At the same time, however, much would be lost if the concept of society was relegated to the dustbin of history, since it is an empirical fact that people all over the world seek stability, continuity, security and predictability (Eriksen, Bal and Saleminck 2010), often by defending or creating spatial belonging,





border demarcations and collective memories anchored in particular places (Connerton 2009). What has been ‘dis-embedded’ is, in a multitude of ways, being ‘re-embedded’.

Less revolutionary, but still fairly radical, attempts to renew the conceptual apparatus of the social sciences can be found in works by, inter alia, Castells (1996–8), Giddens (1991), Beck (2009), Bourdieu (1977) and Bauman (2000), who have suggested terms such as the ‘global network society’ (Castells), ‘globalised risk society’ (Beck), ‘multidimensional social spaces’ (Bourdieu) and the ‘era of reflexive modernity’ (Giddens), in a series of attempts to conceptualise the social in a time characterised by accelerated change and fuzzy boundaries.

Since around 1990, when the Cold War faded into oblivion to be replaced by a series of new geopolitical conflicts often based on nationality, ethnicity or religion, two related tendencies have contributed to shaping life-worlds worldwide, not least in Western Europe: the electronic revolution and ethnic/cultural diversification. Since mobile telephones and internet access became widespread in the countries of Northern Europe in the early 1990s, the ties connecting people to cultural identities and place have become ever more unclear. With the emergence of Web 2.0 (based primarily on communication, not information) in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is increasingly possible to build and maintain almost fully assorted social worlds which are entirely deterritorialised. Flexibility, which may be defined as uncommitted potential for change (Bateson 1972, Eriksen 2005), has been enhanced in nearly every field to do with deterritorialised communication. The nation-state thereby loses one of its main means for creating shared identities, namely territorially-based communication. However, research on internet use

(Miller and Slater 2000, Uimonen 2001, Eriksen 2001) indicates that ethnic, local, religious and national identities are not necessarily weakened by these new technologies; they are re-shaped, often independently of political power structures. One implication for polyethnic societies is nonetheless that long distance nationalism (Anderson 1992, Fuglerud 1999) and diaspora-based identity politics have been boosted considerably by these new technologies, making it simple to connect and keep connected people who cannot meet in the flesh.

The growth in ethnic complexity has also been considerable and, in the space of a few decades, has changed the demographic composition of many cities. Now, of course migration is not new, but the current situation, with people from practically all parts of the world living closely together in large cities, is new. Drawing on research in London, Vertovec (2006) has spoken of super-diversity. For many years, most immigrants in London had a background from the colonies, and they lived in particular quarters and suburbs where they had their own shops, and places of worship and organisation. Since the mid-1990s, the dominant pattern of immigration has shifted, and the largest new groups, such as Iraqis, Poles and Somalis, have no historical connection with the British Empire. In addition, immigrants now increasingly live in a randomly scattered mode and not in particular areas; finally, it is no longer easy to decide on who is an immigrant and who is not. Apart from legitimate labour migrants, chiefly from the EU and Australia, there are seasonal workers (who do not necessarily know when or if they are going home), students employed in the informal sector, refugees with asylum papers and asylum seekers who are either waiting a decision or have been rejected and live underground, tourists who have ‘forgotten’ to return home and an

unknown number of persons who have entered the country illegally. Apart from all these categories, there are grey zones and ambiguous cases, and there are many who live in London without knowing whether they are immigrants or not – a statistician's nightmare, perhaps, but a realistic depiction of the uncertainty under which many foreigners live.

Vertovec once mentioned during a seminar that the number of languages now spoken in London is over 300. The figure is impressive, but a web search showed that the number of languages spoken only in the south-eastern borough of Søndre Nordstrand, in Oslo, was well over 130! Super-diversity is, in other words, not a phenomenon confined to the UK. The growth in immigrant numbers in nearly all Western European countries has been enormous since around 1990, in many cases representing a doubling or trebling of the 1990 figures. In Norway, the proportion of the population with a minority background grew from five to ten per cent between 1995 and 2010 (Statistics Norway 2011).

The growth in immigrant populations has not been as fast as the growth of the World Wide Web, but the two processes should be seen as two sides of the same coin. Both the electronic revolution and the polyethnic one contribute to placing stable, territorially-based identities under pressure. The Herderian and nationalist formula of 'a people = an ethnic group = a territory = a state = a language' does not function properly in a situation like this. This is why debates about national identity have been so widespread in so many European countries in the last couple of decades.

The new complexity, epitomised in these two processes, has grown out of a period characterised by consolidation, homogenisation and the production of similarity. Gellner (1983) once compared premodern Europe to a painting by Oskar Kokoschka, the Viennese artist known for his colourful paintings with many small details. By contrast, after the great levelling of nationalism

had taken place, Europe could be compared to a picture by Amedeo Modigliani, whose most famous pictures are dominated by large, serene, monochromatic areas. In a comment to Gellner, however, Ulf Hannerz (1996) claims that Kokoschka appears to have returned at a time when large cities increasingly become cultural crossroads and transit terminals, when all forms of mobility and movement become faster and smoother, and where identity politics at the micro level ensure that many newcomers resist assimilation into the majority.

Changing circumstances must be taken into account in every narrative attempting to make sense of the world in which we now live. The development of new technology and science creates new frameworks for human projects, which are still anchored in fundamental human experiences such as community and alienation, security and individuality. This is perhaps nowhere clearer than in the identity politics of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Tensions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world**

The two 'revolutions' which, by and large, define the world after the end of the post-Cold War years both took off around 1990. It was at roughly this time, too, that the Cold War was called off once and for all, resulting in the immediate demise of the global two-bloc system. The ideological conflict between socialism and capitalism appeared to have been replaced by the triumphant sound of one hand clapping. By late 1990, it was also clear that apartheid was about to go; Mandela had been released from prison, and negotiations between the Nationalist Party and the ANC had begun in earnest.

The following year, Yugoslavia began to dismantle itself with surprising violence, fed by a kind of nationalistic sentiment many believed to have been overcome. Around the same time, the



Hindu nationalists of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian People's Party) went from strength to strength in India. The identity politics of the state, or of state-like bodies, was thus not a relic of the past. In other words, openness and closure were still twin features of politics, but they were operating along new lines.

1991 was also the year in which the Internet began to be marketed to ordinary consumers, so that Mr. and Mrs. Smith could enter the shop and buy their subscription to America Online. This was new, just as new as the small pocket-sized mobile phones that all of a sudden began to spread all over the world, from Mauritius to Iceland, around 1991. Deregulation of markets had taken place in the preceding decade, but many of the effects of a weaker state and a less manageable and predictable market were being felt only now, fueled by new information and communication technologies.

This post-1991 world is, in addition to everything else, one of intensified tensions and frictions. One needs to only count the present number of transatlantic flights or the number of transpacific telephone connections to realise that the webs of connectedness are hotter, faster and denser than in any previous period, with repercussions virtually everywhere. The growth of urban slums throughout the Third World is an indirect result of economic globalisation (Davis 2006), just as the relative disconnectedness from the Internet in Africa is a significant fact alongside the growth in text messages in China, from nil to eighteen billion a month in less than ten years. The networked capitalist world, in a word, is a framework, or scaffolding, for almost any serious inquiry into cultural and social dynamics.

Zones of tension are manifold in this world. In addition to the old and perhaps universal lines of conflict – power versus powerlessness, wealth versus poverty, autonomy versus dependence – new conflicts, frictions and tensions appear today:

- Globalisation versus alter-globalisation – the new social movements looking for viable, locally based alternatives to the TINA doctrine ('There Is No Alternative');
- Environmentalism versus development – a very real, if under-communicated tension in countries like China and India, but also in the rich countries (my native, oil-rich Norway being an excellent example);
- Cosmopolitanism versus identity politics (including xenophobia and religious fundamentalism) – a main dimension of politics almost everywhere in the world now, sometimes supplanting the left/right divide;
- Inclusion versus exclusion – walls, physical and metaphorical, preventing the free movement of people and their full inclusion in society;
- Uniformity versus diversity – shared templates of modernity articulating with local specificity; and finally
- Cultural autonomy versus the quest for recognition – finding the balance, as Lévi-Strauss once put it, between contact and isolation.

The zones of tension briefly mentioned above cannot be reduced to one another, although they are arguably related. The common denominators are increased speed and intensified friction. This situation entails a need for a new set of traffic rules: a global highway code for interaction. Movement is being regulated. Laws regulating immigration and citizenship are obvious examples, but one might also mention the attempts in certain countries to protect the local language(s) from unwanted contamination from the outside (usually English), and puritanist religious currents, such as the Deobandi movement in Pakistan, which tries



to purge domestic Islam of Hindu and syncretist influence.

Boundary work is always an important element of personal and collective identification processes, and it is now carried out with especial fervour and a sense of urgency: Who is inside and outside the group, what are the criteria for being an insider, and what does it mean to be an individual with proper, socially recognised credentials and personal integrity?

## **Dominant relations of inclusion and exclusion**

Let us now return to the initial question concerning what the term ‘we’ can mean in this era. Collective identities are always defined in relation to that which they are not. They are, in a word, relational. Relational positioning is expressed through two main ways: contrasting and matching (Eriksen 2010). Contrasting implies defining oneself as the opposite of the other; matching therefore implies defining oneself as structurally equal to the other. Minorities tend to combine both strategies in a bid to be recognised as ‘equal but different’. Majorities in contemporary European countries tend to be split between a contrasting strategy, seen clearly in the Islamophobic tendencies criss-crossing the continent; and a matching strategy where structural equivalents and compatibilities are sought. Regional, transnational identities may be seen to follow a similar logic of matching and contrasting.

It is nevertheless fair to assume that some ways of producing differences, some types of relationship, will continue to dominate; that identity constructions will tend to gravitate towards what we could call a semantic core, that is an idealtypical symbolic centre which is relatively unchanging, often associated with core symbols such as flags, core state rituals such as national days, or core cultural practices such as Christmas celebrations or food habits.

In the relationship between majority and minorities, religion and race are often mentioned as constitutive. However, one should be wary of exaggerating the importance of new, visible and spectacular differences. Race, language and religion are easy to identify and easy to do research on. This does not, however, mean that other kinds of relationships cannot be more dominant, even if they are less marked in discourse on boundaries and social contrasts in a given society. The fact that the educational attainment and income of parents have a decisive impact on a person’s possibilities in the labour market is well documented, and is significant both among majorities and minorities to the extent that it tends to overrule differences resulting from ethnic discrimination. If one were to emphasise these kinds of differences rather than those to do with ethnicity and religion, the map of the new Europe would have looked different. Religions perform a vertically integrative function – upstairs and downstairs meet in the house of worship – while class performs a horizontally integrative function. Which zones of tension will predominate in the future depends on which relations are given precedence in politics and public discourse – religion, race, class or something different altogether, such as a transnational, regional identity centred on a shared maritime space. It will scarcely replace or threaten national, ethnic or religious identities, but it may well supplement them in ways that mitigate conflict and enhance reflection on the meaning of the term ‘we’.



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# Philosophy

## Narrating Identity: Stories of who we are

Hans Ruin

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In Jean-Paul Sartre's 1943 philosophical classic *Being and Nothingness*, there is a famous passage wherein the author observes a waiter at a café. He studies his perfect moves as he seamlessly acts out his role as waiter. He seems to be so at one with his role that he believes that he is a waiter in a café in the same way the tray is a tray and the wine is in the glass. In the end the analysis produces a comical effect, of someone desperately wanting to be something he cannot be, seeking to dodge a gap in existence itself.

The nature of this gap is spelled 'freedom'. Unlike the non-free entity of material nature, which has its 'being-in-itself', the human being is also fundamentally defined by its 'being-for-itself'. What this means is that it will always have a relation to itself, and that this self-relation will be part of its nature and identity. Furthermore, it means that its being is not just an ordained fate, but something it has to live and take responsibility for – knowingly or not – at every juncture of its life. When it comes to humans, identity is always something shaped and desired, it is a category not of nature but of freedom.

Sartre's account of radical existential freedom was criticised from many angles, including conservative, Marxist (including Sartre's own later self-criticism), feminist, post-colonial, and structuralist. What his critics all brought to bear on his basic distinction were the many ways in which we are *not* simply the authors of our own fate, and how instead community, class, gender, race, language, etc. contribute to shaping our identity before we are even in a position to make any choices.

Even though we can recognise today the limits of the nihilistic radical liberalism of the early Sartre, his schematic ontology nevertheless brings out an important timeless point. It is a point

that was anticipated by Kant, expressed almost verbatim by Hegel, and developed by Heidegger some decades before, namely, that when trying to understand human existence we must be careful not to equate it with material nature. If we do not take into account the space of freedom in which this identity is, so to speak, lived or 'acted out', we will fail to understand both its present nature and the dynamics of its development. For life is a process not of push and pull causality, but of response and motivation, where its present and future is not just shaped in a linear way by what it once was, but also by what it understands itself to have been. In short: life is temporal and historical, not by virtue of occupying a section of time, but through a continuously self-interpretative process over time.

A more abstract way to put this point is that, when it comes to human beings, *identity* is always intertwined with *difference*. We differ not only from *others*, but also from *ourselves*. We are self-differing creatures, carrying this lack of fullness as our inescapable destiny. We may, as the waiter in Sartre's example, or for that matter as in any contemporary form of dogmatic individual or group identity politics, seek to overcome and close this gap, and to replace difference with wholeness. But all such efforts toward a final and consuming self-identity will be at best in vain and at worst dangerous, since they tend to seek this accomplishment through the subjection, and at times even destruction, of what they experience as different.

This basic existential-philosophical lesson remains a good starting point for discussing the meaning and usefulness of the concept of 'identity' today, as we find ourselves surrounded by a confusing plethora of views on this topic. Within the more theoretically oriented human and social



sciences, the very idea of ‘identity’ has long been placed in doubt, precisely as a cultural fiction often used to promote various political agendas, at the cost of difference. The idea that identity will always be a ‘cultural construction’ runs deep, as a lesson learned both from philosophical critique and the experience of two centuries of nationalist identity politics.

At the same time, we are surrounded by an onslaught of identity politics, not just among empires, nations, and religions, seeking to determine their own distinct essence and role, but also down to ethnic, cultural and linguistic communities fighting for their rights. The implications and ramifications of these widespread identity politics can in no way be tied to any particular ideology. It ranges from right-wing militants to small indigenous populations, from religious communities to sexual minorities, and it also includes commercial interests that seek to benefit from the ‘branding’ of places and peoples. A uniting feature behind these different phenomena is the connection between the affirmation of distinct identities and juridical, political, and economical aspirations. Where there is identity politics, there is also usually an agenda for the future.

Is there any way in which we can analyse this multifaceted situation from a more general and philosophical perspective? Is there any way in which we can determine more clearly what is really at stake in the different approaches to human identity, and also perhaps to find a means to separate legitimate or authentic identity politics from their false or inauthentic counterparts? In short, is ‘identity’ a concept that can be given a more solid existential meaning?

Let us turn back to the basic question: how can we say that a human life or a human collective

possesses a unity or identity over time? If we look only at its outer physical appearance, it is constantly changing. From the child to the adult, very little remains the same, and we know that the body itself is constantly replacing its biological matter. The same is true of a culture. In its outer material appearance it is constantly changing. Its artefacts and institutions undergo transformation, sometimes of a very radical kind, not least in societies that have experienced war, destruction and revolutionary upheaval.

Yet there is something to the peculiar ‘stretch’ or tenacity of human existence that binds it together over time, making it more than a series of sequential events, permitting it to experience itself as the same or identical over time. When seeking the core of this inner coherence, several philosophers at the beginning of the last century came upon the question and phenomenon of time and *temporality*, from Husserl and Bergson, over Heidegger, to Ricœur. It is in and through the inner experience of time that life understands itself as having an identity and a *self*. In this human experiential time, the past is not simply past, nor the future simply that which has not yet taken place. The past is instead something that we are constantly moving towards and assimilating, and the future is that living horizon towards which the very sense of the present becomes meaningful in its movement.

When we measure time in nature we can divide it neatly into past, present, and future, and we can distinguish them according to calendars and chronometers. But in real life, time is something much more complex and diverse: a constantly evolving space of action and reminiscence, where the future and the past are changing places over the threshold of a dynamic present, and where repetition and anticipation interact. It is therefore

toward the phenomena of *time* and *history* that we should turn in order to get a grip on the question of identity, in order to avoid the trap of reification and essentialism. Identity will then be possible to analyse not as something that is ascribed to individuals and communities from the outside based on observable traits, nor as a hidden essential core, but rather as a name for the way in which they constitute themselves over time as the same.

In his masterpiece *Sein und Zeit* from 1927 Heidegger explored this self-constitution over time as the ‘historicity’ (*Geschichtlichkeit*) of human existence. It is not the same as the history told in history books, but an ongoing existential process of ‘historising’ or ‘happening’ (*Geschehen*) in which individuals as well as collectives shape their sense of identity and continuity through a repetition of what has gone before them, for and toward a future. It can result in an aspiration to write the history of oneself or one’s community, perhaps even in a scholarly way. But the point is that this basic ‘historising’ will take place anyway and constantly, as a fundamental manner in which the individual human being maintains itself and its sense of self.

In his encyclopaedic three volume study *Temp et récit*, published in 1985, Paul Ricœur picked up and critically elaborated this point from Heidegger. The overall ambition of his work was to show how individually experienced temporality connects with the cosmic time of nature, and thus how psychic and physical time come together. The bridge between them Ricœur found in historical time, as the domain in which human experience obtains its form. This he also described as the space of *narrative*, where life receives, hears, and itself contributes to the story of itself.

It was in this context that Ricœur also introduced a helpful distinction between two types of identity that subsequently became important in the discussion, namely between identity as *self* and identity as *sameness*, as *ipse* and *idem*. Identity as ‘sameness’ can be qualified in traditional ways

by numeric and bodily identity or simply through observed continuity over time. This category is primarily relevant for describing the identity of objects, as a response to the question of ‘what’ something is. But for human beings, the most relevant category for understanding their ‘identity’ is identity as *self*, as *ipse*. This kind of identity rests on the function of narrative, of the spontaneous self-narrating nature of subjectivity. For this reason Ricœur baptised it ‘narrative identity’. It is the type of identity that responds to the question ‘who’. Quoting Hannah Arendt, he recalled that the answer to the question ‘who are you’ was always to tell a *story* of a life.

Through his concept of ‘narrative identity’, Ricœur took the earlier existential criticism of a substantialist concept of identity one step further. He showed that there is a way in which we can still speak meaningfully of identity. Indeed, he showed why we should not avoid speaking of identity, since narrative identity is part of what human existence amounts to. If we are to understand human life, both on an individual and a collective level, we must learn to be attentive to the identity-shaping function of narrative.

By insisting on the ‘narrative’ dimension of identity, Ricœur also saw himself as having solved an ethical and political question. For while identity as sameness or *idem* implies a stiff once-and-for-all established identity, the narrative identity has built into it a constantly negotiable space of interpretation and reinterpretation. It is as though the very nature of this form of identity also implied certain intellectual virtues, such as toleration and openness toward criticism and a rethinking of oneself and one’s belonging. For Ricœur, the concept itself thus became a key achievement in his entire life work, further elaborated in his subsequent *Oneself as Another* (*Soi-même comme un autre*) from 1990. For him, narrative identity was ‘the poetic resolution of the hermeneutic circle’.

Even while we can agree with Ricœur that



there is a potentially 'humanising' effect in the reflective experience of how our 'narrative identity' is constituted through an interminable process of reinterpreting ourselves through the past, we should be cautious vis-à-vis the idealistic tendency of his argument. We should recall the lesson of Nietzsche from his magnificent essay, in 1874, titled 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben', on the use and abuse of history for life. Life, Nietzsche explained there, will always produce histories of itself, simply in order to survive, and to give itself a future. In this production of pastness it can serve its present life purposes, but it can also undermine them. The 'antiquarian' impulse to keep the memories of the past intact can be necessary at times, but they can also become stifling. The 'monumental' impulse to seek greatness in the memory of past deeds can motivate a people to great sacrifices in the present, but it can also lead them completely astray, making them the victims of past heroic fantasies.

The human animal is an animal with a memory; it is a story-telling animal. It will always reconstitute its relation to the present and future through the tales of its past. But this function of telling and retelling does not guarantee that it will find an appropriate orientation in the present. On the contrary, sometimes its stories will eventually have destructive implications. German nationalism was a liberating movement from the start. Its combination of humanistic learning and politics became an inspiration for many nations in Europe over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But by the time that Nietzsche was writing his critical essay, its fusion of humanism, historicism, and nationalism had – in his eyes at least – already begun to rot. In his last writings he was a fierce opponent to the political and cultural national ideals of Bismarck and of Wagner, having himself become a Swiss citizen, portraying himself instead as a 'good European'.

After the once utopian German nationalism had resulted in two devastating wars and the

destruction of Europe, it was instead the narrative of Europe and a European identity that became the vehicle for a new and historically remarkable political transformation of the continent, leading finally to its reunification. Today, however, the idea and narrative identity of Europe is stumbling. In the face of very difficult and uncertain prospects for its future, the memory and the story of what it was – its presumed identity – is being critically explored and tested again. Will it find a tenable narrative of itself that can still carry it into the future, or will the various counter-narratives in combination with insurmountable economic imbalances tear it apart? We do not know. But we can see how the narratives of what it 'is' are integral to the dynamic that is now taking place.

To take another example from our own region, we can look at the example of the Baltic nations. In the short period of independence following the collapse of the Russian Empire after the First World War, there was an upsurge of Baltic nationalism. The force released in this process was instrumental for establishing a sense of self and identity, resulting not least in the reestablishment of such national institutions of higher learning as Tartu University. During the Russian reoccupation, the newly established nations were violently 'Russified', and their national identities suppressed, so much so that even in neighbouring countries, nationalist Baltic sentiments among the exiles were looked upon as politically suspect. Yet it was precisely the ability to tell and retell their story, and to preserve their historical memory, that enabled them to reemerge so quickly as functioning nations after 1989.

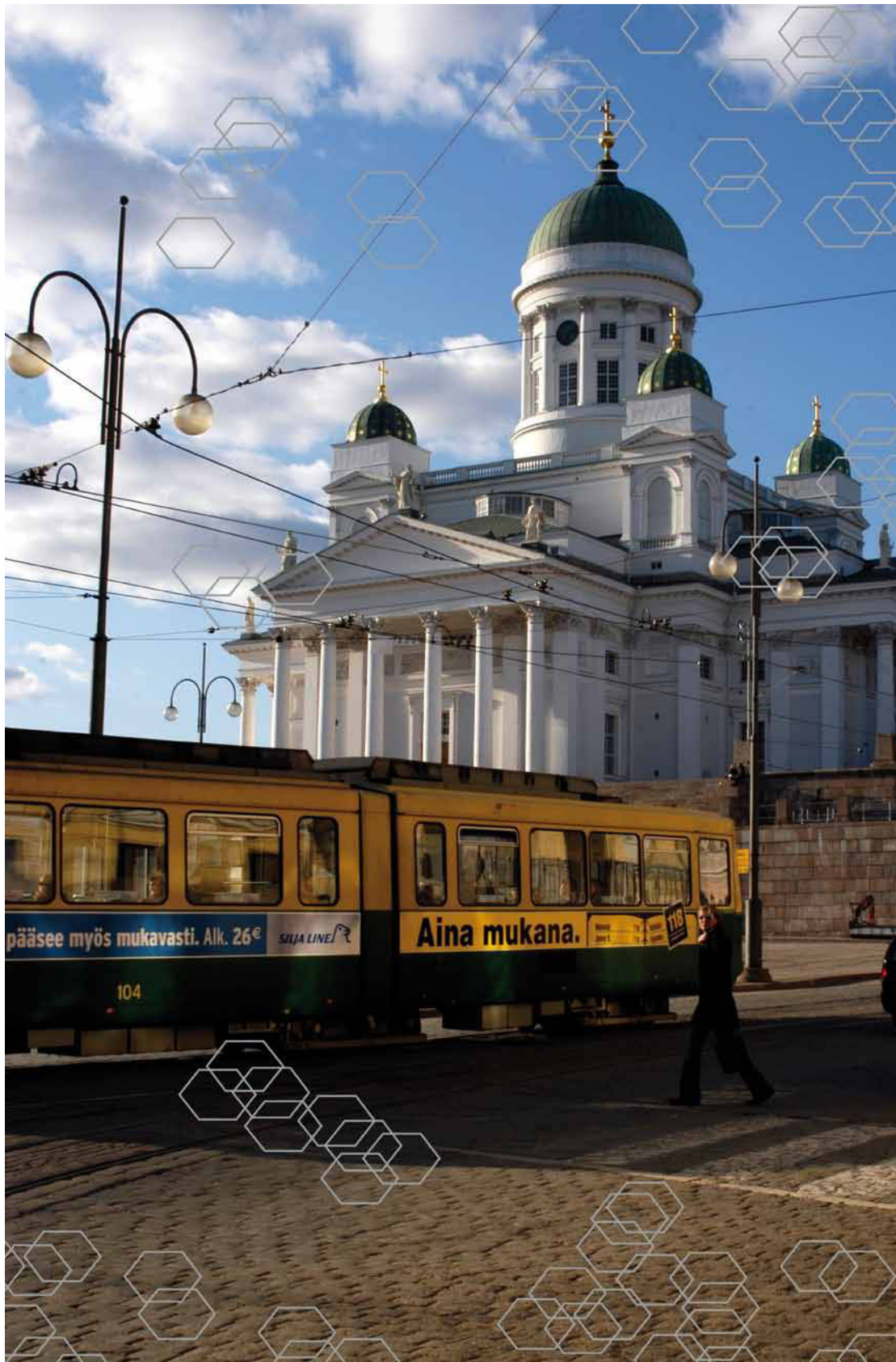
This narrative identity of being Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian, and not Russian, that had been preserved inside and outside the nations gave them a future. Yet in the present situation, the content of this narrative is also gradually becoming a menace to precisely their future. The political and social alienation of the Russian-speaking population of these countries is a growing problem,

and one that has to be handled if they are to have a peaceful and working future, not just in relation to Russia but also in relation to themselves. But here, the narrative that first enabled them to emerge has become part of their problem.

From an external viewpoint, we could say that there is a need for a new narrative, a narrative that can somehow include the long experience of being not solid one-language nations, but in fact multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies, where Russian, Polish, and German was also spoken. Yet, in the face of historically close experiences of terror and destruction, and especially in the face of imminent economic and political threats to their independence, such cultural memories and historical narratives will appear dangerous, not to say treacherous.

In the face of all these challenges, the hopes expressed in Ricœur's vision of a 'narrative identity' are comforting to think of. But it is also important to recall the inherent challenges, and to realise that the identity-shaping narratives are never simply given, nor are they just up for choice. They are shaped in a complex interplay of political aspirations, of memories of suffering and hopes of future, as well as through the work of historians and scholars of culture. To reflect on 'narrative identity' is to remind ourselves that what we think of as our identity will always be connected to the stories we preserve and tell, to that living memory which it is our task both to maintain and to rethink, to find support in, and also to be prepared to critically distance ourselves from.

For this task historians and philosophers, as well as social and cultural theorists, will always have an important role to play, through their special – at least ideal – commitment to the intellectual virtues of intellectual honesty and truth. In this role they can serve as potentially authoritative and responsible participants in the constantly evolving definition of what a people and a society is, and thus also as guides for futures in the making.



# Psychology

## Identity and exile

Sverre Varvin

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Identity is formed in a continuous interaction with people who are close to the individual, as well as people in the individual's group. It is through the interactions with significant others that one learns who one is, learns what others want one to be and also develops ways to be different, while remaining a person who belongs to the group. Identity is simultaneously highly personal and significantly cultural. The essentials of one's identity are contained in the life story, the narrative that one constructs about one's own development, but also others' narratives about oneself: those of parents, siblings and significant others. Furthermore, identity is also group identity. It is a 'we' that is part of the self, and the 'self' that is part of a 'we'.

Telling a life history is a work to ascribe meaning to experiences. The rearranging this implies plays an instrumental role in allowing the subject to incorporate his past into a script of his present life.

Identity is situated in the body. It is based in bodily-emotional reactions of meeting with the other, starting from birth. The mother's or caregiver's ways of understanding and relating to the infants' expressions and utterances forms these, gives them significance in a relational matrix where the foundation for the infant's 'core self' or 'core identity' is laid. Expressions of drives, e.g. sexual and aggressive, as well as attachment and relational needs are formed by the caregiver's personal and culturally determined way of interpreting them.

The significance of the group's values, mores, habits, rituals and traditions impregnates and forms the identity of the individual through participation in the group's rituals, festivals and daily life practices. One's identity is thus formed in the interrelations between personal, emotional history

and the group's history.

The more outward signs of identity formation are obvious in youth or adolescence cultures, where the struggle to find anchoring as an adult, different from one's parents or elders, flourishes and is expressed in ways of being, clothing and group behaviour. In adolescence the body again (as in early infancy/childhood) become the centre for the subjective identity-experience as the drive-urges attached to the important others from childhood now need new objects to attach to in an often intense struggle for individuation and separation.

Under stable conditions, the group identity, be it ethnic, religious or of some other sort, is more a silent background, a more or less stable frame, an implicit connection of who I am, how I am similar but different from others in my group and from others outside the group.

Under conditions of instability like upheavals, wars, exile or the fast-changing modernisation process, this background can become foreground, and identity may seem more importantly anchored in the group's rituals and other characteristics. It may become increasingly important for the group and its members to define itself as different from other groups.

The strains on identity resulting from such potentially traumatising conditions and hardships are, however, of another order than the normal upheavals of development. I will in the following discuss the experience of exile, where identity may come under strain and where background and foreground change, mix or may become blurred or dissociated.





## Exile

*... understanding displacement as a human tragedy and looking no further can mean that one gains no insight at all into the lived meanings that displacements and exile can have for specific people,... (Malkki, 1995, p.16).*

Seeing the exiled through the lens of anthropological culturalism, with its essentialist view on culture on the one hand and only seeing the timeless human suffering in the face on the other, brings with it the risk of ignoring the unique experience that every exiled makes of their exile experience. Malkki argues strongly against the nationalising and ethnicising of identity and the related notion of the unchanging essences of ethnic and national distinctiveness. These notions are not only counterproductive for establishing knowledge, but also potentially political dangerous in that it may (and certainly does) lay the groundwork for stereotyped interpretations of cultures and ethnic identities.

Taking this as a starting point, I want to demonstrate the uniqueness of the exile experience and show how the creation of meaning is an ongoing process dependent on actual context, concrete historical and cultural heritage and the activity of the 'mind', even if it is a traumatised mind.

Being in exile is not a universal experience, even if it is possible to find similarities between different experiences in the process of making meaning of them and the problem-solving strategies. I will argue that there is no such thing as a Somali or Iranian exile, only persons coming from this or that town in country X, having grown up in a concrete family, having had such-and-such jobs, etc. In other words, even though the exiled

person is carrying specific cultural traditions different from that of their host country, he or she is doing this in a personal and idiosyncratic way and are making a life out of her/his exile in a way that is not possible to predict except in general terms. The way a person 'appropriates' another culture and finds his/her place in it is always co-determined by both cultural and highly personal factors.

There is thus a need to understand the relationship between private and unconscious motivations and cultural forms, both from the perspective of the exile's previous history and the present cultural context.

Obeyesekere (1990) introduces the concept of personal symbols, a concept which addresses the area between symptoms, which are strictly private, and signs that are communicative and embedded in cultural forms. In psychotherapy the aim is to make the private symptom, with its unconscious roots, into common or shared cultural forms, first established between the patient and the psychotherapist, which then can make the private suffering communicable and shared. In an 'in-between area', what in psychotherapy is called a transitional space, the private and regressive expression is allowed to develop as a personal symbol which may be respected both as an expression of unconscious and conflictual motives, and as part of specific cultural forms.

A female patient explained that a woman should not be touched by a male, so handshaking, the common way of greeting in western culture, was not to take place. This, she claimed, was custom in her culture but had, as the therapeutic process was able to show, it's a quite private and personal meaning for her as it related to a generalised feeling of disgust when being touched. And this again related to her traumatic experiences of

being touched in unwanted ways. Here a cultural form was both protecting her and expressing an important aspect of her inner pain.

Sometimes the private, regressive meaning can be interpreted in psychotherapy, but often it must be left as a personal symbolic expression to be respected as such. The point is that feelings, emotion, desire and suffering are expressed in culturally determined forms, even if private. Meaning formation and meaning making, semiosis, is always expressed through culturally determined forms, through sign-systems, narratives, metaphors etc., all of which are cultural products. Obeyesekere distinguishes, however, between regressive and progressive forms. When the personal symbols (the personal way of expressing desire and suffering) lose contact with the praxis of culture, they may cause suffering and give rise to symptoms. The personal becomes private and shut off from shared communication. This regressive movement distances and shuts off the person's contact with the social and cultural milieu. This often happens with traumatised refugees and causes isolation. The traumatised exile needs another with whom, and through whose understanding, their private and often not understandable suffering may be translated and understood.

Following Obeyesekere, we call this the work of culture that will have a central place in any psychotherapy, but also in other social areas. He defines 'the works of culture as: the process whereby symbolic forms existing on the cultural level get created and recreated through the minds of people' (Obeyesekere, 1990, p. xix). This basically intercultural process presents a complicated situation involving several 'translations' or 'transformations' in the minds of people in interaction. This is highlighted in psychotherapeutic processes as the following example shows:

A patient told the therapist a story about how a person got help when in need or suffering. To

display a situation of need and helplessness by talking about it or showing it in some way or other was considered shameful. In his cultural context, his relatives were supposed to see the problems and provide what was lacking. This 'story' from this man's homeland informed about his country's customs, but was also a story about his difficulties in exposing his needs in the new context, be it therapy or other contexts. It was a story about shame deeply rooted in his culture and history but it expressed his difficult position in his exile situation. There, he was suddenly another man, got a new identity as 'help seeker', with the accompanying shame. Behind the cultural shield of what was considered appropriate was the anxiety for reliving the humiliating and denigrating helplessness he had experienced during torture. Connected with this were also conflicts related to a harsh and often absent father. Before this story was told, the patient had been consciously withholding material and had reacted with attacks of pain in the session. This bodily language was hard to decipher and it took time before these private symptoms could be expressed through personal symbols which could be understood both in his old cultural context and his new 'psycho-therapeutic' context.

## Identity and upheaval

Identity is thus both stable and changing; it is highly dependent on the context. In the internal world of each, identity will always be stimulated by fantasies, which can be more or less conscious, of how one wants to be and fantasies about other's views on oneself. There is always discordance, the harmony is never right. The expected or wished-for responses are always more or less disappointing. This is most obvious in adolescence, with its bodily changes that the mind never really catches up with, and the pressure of the drives' never attainable goals.

But exile is also a phase where the discordance between one's inner image of who one is and what

is the appropriate 'me' is threatened. One may say that being exiled is a process of identity work that happens along several lines:

- One is a refugee, with all its local and international implications. One is no longer a citizen of one's home country, subject to the laws and regulations of that country. One's destiny is regulated by international laws and interpreted in each receiving country's codex. The asylum seeker period is a no-man's land where one's legal identity is at stake and where one's destiny is in the hands of unknown people. One can be a mother of a small child, an intellectual with certain knowledge, a farmer with extensive skills, but there is no certain context for these identities. It is a 'now situation' where the future is unknown and the past often unbearable.
- One's personal history is broken. The place of belonging, one's home, has been abandoned and often been destroyed. That often silent part of our identity connected to the home is suddenly no longer there and for many will be unavailable forever. The most common characteristic of all exiles is that they have lost their home, both the physical home space but most of all the psychic space connected with home, which is often felt as devalued, broken and denigrated. The experience of a home contains one's personal intimate history at different stages of life, all the interactions with one's loved ones, the history of crisis and developmental achievements: home is an integral part of identity. A major task for the exile is to build a new home, both in the physical and psychological senses. This home may be a transitional space between what was lost back there and the new context. How the exiled furnishes and decorates this home tells a story both of the past but also of the present. This is most obvious when there is an alarming

lack of objects from the past, as can be seen in the homes of exiles who are suffering from unbearable traumatic experiences, including the often extreme experience of having been expelled from one's home country and the devastating feeling of not feeling welcome in the new country. The empty walls, the bare shelves tell a history of a broken and often smashed identity.

- Loss is the hallmark of the exiled, but also the prospects of new opportunities. How to construct an identity that is both anchored in past valuable experiences and can point to the future? A precondition is one's ability to mourn. The losses can be severe, however, and difficult and sometime impossible to mourn. They concern not only the loss of loved ones and a feeling of loss of culture and familiar contexts, but often a profound feeling of loss of future. Extreme traumatisation is often an experience that shakes the basis of one's identity. It implies a profound loss of inner security based on a relation to the inner empathic objects.

These difficult losses influence the acculturation process that every exile is confronted with. The different possibilities in this process reflect, to large degree, the severity of the damage to one's identity. A beneficial integration of past values and present possibilities signals that the inner restraints are not too hard and external circumstances are not too stressful.

But often the past is too painful a presence in the mind, so the present context is overvalued or idealised and the exile feels the need to abolish his/her past identity and may then become more adjusted or 'similar' than the native population. This can only happen at the cost of amputating one's identity.

The present may, however, for many seem too difficult and dangerous, so one has to take shelter in one's national identity. Withdrawing to

enclaves with compatriots may be the result, where the cultural identity-securing traditions of the homeland can be cultivated to the extreme.

The worst case is when neither the past cultural identity nor the present possibilities present solutions. A marginalised existence is then often the result, where no comforting and identity-securing traditions are possible. The lonely existence of many severely traumatised individuals living in shelters, often stripped of any objects that represent some link to earlier safe and comforting experiences, and where nothing from the new context that can help to establish future possibilities, testifies to a deranged identity feeling.

## Coda

*'I know my identity is, as long as no one asks.'*

Identity is both knowable and unknowable. It appears through narratives as one tries to give meaning to my present experience, but is situated in the body; in bodily processes on the vegetative, neuro-biological level, in the muscular movements, as these processes have been formed from early on starting with the interaction between caregiver and child. It is dependent on the internalisation of a secure inner base but must constantly be nourished by good relational experiences. It is regularly shaken, and different developmental phases and individuation processes always implies the risk of instability and catastrophe. But identity is also a societal issue, a task for the group. Upheaval and instability regularly show that group identity may be brought to the fore and idealised, and others and other groups may be devalued and even attacked to secure the group's 'we'.

Exile is an identity-transforming process with many possible pitfalls, but also with possibilities. One of the most famous exiles in world literature, King Oedipus, is a prime example of lost opportunities. Sophocles let us follow him when he at last had to leave Thebes, accompanied by his

faithful daughter Antigone, in the play Oedipus at Colonus. He is maybe a prime example of the psychology of homelessness and identity loss. He became increasingly megalomaniac and paranoid and in an attempt to restore former power and glory, ended up demanding access to the holy area outside Athens.

*For the exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally (Said 2000, p. 186).*

Exile is thus a gigantic identity work – certainly never ending.



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# “What am I?”

## Identity in the context of migration and globalisation identity and exile

Tülay Özbek

The result of successful identity development is a secure feeling, and the subjective certainty that one is identical with oneself, regardless of time, space and location/context. Even when this certainty can be challenged, as is often observed e.g. as one grows older, or when one migrates, a person with a secure identity will always return to their underlying feeling of ‘being the same, despite space, time, or location’.

Identity development goes through several phases. The development of subject-object differentiation, which refers to the ability to perceive and sustain that there is a ‘me’ (subject) and a ‘not me’ (object), and that these are physically as well as mentally separated, is fundamental. The establishment of gender identity follows this significant developmental step; up to this point, a child still thinks ‘I am everything: boy and girl’ (cf. Fast). After approximately 18 months, a clear gender identity develops, in which the boundaries of one’s own gender become known. Another important milestone in the process of identity formation is the development and establishment of an internal picture of one’s most important caregivers. The physical presence of caregivers becomes internalised, creating a psychological structure (inner objects/introjects) that helps build identity. This stage, called ‘object constancy’, enables the child to bear the physical absence of a caregiver without being over-whelmed by unsupportable fear, lays the groundwork for later developments in identity and autonomy (Mahler 1980). This rough outline of ideal-typical identity development should not obscure the fact that this describes a highly difficult and sensitive interaction process.

What eventually follows is the recognition of generational succession (after around 5 years) with realisations like ‘I am a daughter/son;

grandchild of...’. At this point, it becomes clear that the development of human individuation accompanies the finding of a position and place within a certain social structure. As a human becomes an individual, he/she also becomes part of the group to which he/she belongs. This means that personal identity has individual (me-identity), as well as group (we-identity) dimensions. Erikson (1973) emphasised this specific feature with his definition of identity, which he described as ‘a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others’ (P. 124).

### Large group identity

After roughly outlining the essential markers of the development of individuation and identity, I would like to explore the group aspects of identity more thoroughly. Group identity has been described by Vamik Volkan as ‘the subjective experience of thousands or millions of people, through which they are bound together in an enduring feeling of sameness (1999: 48). Even Freud postulated that peoples must exhibit a ‘psychological continuity’, since ‘Without the assumption of a collective mind, which makes it possible to neglect the interruptions of mental acts caused by the extinction of the individual, social psychology in general cannot exist. Unless psychical processes were continued from one generation to another, if each generation were obliged to acquire its attitude to life anew, there would be no progress in this field and next to no development. (1913:440-441).

According to political scientist Benedict Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’, so is the nation ‘imagined, since the members



of even the smallest nation never meet all of its other members, yet an image of this community lives in the consciousness of everyone' (Anderson 1983; quoted by Mayer 2005: 15). A construct like the nation only exists because an 'image of community' exists, with which its individual members have identified. It is this image that binds these members to one another and allows them to understand themselves as members of a nation.

But how does it come to pass that people share common images and concepts, even though they've never met each other? Moreover, a purely cognitive concept of an image cannot explain how single individuals associate into large groups, if 'the image' were not interwoven with emotional developments and linkages. It is the great contribution of Vamik Volkan that he, in the tradition of psycho-analysis, attempts to trace the emotional development of this 'conceptual image of community' and, in so doing, show that large group identity is a crucial component of personal identity.

Volkan describes large group identity as a 'tent canvas woven out of seven threads'. Four of these threads are specific to the 'development and preservation of large group identity' (2005:39). They depict a specific view of the group and its members about its history and reality, respectively. To these belong the following:

- 'chosen trauma',
- 'chosen glories',
- 'internalising the inner world of the leader', and
- 'creation of symbols'.

These four threads, which describe group-psychological processes, are woven together with the remaining three threads, which describe

individual psychological processes. To these belong the following:

1. 'Common concrete reservoirs', which have a specific meaning for a particular group, are shared by all children and must be long-lasting (e.g. the sauna, the cowboy hat, the bagpipes). Over the course of individual psychological development, these common reservoirs will be abstracted and internalised, thus creating the foundation for a feeling of 'we-ness'.
2. 'Good identifications' refers to identifying with members of one's own group that are bearers of the group's traditions. This is followed by identification with the values and norms of a culture and a large group, respectively.
3. 'Common bad reservoirs' are what Volkan calls the 'unwanted thoughts, feelings, attitudes and expectations' that originally belonged to an opposing large group, but which were externalised in the shape of hostility and imputation and finally, through internalisation, adopted as part of one's own group identity. These are therefore ascriptions that have been brought into one's own identity.

Volkan's differentiated conception of the large group identity and the seven threads, which are simultaneously psychic processes and their interweavement, gives us a glimpse to the immense complexity of the formation and the development of the large group identity, with its diverse sources and their interconnections with personal identity. Nevertheless, I would like to expand this concept of Vamik Volkan's to the effect that large group identity be imprinted into the psychic structure earlier than at the 36 months that Volkan suggests. In my opinion, enculturation,

and with it the assimilation of the group-specific, and group-identity formation, begins during the first and earliest interaction experiences between infants and their caregiver. Here, the 'subjective inner space (of the individual, T.Ö) [is interwoven] with the matrix of the primary group' (Kaes 2009: 282). Even when the primary group is initially the immediate family, its members are also members of the large group, of which they stand in the tradition. Here, two opposite directions occur simultaneously: the first is individualisation, detachment, and separation from the symbiotic unity with one's mother (see above) in order to develop a defined core identity, and the second is socialisation and enculturation aimed at the integration of the new member/baby into the (large) group/community. I assume that, during this early interaction experience with the 'object', something is conveyed that can be construed as the precursor to an 'image of community'. I assume that, alongside with the early notion of a 'self' and an 'other' (object), an early, pre-linguistic, sensual notion of one's own group forms as well. Volkan's differentiated conception of the large group identity and the seven threads, which are at the same time psychical processes and their interweavement, gives us a glimpse to the immense complexity of the formation and the development of the large group identity with its diverse sources and their interlace with the personal identity, which is conveyed by emotions. This consideration can also be found in the concept of ethnicity, which Volkan ranks, alongside religious and national identity, as the most important form of large group identity. Ethnicity describes something at once very subjective and collective, namely the 'feelings and thoughts that bind people to those that they *feel*, unconsciously and symbolically, to be their mothers or other important caregivers from their childhoods'. It describes a basic feeling of subjective belonging to a collective as a psychological experience, which is signalled specifically in pre-linguistic and sensual ways, that

is to say, that it is hard to put into words, but one recognises it when one experiences it. This group component of identity experience seems like an inner code to identify the other as someone with whom one has a connection.

## **Identity formation in the context of migration and globalisation**

But what does it mean for identity formation when one grows up with multiple cultural references, e.g. when one is born to German parents in Latvia, and grows up there. What does one feel oneself to be? What large group / ethnicity does one belong to? The loss of this clear association manifests regularly in the following question from bi-culturally socialised youth: 'what am I – Russian/Japanese/Indian/German/etc., or Latvian?' For bi-culturally socialised people, a distinction between 'self' and 'non-self' in the context of group membership, which is constitutive for identity experience, is not conclusively possible, as one identifies with multiple groups. However, this separation is described as constitutive of identity experience. Mario Erdheim emphasised the possibility of building an ethnic identity that is decoupled from a region and instead is expressed through a symbolic universe. Such a decoupled ethnic identity can be found among first-generation immigrants who are far from their homes and home culture. It is this 'decoupled symbolic universe' that is conveyed to children in their earliest interactions. It is a detached, no longer regionally anchored, delocalised, conserved symbolic universe, which no longer experiences cultural upgrades. The process of regional detachment cuts it off from the social development of negotiated cultural meaning, which is usually fed back to the localised subject. What gets transmitted to subsequent generations is therefore a 'delocalised' large group identity,





which gives the individual a certain belonging but also marks him as other; applied to those German youths who were born and grew up in Latvia, this would mean that they simultaneously belong to the large group of Germans, but their 'German-ness' is nonetheless different from that of Germans living in Germany. When an ethnicity receives feed-back from the day-to-day reality of the group, and a real, regionally anchored group belonging is missing, it comes into question to what extent a 'common image of society' (large group introject) applies to both this group and the regionally anchored group, and to what extent some of its traits are illusory. The Latvian ethnicity, and therefore membership in the Latvian large group, does not occur in the framework of early interactions with objects, so it is devoid of the prelingual and the sensual; so one becomes in this sense respectively an external, a stranger; one does not feel bound, in the sense described by Volkan, to the other Latvian-Latvian members of this group. There are no 'feelings and thoughts' that bind people without language, and to 'those that they (the people, T.Ö.) feel, unconsciously and symbolically, to be their mothers or other important caregivers from their childhoods' (Volkan 2005:23). This feeling can only occur when one shares similar early interactional experiences. Thus, the 'Latvian-ness' of a young Latvian with a German background is always different from the 'Latvian-ness' of a

Latvian-Latvian. Nonetheless, Latvian culture is familiar, because it is manifest in the natural external environment that serves as the framework for the secondary and tertiary socialisations that one grows into.

A bi-culturally socialised individual will always perceive each group, in this case the Latvian and the German groups, to be a group to which one belongs. So that a denial of membership to a group is always an attack on identity, on the 'who I am', and therefore be experienced as a fundamental attack on personal identity and self-confidence. They are ascriptions of otherness (e.g. 'You are no Latvian!'), and the confrontation with these ascriptions, that frequently cause bi-cultural people to ask themselves 'What am I?' and lead to a focusing on the ethnic-national aspects of identity. Already embodied in the 'either/or', that is, the question of 'What am I – German or Latvian?' is the desire for one identity, membership in one group apparent, as well as the pain of having to choose between two identities and memberships, respectively, and be required to say 'I am German' or 'I am Latvian' (Özbek 2012).

I operate on the theory that bi-culturally socialised people develop at least three group introjects / 'images of society' during their identity formation:

1. For a start, a large group introject that, due to

a history of migration, becomes detached and no longer regionally anchored. This identity comes to 'only' relate to a symbolic universe, conveyed through interaction experiences with parents; going back to our example, this would be a German large group identity.

2. A large group introject relating to the host country, which is lacking from early interaction experiences and is acquired through extra-familiar secondary socialisation; going back to our example, this would be the Latvian large group identity.
3. A diaspora group introject: by 'diaspora group' I mean an ethnically or religiously determined community which lives outside of its place of origin and its identity-establishing narrative. According to Mayer, the diasporic community is understood in contemporary social-scientific discourse as a 'genuinely new form of socio-cultural identification and interaction' (Mayer 2005:12). Stuart Hall describes them as 'new ethnicities' and emphasises 'a deep-reaching discontinuity' as a shared horizon of experience (quoted by Mayer 2005: 11); going back to our example, this would be a Latvian German, or new Latvian group identity.

Crucial for the establishment of identity formation with multiple cultural connections (cf. Welsch 1997) appears to me to be that the different large group introjects can combine themselves within the subject such that a feeling of self-being / whole-being, in the sense of 'being one with oneself' develops. In my opinion, this is only possible through the recognition of lasting differences. Turkish-ness, Japanese-ness, German-ness are all different from Latvian-ness and further different from the German-Latvian, Japanese-Latvian or Turkish-Latvian combinations; this is having a 'hyphenated' identity. Paradoxically, this hyphenated identity is affected by a non-identity, in the sense of non-belonging. One is neither German

nor Latvian, but something third, something new – namely, German-Latvian or new Latvian.

I believe that identity formation in the context of globalisation and migration is possible. It requires the subject to master a very specific emotional challenge: enduring the pain and uncertainty of not feeling like one belongs to one single group, as identity formation up until now has meant. Essentially, it seems to me that this means being able to mourn non-belonging and, in the same sense, non-identity (Özbek 2012).

## Concluding observations

I have attempted to come closer to the question of Baltic identity and hope to have shown that a self-attribution like 'I am Baltic' is developed as part of a very complex psychological process that starts at birth. This causes an individual to feel like they are belonging to a group and, consequently, are close to the members of that group. I have tried to show how this attribution to *one* group loses its intelligibility in the context of the social developments driven by globalisation and migration. A group-dynamic negotiation of cultural and identity-establishing importance is always taking place inside of collectives. It remains in question if, and to what extent these processes (e.g. those advanced by Volkan) can have inter-generational meaning, when they are constantly developing into 'new identities' due to mobility and migration. Similarly, it is an open question as to what extent their contents, which are bound together by these processes, can change. E.g., will a chosen trauma evermore determine the identity of a collective, or will it be subject to change over the course of time? Feeling oneself to be Baltic was, before 1940, certainly different than afterwards, and is different yet again after 1990.

We can operate on the assumption that Baltic identity exists. However, this is subject to constant changes in the dynamics of global and internal communities; against this back-drop, it may be more accurate to speak of 'Baltic identity – today'.

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# History

## The Baltic Sea – periods and regions

Max Engman

### Sea and power

In his brilliant essay ‘About the Baltic’ (1952), the Finnish writer and diplomat Lorentz von Numers discusses how the Baltic Sea shaped his family:

*I was born a stone's throw away from Aura river at its outlet in Erstan. My family has wandered around the coasts for some hundred years. It has buried their dead in all provinces around the Baltic Sea. It has never lived at the same place for more than three generations and never more than three Swedish miles from the sea. My mother's side of the family has sailed the seas for several generations. This is why I love this gloomy and black water that leaves a brackish taste in the mouth.*

Von Numers emphasises diversity, mobility and mixing in an environment where there's still always something in common – a sentiment which is neither limited to the Swedish, later Russian, Baltic Sea provinces, nor to the agrarian policies and language conflicts, which were by no means a characteristic distinct to the Baltic countries. One can experience this sentiment in Gdańsk, in the language jumble in Vyborg, or in Swedish-Pomeranian harbours. The central ingredient is the sea. In this way the waters of the Baltic Sea, with colours like an oil bottle, is reminiscent – despite everything – of the Mediterranean Sea. Both seas carry enormous masses of water and have only two seaways that make possible a connection to the outside world. Originally, only Gibraltar and the Danish Straits offered passage to the oceans, albeit for a long time unsecure ones. Europe's oldest monarchy and the pirates of Europe's Barbary states did not have much in common, except for controlling and charging traffic through the

Western outlets of the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas far into the nineteenth century. Denmark eventually waived its right to tariff what so far had been an internal sea route within its Realm – since Denmark ruled over both sides of the Øresund – in exchange for generous financial compensation. In order to impose the concept of the freedom of the seas, the United States had threatened Denmark with the use of armed force. In comparison with Denmark, the Ottoman Empire was able to keep control over the Turkish Straits for half a century longer. Both seas received new sea routes to large trade areas through channel building. The Suez Canal shortened the seaway to India. The Russian river channels of the eighteenth century and the foundation of Saint Petersburg opened the enormous Russian channel system to a slow seasonal trade.

For von Numers, Balticness ‘as a mental state and habitat’ was something elusive:

*It is probably just a sentiment. Trying to confine the areas on a map where this sentiment can be experienced is difficult and one has a hard time explaining its components. But there is something that only small and diverse peoples, with a rich seafaring tradition, under imminent threat and with a common linguistic medium, have been able to generate. Where a national culture becomes too pure – take Upper Swedish, Great Russian or High German as examples – the sentiment volatilises. [...] This is connected to the fact that that this sea-shaped area was characterised by provincial and cosmopolitan elements at the same time. These elements were found among people just as among buildings. It was in a way a translation to maritime terms of certain conditions in the ancient Danube Monarchy!*





The central element in von Numers' 'sentiment', which we, for lack of a better term, could call Baltic Sea identity, is the sea, the coast, the harbours and the metropolitan areas. A central fact is that no state or people have ever succeeded in establishing control over the whole Baltic Sea Region. The closest resemblance of the Baltic Sea Region to the Roman *Mare nostrum* lies in the economic, cultural and to some extent political network, which the Germans set up over sea and coasts. The Hanseatic League was maybe the most impressive component of this network. The German minorities, which could be found in all the greater coastal towns, stood for a nearly invisible, but continuous culture transfer. Moreover, it is important to remember that Germany has always been situated between the Baltic Sea world and Central and Western Europe in all of its different shapes. The North has thus received many innovations through the intermediation of Germany or in its German variant: Christianity, Lutheranism, the Humboldtian University or the labour movement.

Denmark tried to gain a foothold in the Baltic Sea Region during the Middle Ages. But it was the knights of the Teutonic Order that established themselves along the South coast of the Baltic Sea. Following the secularisation of the *Ordensstaat* during the reformation, the knights became the dominant social class, or rather a land-owning caste. Sweden established itself north of the Gulf of Finland, in a Finland, where the Swedish state and yeomen left their mark on society.

In 1561, Reval (today's Tallinn) asked for Swedish protection against the German-Baltic aristocracy. This triggered a Swedish expansion, in which Sweden came pretty close to ruling over the whole Baltic Sea Region. After the Great Northern War and the foundation of Saint Petersburg in

1703, it was Russia's turn to try. Following a rapid expansion, Russia came so far that the Cossacks were able to water their horses at the Seine during the Napoleonic Wars. Russia was Europe's leading superpower for half a century and Russian power ruled over the shores of the Baltic Sea, from Tornio to Prussia. The Russians were not able to establish complete control, but the Bomarsund fortress on the Åland Islands, which has been referred to as 'a gun directed towards Sweden's heart', is a reminder of how close they came. The Crimean War, which largely revolved around Sevastopol in the Black Sea, also had consequences for the Baltic Sea. It resulted in the demolition of Bomarsund by a British-French expeditionary force and in the subsequent demilitarisation of the Åland Islands.

The Crimean War was the beginning of the end of Russian dominance in the Baltic Sea. At the end of the nineteenth century, Germany emerged as a new superpower. But Germany also did not succeed in establishing total dominance over the Baltic Sea Region, although it came reasonably close around 1918 and 1944.

## Meeting points and time periods

The character of the Baltic Sea coasts as meeting points is rooted in the fact that no power was able to establish itself as hegemonic. Political diversity resulted in periods of different characters and to region-building around important centres. Even if the balance of power changed, the cities remained. One could say that realms came and went, while cities endured. But, of course, it is not as simple as that. New cities came along and grew. In the case of Saint Petersburg, it was acceleration from the very beginning so that the city had more inhabitants than Stockholm around 1750 and more

than Copenhagen by the 1780s. In contrast, it took Helsinki four centuries to become Finland's largest city. It is questionable whether this would have been the case without the advent of the sea fortress Sveaborg, which was the biggest construction of the Swedish Realm, and politically decisive in 1809.

Political conditions affected the cities. Stockholm's growth slowed down after the Great Northern War. Saint Petersburg grew to outnumber Moscow during the Napoleonic Wars. However, Moscow regained its position as Russia's largest city after 1917. During and after both World Wars, Petrograd-Leningrad survived what were perhaps the most difficult hardships ever suffered by a modern European city.

These cities were influenced by geopolitical conditions, but they continued to exercise their power of attraction on people and goods, in Stockholm after 1809 and in Saint Petersburg after 1856. One can claim that the metropolitan areas created regions and sub-regions through their influence.

*The Lübeck age* ranged from the early Middle Ages until the reign of Gustav Vasa. It was the time of the Hanseatic League and the cogs. Alongside Lübeck, the important cities were Visby, Gdańsk, Riga, Reval, Vyborg and Novgorod, which was also an important Baltic Sea city. The first book printed for Finland, *Missale Aboense*, was printed in Lübeck in 1488.

*The Stockholm age* continued until the Great Northern War. The Swedish age of great power was characterised by the Swedish (and Finnish and Estonian) attempt to transform the Baltic Sea into a Swedish interior sea. They failed, but as a by-product, Stockholm was transformed from being a small city into a metropolitan area and capital in the modern sense. This meant the end of the travelling kingdom where king, court and central government travelled around within the Realm, held estate meetings with the people and consumed the taxes and necessities collected in

the Royal Palace. During the seventeenth century, the Royal Palace in Stockholm was extended, and King and court now resided permanently in the capital. Central government built its own houses, the nobility their own town palaces.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the historian Harald Hjärne mocked the attitude of modern Sweden towards its great power period as being characterised by 'a remorse-filled elegiac sentiment'.

The Swedish would prefer to regard Sweden's great power period as a 'philistine creation of basically failed statecraft on Sweden's account'. Here one can object that Sweden's time as a great power cannot be judged only on the basis of Swedes. J.R. Seeley once stated about the British Empire: 'What does he know about England, who only England knows'.

There has been a debate as to what extent the Swedish attempt to establish hegemony over the Baltic Sea Region was militarily or economically motivated. Economically, the period could at any rate also have been called 'the Amsterdam age'. This is where economic power rested. In addition, cities such as Gdańsk also played a central role. Just as eleven languages were spoken in the Swedish army at the Battle of Breitenfeld, goods were bought and sold in at least as many languages in the Realm, while Dutch had replaced the Low German of the Hanseatic League as the lingua franca of the economy.

In his obituary for Charles XIV John of Sweden, P.D.A. Atterbom drew up the Swedish history's big 'either/or'. One alternative was to remain a Scandinavian island state without a desire or power to conquest, but powerful enough to defend itself. The other alternative was to become a Scandinavian Baltic Sea power. Through the conquest of Finland, Sweden had chosen the latter path, which, however, meant that it was nearly constantly at war with Russia. The final decision was made in 1808, when Russia conquered Finland. The Swedish Realm was divided, with

very different consequences for Sweden and Finland. As a consequence of ‘the Nordic castling’, Sweden was compensated for the loss of Finland with Norway. There were great expectations, but the relationship between the two countries was characterised by many conflicts. Finland, on the other hand, initiated a state- and nation-building process, which reached its goal when the Russian Empire weakened temporarily and lost its grip on its western periphery between 1917 and 1919.

After 1809, the inhabitants of Finland and Sweden had to come to terms with the fact that the political unit they lived in had completely changed its shape. During its great power days, the ancient Swedish Realm was a rectangle, oriented in a West-East direction with a strong connecting line running along Gothenburg-Stockholm-Turku-Vyborg. After 1809, there were three elongate states that were oriented in a North-South direction. Norway oriented itself towards the North Sea and the Atlantic and turned its long mountain ridge on Sweden. Finland oriented itself towards Saint Petersburg, which was ‘Finland’s second-biggest city’ in the middle of the nineteenth century. The old pattern was replaced by the elongate primacy of politics.

able to neutralise deep-rooted revanchist Swedish instincts that could have led to an even worse result. The meeting in Turku laid the ground for decades, if not centuries of peaceful, stable, albeit not necessarily cordial relations between Sweden and Russia. The great significance that Alexander ascribed to the meeting is shown by the fact that he left his headquarters during the critical period of the Battles of Smolensk and Borodino in order to negotiate with Bernadotte. The unvarnished truth is in any case that Bernadotte handed Finland over to a Russian sphere of influence for an uncertain future and gave up any ambitions to change this fact. For the Finnish nationalist movement, this appeared like a good solution for Finland, which avoided becoming a battlefield and received greater leeway. This appears to be a plausible interpretation. However, many Swedes considered ‘the policy of 1812’ to be a betrayal of Finland’s six centuries within the Swedish Realm and of centuries of Swedish aspirations. During the continental campaign against Napoleon – Sweden’s last war – many Swedish officers felt that they fought the right war on the wrong side: against Sweden’s traditional ally France together with its traditional enemy Russia.



The Sweden of 1809 was a sullen remainder of an empire in the process of licking its bleeding wounds. After having met with Alexander I in Turku in 1812, Bernadotte’s statesmanship was

‘The policy of 1812’ meant that the Swedish government drew the consequences from a rigorous re-orientation in Northern Europe, which also changed its inhabitants’ mental maps. For half

a century the conglomerate states of Denmark and Sweden had been fighting with each other about the hegemony in the North. Formerly, they had been referred to as 'the Nordic powers', which – beyond today's North – also consisted of Russia, Poland, Prussia and parts of Northern Germany. During the reformation, Eastern Europe was 'invented' as a counterweight to the civilised western part of Europe and received a distinctive Slavish character in public. At the same time, Poland disappeared from the map and the German states oriented themselves towards a Central Europe, which was in turn perceived to be primarily Germanic.

After the Napoleonic Wars, the North consisted of four small, strategically uninteresting states: the remainders of the Danish and Swedish empires and the autonomous states of Norway and Finland. The 'New North' was therefore a kind of leftover category in order to fill the constructed Scandinavism and a culture built on Nordic languages and Norse romanticism.

In this new or rather totally reversed strategic position, Russia planned to use Finland – just as Sweden had earlier – as deployment zone for offensive operations or as a defensive zone where it could wear down an attacker through persistent battles and thereby protect what it considered most important: its own capital. The Swedes aired their grievances about losing Åland, but Russia needed Finland's South Coast in order to defend Saint Petersburg. It was definitely no coincidence that Russia was uncompromising with regard to the territorial question of the Åland Islands at the peace negotiations at Fredrikshamn in 1809. The French ambassador Caulaincourt is told to have said that conquering Finland and relinquishing Åland would be just like taking a suitcase and casting away the keys. The Russians also refused to accept a fortification ban.

The Swedish feared that the peace would turn them into 'slaves under the tyrants of the North'. Maybe they had not realised that they

were neither the first nor the last people to be placed in such a strategic disaster: by conquering the Scandian provinces, they had pointed a gun towards Denmark's heart: Copenhagen. Denmark's position in 1658 brings to mind, in a stunning way, Sweden's situation in 1809: both changed from realms whose capitals were protected by ancient core provinces into truncated countries whose capitals were situated at the tips of exposed flanks and had become border cities. When the wheels of history turned just as rapidly the next time, it was Finland's turn in 1918 to point the gun against the city, which should not be called Russia's heart – according to the traditional view, this is Moscow – but its brain, Saint Petersburg.

*The age of Saint Petersburg* continued until 1917. The foundation of the city was one of the hinges on which history turns. Many writers and researchers have tended to stress Saint Petersburg's 'artificial' character. This feature is emphasised by the 'Myth of Saint Petersburg' in Russian literature and by Peter the Great's resolution to give his empire – in the word play of Karl Marx – an 'eccentric centre'. His attempt to create an 'imperial Amsterdam' was doomed to failure, but it gave the history of Northern Europe a new direction. The mouth of the Neva was an excellent place for establishing a trade and harbour city and a marine basis. What was exceptional about it were its dimensions and its positioning as capital.

For our contemporary age, the place appeared to have been built on thin air. It could have sunk back into "the Finnish marshes" or disappeared in the pale grey fog which characterised its climate any time. According to Belinskij, a wet autumn was Saint Petersburg's constant season, which sometimes mimicked spring and at other times winter. The Russians suffered from the cold wind, but during this process the Muscovites became Saint Peterburgians, a suspicious subspecies of Russians, at least according to Great Russians. The Saint Peterburgians shared the climate and many other experiences with the other inhabitants of the



Baltic Sea coasts. This increased their opposition to Moscow, and the peculiar Russian version of antagonism between coast and interior.

Certain places (Jerusalem, Rome, Moscow) are centres in a world, while other places which – so to speak – are built at the rim of their world symbolise both a victory over the elements and a perversion of the natural order. Saint Petersburg itself became the incarnation or culmination of the opposition between East and West in Russia's history – it does not resemble any other European city, since it resembles them all at the same time. The combination of stage decoration and architecture reflects Saint Petersburg's 'theatricality'. The city is a window towards the West or a showcase towards the East, a glorious vision of the future or a diabolic illusion, the return of the Antichrist or the Palmyra of the North; it represents the pure lines of classicism and the bleakness of alienation, an oscillation between rational order and threatening chaos. The bronze knight still stands on granite, but his horse rears up over an abyss. Mickiewicz saw the statue as a frozen waterfall; no one could know what would happen on the day that the warm west wind of freedom might begin to unfreeze this cascade of tyranny. There was unease that the waves of the Gulf of Finland had not forgotten 'their ancient feud, their hate, their fight', to use Pusjkin's words. There were visions of a deluge that would flush away the city's provocation of the 'true Russian', which would exceed the actual floods.

The age of Saint Petersburg ended in 1917. The revolutions in 1917 did not only result in a name change from Petrograd to Leningrad, but also in the beginning of a *Moscow age*. The Bolsheviks took the power along with them when they moved to Moscow in the spring of 1918. Petrograd was the scene of the October Revolution, which was an event of world historical significance. But for the city itself, the new age nearly implied a return to earlier times:

*As the country, with its capital returned to Moscow, retreated to its womb-like, claustrophobic and xenophobic condition, Petersburg, having nowhere to withdraw to, came to a standstill – as though photographed in its nineteenth-century posture.*

As Stalin pointed out before the Winter War, Petrograd had become a border city within shooting range from Finland. Never before its foundation had the troops of a foreign power stood so close. A hundred years earlier, Napoleon had said that Swedish canons could no longer be allowed to disturb the nightly sleep of the ladies of Saint Petersburg, but also in two other imperial residences, Wien and Istanbul, one slept uneasily for the same reason. Stalin was particularly frustrated about being forced to relinquish "Peter the Great's naval fortress", a couple of fortresses at the Southern and Northern coastline of the Gulf of Finland, since they had given the Soviet Union the capacity to shut the coasts of the Gulf of Finland. Now, it was the new inheritor states that gained the capacity to lock in the Soviet fleet, which the fortresses originally had been thought to protect.

## Coast and interior

Coasts and region-building metropolises are meeting points for ideas, languages, cultures, and goods, but behind each coast hides an interior. The inhabitants of the interior often view the sea and the coasts with suspicion, as a foreign element:

*It is really the same everywhere at coastal strips, the strange combination of blood, architectural styles and languages, the stench and melancholic gracefulness of careworn Hanseatic cities. And wherever you come – as a dense and unwavering background – the peasantry – speaking an incomprehensible language full of diphthongs, in the visual memory eternally haggling on innumerable*

*squares with rounded pavements  
and the colonnades of government  
buildings just as white socks on thick  
legs looming on the horizon ...*

The peasants represent both quantity and conformity. Few fates could be supposed to have been worse than when Peter I forced the Russians to move to what the Ukrainian Gogol – who was used to a warmer climate – called the country of cold, floods and darkness. Petersburg was the city where the Russians should learn to sail – if nothing else helped by building a couple of bridges. Brodsky observed that the Russians ‘shivered badly at the cold and pervasive Baltic Sea wind’, which, according to Gogol, fell upon people from all quarters all at once.

In the Baltic Sea Region, each new architectural style involved a conquest and vice versa, every new conquest a new style: Low Hanseatic, the brick and stone gables of the Teutonic Knights, the Swedish baroque, the Baltic empire and the bulky orthodox cathedrals on the most visible places in Riga, Tallinn and Helsinki. In addition, the Bothnian region was characterised by the imperishable tetragonal wooden boxes of the free churches, where people could face their Creator without any disturbances except for the regular and repeated fires.

## Regions

Just as time periods in the Baltic Sea can be distinguished from each other by hegemonic powers, its regions have been distinguished by geography, communication and political constellations. This insight made its breakthrough only recently, when researchers began to place a greater emphasis on levels of analysis that went beyond the state and the nation. For example, Finland then appears nowhere in history as a natural collectivity, but at least as two (East and West) or three (Stockholm-Finland, Petersburg-Finland and the interior)

collectivities.

In fact, the national perspective is rather misleading, since regions and their internal networks extend over today’s elongate state borders. It seems far more instructive to talk about a Bothnian region, which consists of both coasts of the Gulf of Bothnia. This region and its many small wooden cities along the coasts have traditionally been oriented towards Stockholm, but at one stage also towards North America because of emigration. The Bothnian region was important for Stockholm and the whole realm for a long time. It produced strategic raw materials, such as tar, and it built ships. Ostrobothnia was so strongly oriented towards Stockholm that researchers such as E.E. Kaila wondered whether the province economically belonged to Finland at all during the eighteenth century.

The Baltic or Baltic-Petropolitan region, consisting of both coasts of the Gulf of Finland, represents another world, one of greater cities and fights between empires. Reval, Stockholm and Saint Petersburg played a dominant role in trade and migration at times. Helsinki was founded as Helsingfors in 1550, but was unable to compete with Reval in the profitable ‘Russian trade’, similar as Saint Petersburg’s predecessor Nyen, whose fortress Nyenschantz was just as unable to ward off the Russian army in 1703.

Saint Petersburg was the second-largest Finnish and Estonian city at times. The Bothnian region is more or less intact today – in Ostrobothnia they still watch Swedish TV. The Baltic region has been resurrected after a period in which Lenin and Stalin cut down on the mobility of people, goods and ideas, which had been the lifeblood of the region.

Other transnational regions include the Kalott and Øresund areas. For its inhabitants, the latter area stood just as much for togetherness and common history as for separating nation-state borders.

## Memory, oblivion and silence

We have lately experienced something like a comeback of the regions – a consequence of more open borders and a greater awareness of common problems. Regions developed in order to assemble food, resources and people from one region in a metropolitan area. The problem is that the metropolitan area spreads pollution in its region and thereby creates environmental problems, which have to be addressed both regionally and in awareness of a common sea filled by water that should hopefully be a little purer than an oil bottle.

The Baltic Sea countries have often found themselves in conflict with each other about and within their common Baltic Sea arena. This is nothing they like to talk too much about at present. Renan subtly points out that one of the nation-building factors is to remember a lot that has been accomplished together, but just as much to forget a lot together. The same holds true for vast maritime regions such as the Baltic Sea, and still does so today.

There are old bonds, but there are also old enmities and old resentment between the aristocratic nations and the peasantry, between majorities and minorities and between states. Finland is Sweden's little brother, even if the roles were partially reversed when the Finns travelled out into the world under Russian flag during the period of autonomy. When Finland became independent, some Swedish diplomats predicted that its independence could not last for long. Others predicted that an independent Finland would become a difficult neighbour for Sweden – similar to Serbia for Austria-Hungary. Estonia is Finland's little brother and just as sensitive to advice from the big brother as Finland is to criticism from Sweden. Norway, again, is Denmark's little brother. The remainders of the Danish and Swedish empires sometimes forget



that a lot of time has passed since they determined Europe's fate in the Peace of Westphalia.

None of the small states of the North has forgotten the time in history when they were tools in the hands of great powers. Count Potemkin once said to the Swedish ambassador, the Pomeranian Curt von Stedingk, that the Finns were a difficult people that should best be deported to Siberia. Nobody asked the Norwegians in Kiel in 1814, whether they wanted to become a part of the Swedish realm, and the Finns were apparently not mentioned in Tilsit in 1807, where their fates were sealed.

These great power agreements can be compared with the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact of 1939. The Balts also remember Judenitj's comment in 1919 that independent Estonia's first government was not a government, but nothing else than a bunch of criminals that had illegally usurped a part of Russian territory.

A lot of things have not been forgotten, but they are preferably not talked about. Russia did not manage to denationalise Lithuania within fifty years after 1864, although they attempted to wipe out its schools and alphabet as punishment for its participation in the Polish Rebellion of 1863. The Lithuanians organised underground schools and smuggled in literature from East Prussia that was printed in Latin letters. This represented an unusual example of smugglers turning into national heroes. The culture war in Lithuania and the corresponding conflicts elsewhere in the Baltic Sea world and in Europe can be seen as an expression for the indestructability of small people, for their confidence that history will be on their side eventually – despite all adversities that stand in their way. The Czech historian František Palacký expressed this conviction most distinctly in the old days: "We have been here before the Habsburgs and we will be here after the Habsburgs."

Finland and Russia do not particularly emphasise that those countries were 'neighbours

against their will' during the interwar period.

Some circles in Finland had plans which Hitler summarised in one of his table talks in August 1942: 'The Finns only wish for one thing: that East Karelia and Petersburg disappear'. The Finnish objective clearly revealed an imbalance between ambition and resources. Stalin again had his own plans, which would not have spared Finland, but he was in a hurry to reach Berlin. Thus, Helsinki – together with Moscow and London – became one of the three capitals of European belligerents which were not occupied by the troops of a foreign power. On the other hand, the relations between both countries are characterised by an underlying fact, which is only very occasionally touched on in public, but which everybody is aware of: Finland rejected Stalin and survived. It belongs to the diverse history of the Baltic Sea that interpreters sometimes had to be able to listen to 'Finlandia' and the 'Leningrad Symphony' at the same time.



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# The map of the nation-state as a flexible *lieu-de-mémoire*

Steen Bo Frandsen

Maps are one of the strongest symbols of nation-states. They are important markers of identity, because their form presents a concentrated and memorable picture. There are no signs of heterogeneity or competing definitions. The whole nation can be symbolised by just one element. In every country, nation-builders have been concerned with constructing homogeneous states. This was not always an easy task in a world of divisions of almost every kind, but with their maps they normally succeeded in producing signs that would be understood and accepted as belonging to the nation.

Maps, and all the narratives connected to how it got exactly the form of the nation-state, constitute important *lieux-de-mémoire*. They could change, however – loss or expansion could alter the lines – without losing their role as identity markers. But even though nation-states have claimed to be stable, more or less unchanging entities, the changing borders but also size, dimension, and orientation of the maps of nation-state tell a story of a dynamic reality. As Danish history shows, the map of the nation state over the last 100-150 years tells a lot about developments in Danish identity and where they see themselves with respect to the outside world.

After two serious defeats in fifty years, the kingdom of Denmark was all that remained of the Oldenburg composite state after 1864, if we do not consider its overseas territories – which nation-state historians usually don't. Denmark had constituted the core of the Oldenburg monarchy, but it would not be precise to call the monarchy 'Danish' or to see the Danes dominating the other ethnic groups. The kingdom was pretty close to the nation-state that the nationalists had been fighting for during the previous decades, but it did not contain the ideologically essential region of Schleswig, which

was lost to Prussia in 1864. Thus the new nation state was born from a catastrophe and began its existence in an atmosphere of depression. It was widely feared that such a small state would have no future. It seemed likely to many people that the Prussians would take the next opportunity to finish off the kingdom or perhaps even more probable that Prussia and Sweden would agree to divide the rest.

Denmark and its German neighbours fought two wars over Schleswig in 1848-1850 and 1864. The national conflict had put the nationality and future of the Duchy of Schleswig in the centre of the Danish-German controversy. Both sides took a stubborn and fanatical position. Intransigently, they both demanded the whole region for themselves, and it proved to be impossible to find a compromise. Not even a division along a line of national identity could convince the opponents. During the negotiations, the Danish government rejected a division, and in the end the Prussians and the Austrians annexed all of Schleswig. Consequently, the Danish nation-state became much smaller than the national movement had dreamt of.

It was a heavy blow that the nation state did not comprise exactly that region, which had been proclaimed and built up to be the heartland of the nation, but it still took another five to six years before the Danes recognized the scale of their defeat. Only the humiliating defeat of France in the war against Prussia in 1870 made it obvious that a *revanche* was totally out of question and Schleswig would remain in Prussian hands.

The nation-state was in need of a new history after the end of absolutism and the Oldenburg composite state. Unlike fellow nationalist movements, the Danish one chose an interpretation of the past that did not promote an expansionist



agenda. The odds heavily disfavoured the Danes and another armed conflict would almost inevitably result in the end of their state. Thus Danish historians produced the narrative of a small state where almost all important events of the past were situated within the present day border of the nation-state. Holstein, Oldenburg, Norway, Scania and other territories with a common history were left out as if they had not contributed to the development of the state at all. The only exception, the only lost province still defined within the national history was Schleswig. The fight for this region had been so crucial to the national ideology that the lost territory could not be forgotten.

This small-state ideology paved a way for coming to terms with the new reality, and in the course of time even a certain ‘small is beautiful’ tendency became a prominent feature of Danish national consciousness. Furthermore, it had a very productive effect on the nation-building process. In fact, Denmark profited from being a small and homogeneous society under a certain pressure from the outside. However, the small state ideology and the corresponding history did result in a distorted perspective that judged the past exclusively through the lens of the nation-state. The fact that Denmark had for centuries followed rather expansionist policies, or that its inhabitants had never been isolated and threatened but always active players in trade and commerce with closer and more distant neighbours, disappeared from memory.

Using the refined and more elaborate cartography, the absolutist state-builders of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century could promote the map of the monarchy as one of the most impressive representations of the composite state. Through a growing consistency and unification of its territories, a monarchy that reached from the

Elbe to the North Cape presented a strong picture of the might and importance of the monarch. The map now also showed the progress of state-building efforts, as there was no sign left of all the territories that had compromised the impression of a united state.

The importance of cartographic representations became even stronger alongside national ideologies. Now, the map of the nation-state should demonstrate the overlapping of nation and territory. This map won an exemplary and iconic position and soon turned out to be one of the most important *lieux-de-mémoire* in the nation-building process due to the precise illustration of unity between nation and territory. The map was an icon. It reminded all members of the nation of their common land and gave it a visual expression. The outlines of the map would be well-known within the nation itself, but in many cases it functioned as an instrument to brand the nation towards the outside world, too. From early on, the hexagon would be synonymous with France, and alongside the boot of Italy one of the most successful brandings placed the ‘island’ of Switzerland as one of the best known map-figures of a territorial state without a defining coastline.

That history, geography and society have a relational connection is clear from nation-states’ maps. In Denmark this is not different. Just as nation-state historians constructed a narrative of the past that fitted the small state and ignored the old imperial tradition, cartographers produced a congenial expression of the new nation-state.

The outline of the Oldenburg monarchy – even in the dramatically reduced version of the post-1814 *Gesamtstaat* of Denmark and the duchies – was an unwanted reminder of how the state had now shrunk even further. But if the rulers of the composite state had been thinking in space and

outside relations, the politicians of the nation state were focused on their own country. Both defiant and forced by the circumstances, the nationalists turned their backs to the outside world. Thus the 'classic' map of the Danish nation-state was cut in a way that left out almost any sign of territories outside Denmark. Given the geographic position of the state, this was quite an achievement, but it perfectly reflected the aversion of recalling past connections and the wish to focus on what really mattered: the nation-state.

The cartographers faced two major obstacles when drawing the map of the nation-state: the former duchy of Schleswig and the Baltic island of Bornholm. Due to the Cimbrian Peninsula, the map of the nation-state had to be constructed in a North-South orientated rectangle. Schleswig could hardly be left out, whereas Bornholm was situated so far to the east that it would be impossible to include her without including neighbouring coasts and territories. A map putting Bornholm in its actual place would change the format of the map, but it would also make it necessary to include a large portion of Sweden. This, however, would counteract the principle of drawing a map with no sign of a world outside of Denmark.

The problem of Schleswig was solved in 1920 as the northern half of the duchy returned to Denmark. This moved the border far enough to the South that it almost corresponded with the southern part of the islands. Central Schleswig, which had voted for Germany in the referendum of 1920, was the only exception to the rule not to include former territories. This part of Schleswig would neither be given a colour nor the details that could be found on the Danish side of the border. Thus, it remained on the map as an illustration of the King's vow that the Danish Schleswigians should not be forgotten.

The delicate problem of Bornholm was simply solved by constructing a separate box in the upper right corner of the map and thus moving the island from the Baltic to the Kattegat. The box could even cover a part of the Swedish coastline that kept up

peeping in the rectangular cutting out of the map. The islanders of Bornholm were quite upset, but they had to consider themselves lucky. Other parts of the Danish state – the North Atlantic residuals of the composite state – were totally left out of the map. They were too far away and much too absent from the Danish metropolitan culture, and luckily so, because they would blow the scale of the map to pieces.

As *lieu-de-memoir* and a mind-defining figure, the isolated nation-state strongly contributed to the idea of Denmark as a state on its own. It swept away the idea of a state that had always been intensively engaged in international trade and where its simple geographical position as the gate to the Baltic made it a state of economic and transportational transition. The map of the nation-state showed no sign of interaction with the outside world. It obscured the fact that neighbouring coasts were very close. By looking at the map there would not even arise any notion about the peninsula's continuity with Northern Germany, a feature that used to be an important characteristic of the state.

Making the Danes feel small and isolated, but at the same time also focused on and proud of the specific characteristics of their unique geography and history, was an important result of this act of nation-building. The national narrative always preferred to tell about the domestic achievements in agriculture, the school system or the national culture in general. The stories of entrepreneurs and achievements outside of the Danish nation-state would not be included in the national narrative. In many respects, the small-state ideology had a positive influence. It counteracted revanchist ideologies and presented a perspective for a future development. A mostly destructive focusing on past glory and lost territories never dominated the political discourse in Denmark.

The iconic function of the nation-state map was promoted in many ways. It was an indispensable accessory in every classroom. In school atlases it



would be the point of departure for all geographic orientation. Starting with the map of the nation state they proposed a hierarchy, where Denmark would be placed in a Scandinavian context and only then in a European one, as a subtle but effective way to indoctrinate and form the minds of the pupils.

Later it would get a prominent position on the television. The showing of the map in the weather forecasts was repetitive and ritualised. Of course, the forecast of the Danish state television was linked to the map of the nation-state, as it was explicitly and almost exclusively addressing a national audience. In spite of a larger European map with movements of highs and lows, temperatures and diverse symbols, the focus would always remain on the upcoming weather of the nation-state. Here, the iconic map turned up once more, predicting showers and sunny spells for the following day. This function of the map is by no means a Danish phenomenon, but an international normality. On German television it seems as if there is no weather outside the German border.

If we return to the relational connection of history, geography and society, we can identify changes in orientation and world views by looking at maps and representations of the nation state. Here Denmark once again offers an interesting case. The congenial unity of geography and history was expressed in the restricted, focused nation state map and a national narrative almost exclusively dealing with events and historic facts from the contemporary territory of the nation-state. Together, they left out Danish engagements or foreign influences from beyond the modern state border. This way of looking at things was never really challenged during the heyday of the nation-state.

The most important event to trigger a change in this paradigm was once more the break-down of Soviet dominance in Eastern and Central Europe. To a much larger degree than European integration, where Denmark hardly ever showed

much enthusiasm or engagement, the epochal change in the political geography of the continent influenced the ideas about Denmark and its position in the world. Once more, we can observe a simultaneous change in history and cartography that must be interpreted as a change in orientation and definition.

Denmark has not grown in a territorial respect, but it might be argued that the nation-state idea of the small state has given way to a broader and especially more interdependent and relational way of seeing oneself. Among the important preconditions for this change was the historicized conflict with Germany. The national conflict and the Schleswigian wars had been the most important reasons for the definition of a small-state ideology, and the role of Germany as a threatening power south of the border always supported the tendency towards a small-state attitude. In the decades after the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations of 1955, things began to change. It was a long and slow process, but over the course of time a more relaxed and less emotional feeling took over in spite of setbacks. The old fear and distrust gave way to a co-operative climate.

The dramatic changes to the South and to the East opened the windows to the outside world. The Baltic neighbours on the communist side of the Cold War divide were almost forgotten in a Danish context, but the sudden changes following the dissolution of the Soviet Union provoked questions that led to the rediscovery of a Danish past that did not fit into the nation-state narrative. It slowly dawned that there were historic links not only to Estonia, where the Danish flag, according to the myth, fell from the sky in 1215 at the battle of Tallinn, but also to Baltic islands, to Pomerania or Mecklenburg. There had been a time in history where Danish kings followed an expansionist policy and created a Baltic empire stretching along the Baltic Sea from modern Denmark to Estonia.

When historians wrote about a Danish empire, a composite state or the Oldenburg monarchy, they

approached a history that had been out of reach in the nation-state and furthermore buried by the Cold War. This pre-nation-state history now turned up as something almost new that waited to be told in a different way. Books and articles documented a growing interest in the Danish medieval past, not least in the Baltic. In general, a broader perspective could be found in the writings of the historians. The long nation-state consensus about the small state and a national history inside the borders of the contemporary nation-state quickly began to crumble. These new tendencies in the writing of history were also reflecting a redefinition of Denmark's position in Europe and the world. Danish foreign policy was rewritten too, and an activist policy including military interventions in other countries stressed the fast movement away from the classic small nation-state ideology.

Although the nation-state remains the same in a territorial way, the changing idea of Denmark and the world around it is reflected in the maps. The German coast of the Baltic now appears more frequently on Danish maps. The consciousness of a German neighbour has grown stronger and at the same time lost most of the former characteristic negative aspects. Berlin has become a frequent place to visit for many Danes, but also the plans of building a tunnel between the Danish island of Lolland and the German island of Femern stresses the need to realize that Denmark is close to its neighbour.

The small nation-state reality has been even more challenged to the East. One of the most evident problems in the nation-state narrative was the role of the Scania region in Southern Sweden. Having been one of the most important parts of the Danish kingdom for centuries, Scania was definitely lost to Sweden in 1658. It was perhaps the most painful loss in Danish history, but in the national historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century it was almost taboo, not least due to nationalists' wishes for a fraternal relationship

with Scandinavia. But Scania's role changed too. In 2000, the bridge across Øresund was opened and the Danish capital now openly gave priority to a regional co-operation with the Swedish side, hoping to find new room for expansion in Scania. Creating a cross-border region between Copenhagen and Malmö was of course a fascinating perspective and an obvious example of 'the return of history' that characterised many post-1989 developments. But it constituted a challenge to the nation-state consensus.

The focus now shifted away from being one dimensionally orientated towards the nation-state, and this change once more found a direct expression in a map. On Danish television, the weather forecast is no longer limited to the nation-state. The rectangle has been turned around. It now has an East-West dimension and includes the historic Danish region of Scania. In this way the island of Bornholm has finally escaped from the box in the upper right corner and is now seen where it belongs. The change has not been made to please the islanders of Bornholm though. It shows how the Danish capital is rediscovering old ambitions and how the nation-state's border is no longer the *non plus ultra* in the consciousness of many people.



# Case Studies

## Being Baltic: obsolete or reinvented?<sup>1</sup>

Mindaugas Jurkynas

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*'We know what we are, but not what we may be.'*

*William Shakespeare*

### Random Access to Identities

Few would perhaps disagree that identity is among the most ambiguous terms in social sciences if not in life *per se*. Scratching the surface with psychology and individual levels of self-ness (Loch-Ness?) we dive into the murky waters of collective feeling(s), i.e. togetherness. A person is not born into a void and enters the social fabric with their first breath. Relations with other human beings define the imagination about 'self'. With globalisation, the decline of traditional ideologies, recognition of uniqueness, relative truths and interpretations, let alone virtual lives, we do not possess a luxury of a desert island in seclusion from other people. Even Robinson Crusoe had his Man Friday. Turn off your BlackBerry, iPad or notebook, abandon your Facebook and Twitter accounts correspondingly and you will feel the power and a dire need for social interconnectedness and its mounting lack thereof.

Associations with others, alike or alien, shape our experiences, worldviews, visions about ourselves and our relationships. We-feeling is not carved out in stone. It is dynamic, flexible and multiple. In the contemporary and postmodern world one can simultaneously feel, or sometimes choose overlapping affiliations: e.g. being female, Icelandic, gourmet, Nordic, married, gay, a beer enthusiast and so forth. The once-strong structures of family, patria, and religion in the Occident

become diluted these days. Increasing rates of divorce and cohabitation, vanishing patriotism and sparks of radical nationalism or religious zealotry, growing secularisation, individualism, hedonism and consumerism, seem to be the signs of the times. This is not preaching about the doom and gloom of postmodern societies in the wake of laments about a lost yesterday – it is rather a context in which contemporary identities dwell, pulse and transform. What once was distinctiveness in yesteryears can be different in the years to come: we know who we are now, but we can never be confident about the perpetuity of the present's exceptionality. For instance, being a Lithuanian several hundred years ago and now are completely divergent paradigms of identity. Ergo, it changes. Where to, though, we wish we knew.

Cherry-picking from history, sporadic actions and attractions, transformation of social and economic structures and encounters with the second kind supply us with new mental Lego blocks we employ in shaping and bending our togetherness. Nobody lives without we-feelings. Some even dare claim that we have to know who we are before we know what we want. Our uniqueness and a collective of similar beings create for us a perimeter of personal, social, economic and political security. People have tended to cluster with those of their kind since the early times. Tribes, cities, states, firms, any other institutions of collective and often cooperative action have carved out their niches in history or remain relevant to this day. Shared identity, an inseparable part of the aforementioned entities, has always had a focus of reference. Medieval societies identified themselves

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<sup>1</sup>The author is grateful to professor Egdūnas Račius (Vytautas Magnus University) for his observations and comments.





with a ruler, modern nation-states reinvented nations along the lines of oft-constructed language, practiced religion, unique mores, culture, literature and glorious achievements of history. The recorded past, as Romantic Nationalism in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century revealed, contained a lot for cherry-picking for construction of identity which habitually rested on the laurels of the glorious past to a great extent.

On the other hand, a substantially more complete, and less pristine, ‘fifty shades of grey’ history, full of, among others, occupations, annexations, or crimes against minorities exists. Having generally only caught the attention of scientists, this history is still struggling to find a way into public and political discourses of contemporary identities. At times, those black spots of the reanimated past serve as the clay for identity bricks and enhanced relationships. In the Christian understanding, the redemption of misdeeds frees one’s spirit from the burdens of the past.

Togetherness of a group, as a rule, rests upon two main pillars: internal similarities and differences from the Other, that is, a reflectional foe. Collective affinities engulf socially developed features, which creates a safe space of order among the familiar and similar to one another ‘Us’, whereas ‘They’, or ‘the Other’ cause anxieties, frightfulness and invoke a distance to be kept. Therefore, we coin our relations of social kinship in order to feel safer and reap the shared benefits of cooperation in a community. Commonly developed value sets through cultural, religious or just cooperative practices and shared experiences bind us into variegated clusters of all sorts and all levels, either individual or international ones.

Nations and intra- and inter-state regions work in similar ways. They swarm around through time-constructed camaraderie, and the Baltic case

comprises no exception whatsoever. De facto, since the early 1940s the world has (re)discovered the three Baltic States: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The Soviet occupation and annexation proved to be a catalyst for the emergence of, as we see it these days, the trilateral region, or, as some may claim, the sub-region of the Baltic Sea Area or Northern Europe in a wider sense. David Kirby aptly observed in 1999: ‘The location of the Baltic is in fact more a question of awareness than of geography, but that awareness has to be guided and educated. Old legacies continue to dog the states formerly under Soviet domination, whilst new opportunities may undermine the fragile sense of regional community. There is much to be done. Defining the Baltic at the beginning of a new millennium is thus an exciting challenge for all who study the region’. Thus moot questions remain relevant and up-to-date: what has it meant to be Baltic since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and what paths might Baltic togetherness follow in the foreseeable future?

## **Baltic Togetherness Revisited in a Nutshell**

Theorists argue one may look at regions of states as products of internal similarities ascribed by outsiders. Browse ‘The Economist’, ‘The Financial Times’ or ‘The International Herald Tribune’ and you will spot ‘Nordic’, ‘Mediterranean’ or ‘Baltic’ regions that buzz with certain assigned characteristics: ‘Nordic welfare’, ‘Mediterranean civilization’, ‘Baltic freedom’ crop up among other images and stereotypes.

Other pundits ponder over exogenous influences for the formation of a region by asserting external powers against which regions form, seeking balance. Olav Arne Brundtland extensively wrote

on the 'Nordic balance', the international status quo of the Nordic states agreed between the US and the USSR during the Cold War years. Finally, regions, like modern nations, can be constructed from within. As long as region builders, usually elites of a different sort, find commonalities relevant to a region and sustain them via cooperative and institutional practices, we have a region with its distinct identity.

The personality of an inter-state region is, in a similar vein to nation-building, erected on selected elements found in a broader meaning of history. As a matter of fact, the past is not the only wellspring for identity. Togetherness can also be developed through the maintenance of cooperation, which gradually accrues into investments of future memories, that is, collaboration turns into the commonly shared past and experience in the future. We do not have to look far: the Baltic Sea Region, as Bernd Henningsen argued, has barely traceable traits of affinities for all littoral states, yet it appears to stand on firm networking foundations and does not vanish from the parlance of policy makers. The EU's Baltic Sea Strategy, inaugurated in 2009, is a clear illustration of this point.

The Baltic case is luckier in this regard. It contains both the history and ongoing cooperation, with all its ups and downs, in different regional configurations (Naltic, Baltic-Nordic, Baltic Sea Area). The term 'Baltic' has different connotations. In the high Middle Ages, Adam of Bremen mentioned a *Mare Balticum*, the Baltic Sea. Linguistically, the definition encompasses Lithuanian, Latvian and now extinct Old Prussian and Sudovian languages. Historically, it can be associated with the Baltic Germanic nobility who, as a progeny of the medieval Livonian state, lived in the current territories of Estonia and Latvia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Medieval history witnessed the emergence of the Lithuanian state and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to be partitioned among Russia, Austria and Prussia at the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Some might even claim that the

Baltic States (re)emerged on the map in 1918-19 after the waves of the Spring of Nations shattered, among others, the Tsarist empire. Poland, Finland and an array of other states proliferated after the implosion of empires across Europe at the same time. The current use of the term 'Baltic' became gradually entrenched through the occasional Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian endeavours of the 1930s to withstand the imminent calamities of the Hitler-Stalin pact, the division of Europe, and World War II. The brutal arrival of the totalitarian Soviet regime to the Baltics in 1940 sealed the contemporary notion of the Baltics – once sovereign states occupied by Moscow. The Kremlin era made deep inroads in the formation of the Baltic collective identity. Come to think about it, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia did not enjoy very many similarities at the outset of the 1940s. Yes, they were small and lived on their nerves vis-à-vis great neighbouring powers. However, Lithuanians, differently from Latvians and Estonians, were Catholic, whereas their northern neighbours were predominantly Protestant. Linguistically, Estonian is a Finno-Ugric language, which differ greatly from the Latvian and the Lithuanian languages. Helsinki, just across the harbour, has always been much closer to Tallinn than Riga, let alone Vilnius, with its formerly distinct Jewish and Polish features, something that made the city look more central European. Inter-war years were not fertile with trilateral collaboration, as Lithuania was desperate and unfortunate in seeking international support to reclaim the annexed capital Vilnius and the south-eastern part of the country from Poland since the early 1920s. This, on the other hand, did not thwart Lithuania from annexing the Klaipėda (hitherto known to the world as Memelland) area along the seacoast in the West. Last but not least, Estonia and Latvia were more industrialised, and economically and socially slightly more advanced, countries.

Nonetheless, the Soviet years levelled out many differences, and the Baltic States became leaders

along many parameters of social and economic life in the Soviet Union (and the laggards in the EU later on). The region's image was reinforced by the denial of some key Western countries to recognise the Baltic incorporation in the USSR, whereas the co-operation of émigré communities abroad and emergence of the Popular Fronts in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia fuelled Baltic togetherness to fight for independence from the Soviet Union. The Baltic human chain of 1989 (it inspired the Catalans to do the same in 2013), when approximately 2 out of 8 million people joined their hands from Vilnius via Riga to Tallinn, signalled to the world that a trilateral uniqueness existed against the Soviet oppression. The Baltics wasted no time in making a U-turn westwards. They knew perfectly well about the narrow range of actions small states possessed in turbulent times and therefore it does not come as a surprise that they vehemently hit the road towards the EU and the NATO and simultaneously embarked on successful post-Soviet transitions of their states, societies and economies. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia kept on clinging together:

common institutions for co-operation – the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers – served as vehicles for political socialisation and coordination of a legion of activities. Reforms, at times socially sore, triggered a quantum leap, not only in faith, and catapulted the Baltics from once Soviet republics to Western, albeit still economically underachieving, states, hungry for success and prestige. For example, in 2012 the 'richest' Baltic state, Lithuania, reached merely 70 % of the EU27's average GDP. On the other hand, Estonia introduced the Euro in 2011 and Latvia and Lithuania are following suit, as the Euro is considered to be a means of economic wellbeing. Security and a desire to be part of the West was ingrained into its victory in the Cold War, or even in Francis Fukuyama's notion of the end of history. Human and political security emanating from liberal democracy and market capitalism, combined with military strength, served as beacons for Baltic change. All three states became members of the NATO and the EU in 2004; however, the feeling of insecurity due to Russia's proximity did not fade away. Research has revealed that leading





Baltic politicians associate their countries with the trilateral Baltic region first and foremost, and the binding themes are Soviet heritage and the frequent perception of the existence of a Russian threat. Looking at the foreign policies of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, one would easily find overlapping agendas: energy security, Eastern Partnership and Transatlantic affairs resonate throughout Baltic political discourses. Even post-Lehman Brothers economic crisis and the successful Baltic way out of it, with socially and sometimes politically costly severe austerity measures and sound fiscal policies, have now put all three states at the top of the fastest EU growing economies. On the other hand, many things are far from rosy, as social disparities, emigration, distrust in political institutions, low tolerance, and medium levels of corruption seem to pester the Baltics more or less to similar degrees.

Commonalities might also arise from milieu and lifestyle. The landscape and cuisine in the Baltics are not that different. All three countries endure the same cold winds blowing off the Baltic Sea, curse at the same long, dark and cold season, yet this is not that unique compared with their neighbouring countries in Northern Europe. True, no Michelin-starred restaurants have opened in the Baltics yet, and many things might taste a bit fatter, sweeter and with an additional dash of alcohol compared to food in the West, but garlic rye bread accompanied by a glass of cold beer of numerous local varieties would most likely be an apt contemporary gastronomical portrayal of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

As for the aforementioned linguistic, religious and cultural differences among the Baltics, one might make the counter argument that English, or as some Englishmen joke, 'Baltlish' took over from Russian as the *lingua franca*. Religion plays a diminishing role in post-modern and ever more individualistic societies. The Baltic States, according to the recent World Value Surveys find their rank among secular-rational countries. Culturally, Europeanisation of politics, economics

and even patterns of consumption dilute Baltic diversity. Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian efforts to refocus their cooperation within the larger Baltic-Nordic network single out three small countries in Northern Europe. Paradoxically, the Estonian president Toomas Hendrik Ilves claimed momentarily in 1999 that Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia did not share a common identity: instead 'what the three Baltic States have in common almost completely derives from shared unhappy experiences imposed upon us from outside: occupations, deportations, annexation, sovietisation, collectivisation, russification.' Rein Taagepera also noted the lack of Baltic emotions, that is, an understanding of needs for collaboration, yet dearth of enthusiasm. Despite threnodies about rusty Baltic cooperation and decline of a once great unity, the reports of its death, to borrow from Mark Twain, have been greatly exaggerated. The pool of items to be picked from for identity construction is filled to the brim. External observers create some of them through attributed regional characteristics, as do region builders who want to make sense of Baltic togetherness. It may not entirely lead to emotional recollections of an inexorable descent of gloom, based on notorious Soviet legacies and its post-communist hangovers and ever present insecurity. The past forms part of Baltic identity but it is not a shackle. Successful transformation into democracies, accelerating Europeanisation and rapidly developing market economies pave the way for success stories. The Baltic States have proven their surprising resilience in the face of daunting setbacks; moreover, they have become some sort of lucky winners in spite of their small size and troubling eastern vicinity. They may know who they were and who they are, yet they can also be aware of an open identity to be saturated with what they want to strive for. The Baltics seem too long to become full-fledged Western states with a twist: open, smart, fit, flexible and full of survival skills in the face of slings and arrows.



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# Who are we? Or the crisis of ethno-cultural identity

Julia Mazur

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, intensive and continuous cross-cultural interaction, increased migration and permanent contact with other cultures will inevitably create an environment in which people think about their own place in a culture, and about belonging a particular culture.

Identity is considered to be one of the most popular and even fashionable notions today, as it is being strongly discussed by philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists and other specialists of human science. Moreover, the term is widely used in socio-political and publicist rhetoric and in common speech, having managed to acquire a certain controversy. Depending on the context, it is possible to define professional, gender, national, ethnic, racial and religious identity (the list goes on). But prior to considering the problems of identity, it seems crucial to provide a definition of the concept and draw a demarcation line between the notions of identity, identification and self-identification.

## Structural levels of identity

To begin with, from the structural point of view it is possible to distinguish identity at two levels, namely personal (individual) and collective (group). Friedrich Nietzsche was the first European scholar to address the concept of individual identity. These issues are more or less touched upon in such works as 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book For All And None' and 'Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is'. According to Nietzsche, a man fulfills the goal of his life and finds himself at the very moment when he assumes responsibility for any deed of the past even though they did not depend on his will. The road to this discovery cannot be easy. It takes a whole life for a man to form the personality, transfer and finally

reach said identity. One can hear a voice from deep inside that says 'Be the one that you really are!' The roots of personal identity go deep into the past, representing responsibility for any deed ('So I wanted!') and go as far as to the future, as these are the constant efforts to feel and define a life goal and acquire the means to reach it. The main reason of one's living can be understood only through deep self-study; one can succeed only when said target is close to being fulfilled. This is the moment of self-identification, which is equal to finding oneself. Nietzsche himself, to his own mind, acquired this identity over the course of solving the greatest mystery of his life – the revaluation of all values.

The next one to develop the same idea was the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, the one for whom the purpose of life mentioned by the German philosopher is actually not a goal but the essential knowledge of what an individual is. The point is that this knowledge is hidden deep inside the personality and must be reached. As long as one succeeds, one finds his own identity.

Though the question of identity was not the major topic of the studies of Ortega y Gasset, his ideas on the subject have considerable meaning. Therefore, it is evident that the concept of identity in its various aspects was formed in the scientific literature long before the definition of the notion appeared.

The first scholar to propose the term was American psychologist Erik H. Erikson. His insight was based on psychological analysis. He was the first one to introduce the notion of the 'identity crisis', connecting it with the development of a teenage personality. He believed that the formation of a child's personality consists of eight stages. Passing through these stages, one may face the problems (crises) of an awkward age.





Identity crisis, according to Erikson, is a period of confusion of roles when an individual is young and asks him-self ‘What am I?’ The point is that, in the process of self-identification, a youth is forced to form a holistic picture of one’s own personality, place in society and social role. As a result, a person cannot give a precise answer to the question ‘Who am I and what is my place in the world and society?’

For Erikson, this is the period when the basis for one’s entire future life is being formed, shaping the whole picture of one’s worldview. Thus, self-identification of teenagers results in the formation of personal, and to some extent social, identity. Therefore, we can define individual or personal identity as a person’s relation to himself, his perception of himself over the course of socialisation. The problem of personal identity lies in the fact that an individual is constantly involved in the process of development and, keeping in contact with a society that is expected to accept him as a homogeneous whole, trying to understand the reason of his existence as the result of the formation of his personality. The identity thus is not given, but is rather acquired in the process of socialisation.

Collective identity, in its turn, means that a person or a certain group belongs to one or another social community. But in this case we face the question of the degree or comprehension of one’s identity: a person (due to unconscious behavioural motives) cannot be fully conscious on oneself. In that case, an individual may not have anything but assumptions concerning their engagement in a certain community. We can see the same reason at work with scholars’ assumptions about identity for certain individuals or groups. To that extent it is necessary to distinguish identity, self-identification and identification. Self-identification

is an act of identifying oneself in a certain community. Identification, in contrast, means the act of identifying in this community by some subject (for example, a scholar). Neither self-identification nor identification is able to provide a true insight into a person’s identity (or group) due to the subjective nature of these assumptions. The process of social and cultural self-identification can be observed through direct contacts with representatives of a certain culture when facing the controversies in behavior, systems of values and misunderstandings. Identity must be understood not only as a behavioral characteristic, but also as a distinctive feature of an individual.

## **Deep and superficial levels of identity**

According to several contemporary researchers, identity has either a conscious or subconscious level. The first one can be comprehended by an individual, the latter cannot. The first level unfolds over the course of identification process due to its situational and mutable nature.

For example, when the citizens of Kaliningrad were bluntly asked who they were (Russians, Europeans or Kaliningrad citizens); the majority of the respondents defined themselves as Europeans. At the same time, should these people visit countries in Western Europe or the USA, they would call themselves Russians. The same thing may occur in the case of our fellow countrymen from the Baltic: when one is in the motherland, one often calls oneself a European; while living in the Baltic States, one considers oneself a Russian. Therefore, identity lies not in an individual himself but in relationships between individuals. Self-identification is thus heavily influenced by several factors, such as social sphere, social position,

social role, habits, personal pursuits and wishes etc., that make it impossible to consider the concept to be true. In this context, identities mean relationships and are, at the same time, a quality of one's personality.

The basis for the deeper level of identity is mentality. The formation of an individual's personality takes place within a certain culture and is influenced by the rules and traditions of the given culture. In the process of enculturation, an individual acquires those basic mental characteristics and becomes a representative of a certain culture, even though he may not realise this fact. To that extent, identity can be considered to be an integral part of one's personality. Such definition of this concept removes the controversies between relative and attributive approaches by composing them together.

## **Globalisation and Regionalisation in the sphere of culture**

Why have these questions generated such a great deal of interest in several spheres of human science in the last decade? First of all, this is due to the globalisation process, which has drastically altered cultures, creating a world where the systems of values, behavioral norms and lifestyles of different cultures have become more universal. Ulrich Beck emphasises the existence of a gap between the national state, the nation and its territorial rootedness. Preference is given to a transnational communication and lifestyle; this blurs perceptions of ethnic identity.

Globalisation processes result in a strengthening of universalistic tendencies, which may lead to cultural homogeneity and the elimination of cultural differences. Though the process is controversial, cultural globalisation can be analysed in opposition to a closely related process: cultural localisation.

Today ethnic, religious and cultural identity manifest more and more openly due to a process which is the reversal of globalisation: regionalisation. Society accumulates the cultural uncertainty that, in the context of international communication between people, countries and cultures, results in searching for the basics of cultural specifics with the intention to preserve them. Regionalisation is also demonstrated through the definition of national uniqueness, which is a desire to preserve the national culture, including the principal factors that distinguish it from foreign cultures. Presently, there are two competing, yet at the same time interrelated and interdependent tendencies: an acute sense of national identity and vague cultural values; this fact is caused by the development of transnational organisations that create and stimulate international social relations.

## **Ethnocultural identity crisis**

The crisis of ethnocultural identity is in many ways a product of the globalisation defined by Beck as a denationalisation shock. The transnational social sphere is characterised by an increased quantity, intensity and geography of migration, which in its turn means active cultural exchange and dialogue. However, cultural cooperation can be carried out according to two scenarios: optimistic and pessimistic. The first means creation of the uniform nucleus within human culture, i.e. the tendency to cosmopolitanism. In the context of the second one, it is possible to observe the expansion of a given culture. Both scenarios are closely connected with the problem of blurred ethnic and cultural identities.

The process of globalisation results in altering the global universe. As discussed above, the borders between national states has been replaced by several unions and formations (economical, military and political ones, etc.). These trends are accompanied by the development of global



informational structure, generally aimed at the masses. Devaluation of the worldview and the intention to atomise the social life has led to a crisis of personality, enhancing the fragmentation of the upper level of this identity, depending on the situations and growing dynamics of social and cultural activity.

Thus, an individual of the modern world can regard himself as a part of global mass culture, losing the connection with his own culture. The fact is, first of all, caused by the loss of historical and cultural roots, which in many cases are attached to freedom of movement and intensive migration. Once a person enters the area of another culture, he begins to realize his own identity, dividing the world into 'we' and 'they', a process which makes individual ethnocultural identifications more acute. But gradually, one's personality undergoes changes: first on peripheral, but then on deeper levels that have much to do with mental values, the cognitive structures of one's consciousness structures, etc. All of this results, according to Samuel Huntington, in the problem of the so-called 'third generation', a generation that may still identify itself with its parents' epoch but mentally belongs to another culture. Here we should take into account the problem of the changing of cultural codes and staying in the context of another culture (Andreychuk, Gavrilina). The second factor is widespread mass culture, with its standardised system of values and the ability to promote the

behavior stereotypes and simplify the language of communication. As a result, one loses first of all the emotional connection with the traditions and values of one's own culture. The consequences of an ethno-cultural identity crisis may also be the overemphasis of individual cultural values, leading to the promotion of traditions and values peculiar to a certain ethnic group as the only possibility.

Such cases of acute national and ethnic self-identification may lead to the principal denial of values peculiar to other cultures, i.e. cross ethnic conflicts and the clash of civilizations.

Therefore, from one side, the process of globalisation stimulates the transformation and elimination of ethnocultural identity, but from the other it boosts the process of self-identification through the disconnection inherent in the modern social and cultural area.

## **Study of cultural identity of the Russian population in Lithuania**

To illustrate the example set above, let us look at the data of the study in Lithuania held in 2011 by the employees of the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal State University jointly with the Center of social research of Lithuania.<sup>2</sup>

The survey has brought to light the difference between the actual ethnic status of the Russian youth residing in Lithuania and the older

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2 The study consisted of the mass survey of Russian citizens residing in the Republic of Lithuania, expert interviews and content analysis of Lithuanian press and websites in order to reveal the basic values of ethno-cultural identity. The following empirical data is acquired over the course of a study, carried out in 2011 by Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal State University, Kaliningrad, within the framework of the Project 'Evolution of Russian social and cultural identity resided in Lithuania'. The grant was given by the autonomous non-commercial organisation 'Institute for social engineering' (Russia). The project was carried out by the autonomous non-commercial organisation 'Centre of socio-political studies', 'The Russian Baltic, the faculty for history of the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal State University (department of philosophy), the laboratory of social research of the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal State University, 'Lithuanian centre for social studies' in Vilnius.

generation. The major part of the latter (79.2 %) call themselves ‘Russians that live in Lithuania’, while the young people mostly define themselves as ‘Lithuanians of Russian origin’ (17.6 %) and sometimes even as Lithuanians (2.9 % vs. 0 % from respondents older than 30 years old). The given indicator shows the tendency of different generations to integrate and perhaps assimilate Russians into Lithuanian society. This observation is supported by the fact that 42.9 % of respondents do not think a lot of their nationality. Such a tendency increases in the younger (55.9 %) generation relative to the older one (36.3 %).

In this regard, as it was mentioned above, the problem of ethnic self-identity is quite complicated, as a person must confess to himself who he really is. These speculations are mostly relative and subjective. The survey found that people whose ethnic origin is controversial consider themselves to be Russians in terms of culture and worldview. Expert interviews carried out by the Lithuanian center for social searches in Vilnius within the said project gave the opportunity for insight into some motives for deeming oneself a part of Russian ethnic society. Therefore, it seems appropriate to provide some examples:

*The passport says that actually I am a Belorussian ... Our family is of mixed origin, though my parents consider Belarus as their motherland. My mother is a Belorussian, my father is a Jew. He neither observes any of the Jewish traditions, nor speaks their*

*language. Actually, I was thinking a lot about that, when it was relevant ... As I said, for me who was very skeptical about Soviet ideology and power, I defined my nationality as the only true one – the Soviet. That’s it.*

*There is not an ounce of Russian blood in my veins. My mother was from Lithuanian Jews; her kin is as old as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. My father did not take part in my up-bringing, so it happened. He was from Kazani Tatars. But being born here during the Soviet era and having obtained my education in the Soviet school I think I’m a Russian ... I always felt as one of the Russian culture. For me the Russian language is my mother tongue. I have been working for many years in a Russian school and preserve the language traditions.*

*I can say that I’m a Eurasian of Russian and Polish origin ... i.e. my grandparents from my grandfather’s side used to be Polish that became Russians being from Vilnius ... My father is Jew. So who am I? I live in Vilnius ... Of course when somebody asks what do I have in common with the Russian culture, I say that this is the language. It was my daily bread. All my life I have been speaking Russian, so this is literally my bread. I work with Russian, write in Russian, speak Russian and graduated from the department of Russian philology ...*



To comprehend the personality of Russians that live in Lithuania, it might be interesting to stress the fact that despite numerous relatives and friends in Russia and certainly, keeping in contact with them, nearly a fourth of Russians living in Lithuania (24.9 %) that were interviewed had never left for Russia and more than a half of them (54.2 %) had not visited Russia for several years. Meanwhile, they visit the EU countries more often than Russia: 36.0 % make such trips one or more times a year. This certainly affects the transformation of the socio-cultural identity of Russian people that live in Lithuania and leads to Europeanisation.

One of the key indicators of ethnic identity is the usage of the mother tongue in common speech. This fact is stressed by Samuel Huntington, who defines language as the basic element of ethnic identity. The data obtained from the empirical study reveals that, presently, there is no language assimilation for Russians. The Russian language is still used for common communication within the family (81.5 %), though a lot depend on its ethnic composition. In those of mixed ethnic composition where one of the spouses is Lithuanian, Russian and Lithuanian languages are both used (15.2 % of the respondents). Only 3.1 % speak Lithuanian at home. The youngest respondents use Russian in everyday life more rarely; the most widely used language is Lithuanian or simultaneously Russian and Lithuanian. It proves that most Russians in everyday life use the Russian language but the younger generation tends to be bilingual. The same idea is supported by the fact that the majority of Russians residing in Lithuania (81%) actually speak Lithuanian, which is natural to the citizens of the Republic. The structural changes in communication inevitably change mentality and consciousness. Young people are more involved in the sphere of influence of the Lithuanian language, and consequently acquire higher social mobility, which opens new prospects for improvement of one's standard of living in Lithuania.

Another problem that affects Russian self-identification, possibly promoting to the elimination of Russian identity, is the education carried out in the Russian language in Lithuania. Many Russians are not quite content with the reduction of Russian-speaking schools and classes due to recent amendments to the national laws. This aggravates the feeling of national minority for Russians that live in a foreign country and belong to the area of a foreign culture. Meanwhile Lithuanians, like many Russians, especially those of the younger generation, consider the process of reducing Russian-speaking schools as natural.

The fact that the said problem meets such a strong outcry among Russian residents of Lithuania is the proof that they wish to preserve their language and culture, but the tendency of reducing Russian-speaking schools may lead to language assimilation. This fact is being emphasised by respondents themselves and experts: Russians are to become not simply a minority but very few. Russians (and not only Russians) are forced either to leave or to stay here, but if they do, they should learn the language.

## **Transformation of ethno-cultural identity of the Russian population in Lithuania**

In early 20th century, the Lithuanian Republic showed the tendency to transform socio-cultural identity. In several aspects, this fact is connected with the titular nation and Russian population of Lithuania. The changes of identity in Lithuania were influenced by the wide range of historical and political factors. From one side it affects the identity of Russian residents, from another – the transformed identity of ethnic Lithuanians, making it more European. First of all, in the context of current processes of globalisation, there is a tendency towards multiculturalism and the elimination of

ethnic identity. Second, the question of identity is often considered by citizens of Lithuania from the point of view of everyday life. In this regard, the current situation in Lithuania requires too much attention to waste time and therefore, it seems irrelevant to define one's own ethnic identity, as there are questions of survival within the conditions of the globalised market, the economic crisis, etc. However, modern Lithuania has a severe migration problem that affects every citizen of the country, whatever their ethnic origin. European countries are considered to be potential migration territory for emigration.

The survey has revealed several tendencies in changing the socio-cultural position of Lithuania and the self-estimation of Russians residing in Lithuania.

First of all, it is necessary to mention the high social rootedness of the Russian population in Lithuanian society and the fact that Lithuania is perceived as a mother country by several Russians. Secondly, the problem of preserving the Russian language as one of the basic elements of Russian mentality is quite acute. The professional language undergoes some changes, such as the one used in everyday speech, towards Lithuanisation, especially among young people. Finally, the incidence of heterogeneous marriages is increasing, which is mixing Russian and Lithuanian traditions. These tendencies are supported by national, geographical, political, economic, cultural and social policies carried out by the government of the Republic of Lithuania. The situation is aggravated by the absence of effectively operating Russian cultural communities that deal with reproduction and transferring of Russian cultural values and traditions. Today the problem of assimilation between with Lithuanian society and the third generation of Russians living in Lithuania is relevant.

Generally speaking, Russian traditions, patterns of family life and values are preserved in the families belonging to the older generation; young

people tend to transform customs and systems of values quite rapidly. The most stable Russian identity (the Soviet one, to be more precise) is peculiar to the older generation that moved to Lithuania after the Second World War in order to restore the Republic. Many of them still do not speak Lithuanian and mostly communicate with Russians; they need the crucial connection with Russia, their roots, etc. The next group is represented by Russians that were born during the Soviet era and are aged over 40. Their behavior and identity depend on place of living, atmosphere, work, etc. In many cases, Russians were integrated in Lithuanian culture and only their family names betray their nationality. Finally goes the youngest generation, that is already half Lithuanian. Even those children that were born in Russian-speaking families and study in Lithuanian schools, as a rule, have begun to think and perceive information (even semantically) in Lithuanian, i.e. they cease to be Russian-speaking. It is interesting to mention that most Russians are identifying themselves as Russians. Thus we can see how different the results of self-identification and analysis of the characteristics of mental identity are.

Therefore, from one side we can see the tendency towards integration and assimilation among the young Russian population of Lithuania, from the other the tendency to technical isolation among its older representatives.

## Conclusion

The results of the study of ethnic and cultural identity of the Russian population in Lithuania confirms the general European recession of ethnic and cultural identity. In the context of close international cooperation and globalisation, the representatives of one culture constantly make contacts with those of another culture, which usually sharpens the self-identification process, accompanied by overemphasis of one's own cultural values and xenophobic intentions. But



in case these contacts are more prolonged and migration processes enhanced, the increasing number of heterogeneous marriages etc., the process of gradual elimination of one's own ethnocultural identity on the mental level is evident.

The crisis of ethnocultural identity stimulated by globalization and boosting the regionalization processes is a universal tendency. One of the main signs of said phenomenon is the loss of a mental connection with the culture of one's own ethnic society. This is the reason for such changeable and situational socio-cultural definition of individuals. It is necessary to mention that the identity crisis is considered to be negative, though this is natural consequence of the process that takes place in modern society. Today, the ethno-cultural identity is being transformed, making more vague the basis and borders of the concept. Meanwhile, due to the integration process, there is a tendency towards a new level of identification, which gradually approaches the deeper level. Nevertheless, the modern generation finds itself in the position of cultural duality, i.e. from one side they lose connections with their own culture, traditional ties and system of values peculiar to the given ethnic community, but from the other side they lack certain transnational values that would become the basis for a new type of socio-cultural identity. This phenomenon known as marginalisation of culture is given a great deal of attention in treatise by Samuel Huntington 'Who we are?', where social community loses the basis composed by the systems of values of one's own culture and fails to acquire new ones, thus provoking the creation of the situation of contested ethno-cultural identity.

In these conditions, it is necessary to strike a balance between the dialogue of cultures, the development of cross-cultural interaction, etc. and the maintenance of national cultural identity. Perhaps for this reason, it is necessary to develop new values, allowing, accepting, and understanding other cultures without losing their connection with

their own. Another topic that requires a separate study is the question of channels of reproduction of ethnocultural identity, which includes cultural policy, media as a translator of attitudes and stereo-types of behavior to a large audience, and education as perhaps the most important institution for the reproduction of values, and how they function in this direction.

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# Bridges to nowhere?

## Identity of the residents of the Kaliningrad region in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Ilya Dementiev

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*Non sine causa di hominesque hunc  
urbi condendae locum elegerunt,  
saluberrimos colles, flumen  
opportunum...*

*Titus Livius. Ab urbe condita. V. 54. 4*

### On Seven Bridges

Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg) is located on the banks of the river Pregolya (Pregel). The bridges of that city were commemorated by Leonhard Euler in his famous mathematical problem, from which the topology stemmed. So, seven bridges linked the Pregel with the Old City. They used to connect the northern and southern parts of the city, as well as two islands in the river. The task was to walk along the bridges, crossing each of them only once. Euler managed to prove that there was no solution to this problem. Later, new bridges appeared and the old ones were demolished, but the history of mathematics carefully preserved the cryptic Number 7, which stood for Utopia.

The modern city retained only three of the bridges that previously saw the fruitless walks of Euler. A major flyover was constructed in the Soviet period, binding the north and the south of the city. The first pedestrian bridge was erected to mark the Königsberg-Kaliningrad anniversary. A second flyover over the river was also planned, which would run parallel to the first. The work began during Perestroika and, due to various reasons, was frozen for two decades.

Those foreigners who came to Kaliningrad were literally taken aback. Some were surprised by the outlook of the unfinished House of Soviets – an appalling building near the site of the destroyed castle. Others were upset by the general view of a once beautiful European city, now dotted with *khrushchoba* (standard houses dating back to

Nikita Khrushchov's term in office). However, the second flyover was also a great shock to the visitors. One end of this weird structure ran straight into a house built before the War had begun. By 1990s the house was recognized as one of the city's heritage sites. The other end of the bridge was hanging over the river, producing a macabre reflection in the waters. The destiny of the bridge was also peculiar. At first there was not enough financing to complete it, and then nobody knew what to do with the old house. It couldn't be demolished and couldn't be left as it was. Euler's problem seemed to come back to those living in Kaliningrad, this time reminded of the grotesqueness of E.T.A. Hoffmann's fairytales. Foreigners would take pictures of the bridge from different vantage points, and filmmakers from Finland even produced a feature film. In order to do this, they lifted the necessary vehicles onto the bridges, marked it and the odd construction found its unique place in art history.

The second flyover was completed in early 2010s, when the old German house was brought down. Now the apexes of this graph are connected by six bridges – three of them German, the Soviet flyover and two post-Soviet bridges – one bridge less than in Euler's lifetime. The problem was solved at last: you can easily walk along all of them, crossing each only one time. But today – in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – the identity of those who populate the westernmost city of Russia ceaselessly attracts researchers' attention. The pressing questions remain: how can we reconcile the historical experience of all the peoples who used to inhabit former East Prussia with the ones of those who live in the modern Kaliningrad Region? Can we freely walk along all the bridges binding us with the past and find the common way to the future?



## First settlers' categorical imperative

After World War 2, adults and children were left in former East Prussia. Settlers coming from various Soviet regions were also adults with children. The children's memories are the components of the historical experience which, in many ways, conditions the identity of the people living in today's Kaliningrad.

In autumn 2012 the children of the first settlers had a meeting in the library of Kubanovka village (Gusev district). They were mostly born in 1938, some earlier than that. Those people were talking about their lives in late 40s-50s: about work and rest, how they used to go to the cinema and steal carrots ... When they first came, they couldn't believe that Germans had so many flowers. Weddings were celebrated without any luxuries, newly-weds were escorted by bicycles. The presents were also modest, like socks. Schoolteachers together brought four chairs; the local saleswoman presented a saucepan. Some woman named Lena gave a vase and after the wedding took it back. At New Year's holidays, a decorated fir-tree was put in the club – an old German building. Religious festivals weren't celebrated, but many of those not in the Communist party would easily take their children to Lithuania, *Kybartai* for baptism.

If we give it thought, those people had a hard, indeed very hard life. Firstly, occupation, deaths in their families, ruined villages. Settling down in a strange land was a road to the unknown. People used to keep axes under the pillows; some father was picking the pistols from the corpses of German soldiers. Only years later did people stop locking their doors! Then there was always the risk of explosion (once mother found a nice little silver

plane, and father called the bomb-defusing specialists). There were no roads at all. As it was too hard to walk knee-deep in the snow past the cemetery, kids abandoned school. Then work, a huge family, and a meager diet. *Kybartai* was the place where the body and the spirit could be sustained. Villagers used to baptise children there and also shop for sausages. Those people worked for decades running – some as dairymaids, some as teachers being only around 150km away from the coast. Yet they never undertook a trip to have a look at the Swedish-coloured horizon. Like Immanuel Kant, they could not go abroad, only his 'categorical imperative' had a taste of *sovkhoz* everyday life. They had to rear children, animals, and work the fields. The principle was that there was no time to travel. They managed to learn a lot despite the abandoned schooling and 'success intoxication' caused by the results of the *sovkhoz* development. They learned to appreciate the little they had, and to not worry about trivial things. When necessary – bemoan the dead, when needed – sing about their undivided loyalties. Remembering the past with a smile was also a great art.

The life of those simple Russian people was like this vase – someone was bringing it as a present and then taking it away all the time. But they are still alive, still light-hearted and the picture of their life is simple. So simple that it makes one shudder. Chairs brought from somebody's wedding. Curtains faded in the sunlight. Doors still unlocked, and under the dusty windowsill are the inherited flowers that are never going to need any vase.

## Such different people in Kaliningrad

Kaliningrad is one of few places where the self-perception of people differs from their perception by others. Locals are used to describing themselves as Russian Europeans or European Russians. Even in the Soviet era, the region had a euphemistical definition with dangerous connotations: The Westernmost. During the Perestroika period, the literary journal that was published there was called 'West of Russia.' It seemed that the location itself conditioned the closeness of this region of Russia to the Western world. Kaliningrad lies more to the west compared to Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, but also to Warsaw and Vilnius. People in Kaliningrad are forever emphasising their Europeanness. Drivers on the 'westernmost' roads give way to pedestrians in nearly every other case – you'll never encounter this in other regions of Russia. Russian tourists are amazed at the quality of roads, though local motorists have a habit of criticising them.

Identity is something that can be found also on the subconscious level. The ethical demands are formed by the familiar city surroundings. One of my colleagues started a new job with a company that had its office situated in the newly built district of the city where no pre-war buildings could be found. No redtile roofs, no cobblestone. She doesn't feel comfortable. In order to be at home she is subconsciously looking for other features. Such an attitude is mainly characteristic of those who were born here, of the second or third generation settlers.

But that view is probably typical only for locals themselves. Foreigners (mostly coming from the West) frequently see Kaliningrad as a Soviet-era reserve. Locals don't fancy this point but there is a rationale behind it. Dull housing dating back to the end of the Soviet times, ruined German buildings right in the center of the city, instances of sheer

negligence towards the historical heritage – all that really looks more like belonging to the idea of 'developed Socialism' than to post-industrial society.

Settlers who moved to Kaliningrad during the last two decades also have a curious attitude towards it. According to different estimates, these people account for one fourth or even one third of the population. They are whole families of Soviet military personnel from the Baltic Sea states or Eastern Europe, Russians coming from Kazakhstan or Central Asia, and refugees from the South Caucasus states. Their perception of Kaliningrad lacks this nostalgia for the German past and their narrative of history is differently coloured.

In 2012 I attended the meeting of villagers who gathered in the school building in Gavrilovo settlement (Ozersk district). The meeting saw quite different people. One part was made up by the Russian settlers from Kirgizia and Kazakhstan who arrived to the Kaliningrad Region in 1990. The other part comprised the Armenians, refugees from the Shaumyan district of Azerbaijan who came to Kaliningrad only two years later. Their children grew up there, even grandchildren were born and former East Prussia became their Motherland. Certainly, as Mamik, one of the Armenians, told me 'Homeland holds you up better.' But now this place is also their home where they feel at ease.

That village in Kirgizia represented 18 ethnicities. To be more precise, 17 ethnic groups and one Italian, who got stuck there after World War 2. During the Soviet era, there seemed to be no conflicts, but when people were leaving Kirgizia for Kaliningrad they heard some backbiting words: 'At last you Russians are moving out and we can eat enough bread.' These bitter memories that united people of different nationalities help them to better understand Germans who were deported from East Prussia after the War. The same memory makes people preserve their traditions. Russian women participating in the meeting came dressed up in national clothes. The singing band 'Podrugi'



(‘Friends’) performs Russian folksongs. Armenians are also trying to keep their customs – they teach their language to children who have never seen the land of their fathers, teach them to keep doors hospitably open, to celebrate their weddings without brawls.

It was widely known even before that many wanted to move to the region, as it was ‘no-man’s land’ in a sense that everyone was a migrant here. Many moved to be with their relatives or acquaintances. But Mamik discovered one more reason. He used to visit this place before. In 1981 in Kalinovka village he spotted a black-haired man with a wife and two children near the local council office. They were from Georgia. Looking sad, they aroused his questions. Those Georgians told Mamik that they came here to live and work but the director refused to accept the immigrants. Mamik remembers rushing into the office and putting the director to shame. ‘You are sitting there, enjoying eating and drinking only thanks to the Soviet soldiers who had paid for this village with their own lives. There is even a memorial to the Soviet Hero, junior sergeant Shota Levonovich Gamtsemlidze, right in this village. And now his grandson is sitting under your door and he has nowhere to go.’ Of course, he meant ‘grandson’ figuratively as we are all brothers and sisters. ‘He blushed and was the same colour as your dress’, Mamik smiled to one of the ‘Friends’ seated at the table. This Georgian was accepted.

We don’t like it when foreigners call Kaliningrad the Socialist reserve, the gloomy Soviet city. Living behind the facades of the German bastions, we are used to ignoring the fact that grey *khreshchoba* actually prevail over the gilt church domes. But the Region is virtually the most Soviet one. People were coming here after losing their homes because here they could live in the USSR. Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani people wanted to feel at home here – in Kaliningrad they are the same ‘locals’ as the Russian refugees from Central Asia or the Soviet Army ex-servicemen

from the Baltic States. They were just like the rest of us, living here in the second or third generation. This area legally belongs to Russia, but spiritually – to all citizens of the former USSR, all grandchildren of junior sergeant Gamtsemlidze. It’s the last splinter of the ‘indivisible union’ (as was proclaimed by the USSR national anthem) that got lost in this corner like a piece of amber with an inclusion that can be often found on the Baltic shores. Or maybe like the Noah’s Ark amid the waves of the ocean and its door are wide open to every living thing of all flesh.

But here we speak not of jewellery pieces but of living people. Mamik’s niece was called *Կարոտ*, *Karot*. Strictly speaking, it is from the verb ‘to miss’ – so, one can understand it as ‘Sorrow’ or even ‘Nostalgia’. This feeling isn’t only sadness; it’s the piercing grief of the highlander who has to live down in the valley. It’s the memory of the Beautiful that was left in the past. And possibly it is also a hope for a better future in this strange place where there are so many broken hearts; yet people still find enough spirit to sing songs, celebrate weddings and welcome guests.

## The duality of the narrative

People living in Kaliningrad are destined to duality. On the discourse level you can view this in some elementary speech constructions like ‘going to Russia.’ If Kaliningrad is part of Russia, how is it possible to go to Russia from it? And still practically everyone here says so.

This duality can also be observed in more complex micro-narratives. Once someone was retelling me the tour guide’s commentary ‘Starting from our airdrome the Nazi planes went to bomb the Soviet cities.’ From whose position is this story told? There is a monument in the Kaliningrad zoo dedicated to setting this place free in the end of the storm. The question is – who did the Red Army soldiers liberate in the zoo and from whom? Several years ago, when the President of Croatia

was granted the title of Honorary Doctor of our university the Governor of the Region (who moved here from Moscow) was giving a speech at the ceremony and he proudly announced 'For the first time since Duke Albrecht's times our university hosts the head of a foreign state'. Since 2005, the university has borne the name of Immanuel Kant, though this situation still creates controversy in the community.

Probably this duality of Kaliningrad's identity predetermines the longevity of stereotypes in our compatriots' minds. Some years ago I visited Arkhangelsk, a city in the north of Russia where some people earnestly inquired 'Where did you learn to speak Russian so well? German is your mother tongue, right?' So there is nothing to wonder at when the announcer at the federal 'Cultura' channel was narrating about the destruction of the Cathedral in Kaliningrad at the end of World War 2 by the German air force. Imagining that the Russian historical centre would be destroyed by the alliance forces of Great Britain is somehow challenging.

This collection of slips of the tongue was replenished by some more specimens at the Forum of German ethnic communities in Kaliningrad, autumn 2012. One of the Russian participants was talking about 'heroic past of our Motherland, including the Amber Region.' Everything is clear but at the same time not. What is meant by 'our Motherland?' Which historical period of 'the Amber Region'? The other Russian attendee mentioned 'the anniversary of Königsberg-Kaliningrad and of the Kaliningrad Region-East Prussia.' When is this East Prussia's anniversary celebrated? (Actually the Germans had one – in 1931 Königsberg had a grand celebration of the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of East Prussia.)

In the 'cloak-room' of this Forum, one German told me a story taken from his own life. Around 1960s he lost his passport. So he went to the police and submitted his personal data: Place of birth: Königsberg. The frightened gendarme instantly

raised his hands 'Are you Russian?'

It is not that we are a bit German in the Kaliningrad Region. Now all who come from former East Prussia are a little Russian. That's the heroic past of our country and it needs the future not less than the future needs the past.

## Arsenyev's Case

The role of the past in people's identity also makes people from Kaliningrad different from other Russians. They find it challenging to find their own place in the complicated history of Russian-German relations. One of the most recent examples to this point is the story of Professor Nikolai Arsenyev (1888-1977) who used to work in the Königsberg University. Being persecuted in Soviet Russia after the Russian Revolution he emigrated to the capital of East Prussia. Here he was claimed to be an Orthodox thinker and studied the History of Culture. In autumn 1944 he escaped to the West and died an American citizen.

The life of this person awakened some interest in Kaliningrad in 1990s. He seemed to be a compromise figure – for those who appreciated the German past, Arsenyev was a genuine citizen of Königsberg, for the Russian nationalists he embodied an Orthodox person who suffered at the hands of Bolsheviks. In 2010 an initiative group decided to install a memorial plaque on the wall of the house in Kaliningrad where he used to live.

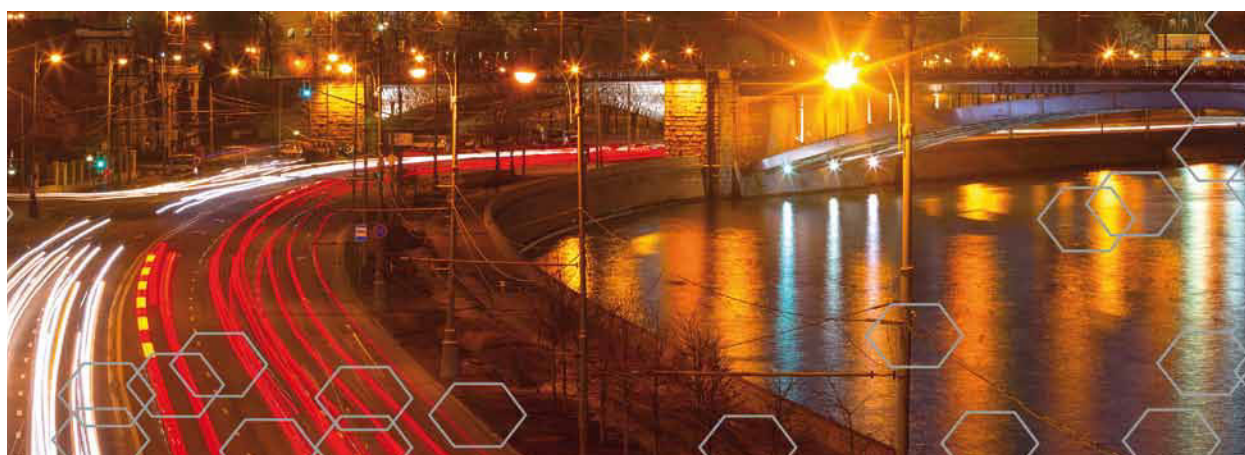
After a two-year debate about the inscription on the plaque, the opening ceremony date was announced. Nobody had any particular objection to commemorating one more Russian on this land. It seemed to be one more proof of the Russian presence in the former German land. But after the media announced the decision one blogger discovered some interesting documents witnessing the Professor's activities during World War 2.

Not long before he died Arsenyev had published his memoirs, where he talked about his life in Königsberg in detail, but there was not a word

mentioned about his activities in this tragic time. And it was found out that in autumn 1941 he started serving in the Wehrmacht as 'Sonderführer' and was working as an interpreter in the captives' camp near Leningrad where Soviet soldiers were kept. The archive documents and some publications shed light on his occupation as 'Sonderführer' at least until spring 1942. There is no evidence of war crimes which he could have taken part in, but the fact of Arsenyev serving in the Nazi forces is indisputable. He was corresponding writing to the Nazi officials sending letters from his house in Königsberg and signing them 'Mit Heil Hitler! Nikolaus von Arseniew'. The findings caused a heated debate during which the participants tried to outline the permissible limits for the commemoration text. Supporters were pointing to the fact that there is a memorial plaque in Kaliningrad on the Agnes Miegel's house while this poet was actually a member of NSDAP. Opponents drew attention to the fact that 53-year-old professor's collaboration with Nazi Germany that had attacked his country casts a too dark shadow on his image. As a result the decision to install the memorial was cancelled. So in the Russian city of Kaliningrad there is a plaque to the German Nazi poet and there is none for her contemporary: a Russian Orthodox philosopher. This is one of many paradoxes framing the historical feeling of local people. In their

conscience 'our' Germans and 'their' Russians somehow manage to co-exist.

Like the banks of the river, the past and the future are linked by a bridge: the present. Once Bert Hoppe remarked that, for a long time, Kaliningrad was a city without a past for the Russians and a city without a present for the Germans. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the situation has changed dramatically. At last the bridge over the Pregel to nowhere (its construction began at the end of the Soviet era) was finished. But the bridge to the future is still hidden in fog. Does it lead to a miraculous place that sees the final reconciliation of all peoples of the Earth with each other and inside themselves? Or is it indeed called Utopia? Even Leonhard Euler couldn't have solved this problem, but the millions of new inhabitants of this land have to do so every day.



# Current State

## Policy Making and identity

Anna-Cara Keim

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This essay attempts to examine the connection between identity construction and region building in the Baltic Sea Region.

Policy and region-building initiatives can have a powerful impact on identity construction. Studying identity as a conscious political construction allows us to make a close connection between policy initiatives that are linked to region building and identity construction. In the case of the Baltic Sea Region a number of region-building initiatives, such as the Northern Dimension, European-led initiatives, the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) or the establishment of the Council of Baltic Sea States, have taken place within the last twenty years that have created a fertile breeding ground for the construction of new regional identities.

The second part of this essay looks specifically at the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, its purpose and to what extent some of the individual projects help to create a common identity. Two projects will be examined in greater detail; One BSR and Horizontal Action project Baltic Lab. Some attention will also be paid to region branding which can in some ways be seen as an extension of region building. The conclusion will emphasise the importance of EUSBSR projects as vital stepping-stones towards a common identity in the Baltic Sea Region and make suggestions of how identity-building efforts could be optimised.

### Identity

Social scientists would argue that identities are generally man-made, political and social constructs based on some common denominator. Identities can be based on geography, nationality, ethnicity, religion, language, space, kinship and myths.

Benedict Anderson referred to nations as imagined communities – however, any identity linked to a community will be based on something shared, which bar the obvious, such as geography and topography, will be imagined to a certain extent.<sup>1</sup> Anderson defines nations as imagined political communities, imagined both sovereign and limited. They are imagined, as even in a small community the single individual is unlikely to know all of its fellow members. Communities are imagined in different ways but they will always be limited as they have definite boundaries which separate them from other communities.

Identities are never universal; they are still based on us vs. them, the ‘self’ vs. the ‘other’. Moreover, identity is a diffuse concept, as identities are never fixed; they are fluid, open to change and often created through negation with others. Brands, on the other hand, though related to identities are different - they require a clear and distinct concept.

Depending on which definition one chooses, the Baltic Sea Region is made up out of eleven states - each of them constitutes a separate political community. Eight of the Baltic Sea Region States, namely Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and Sweden, are member states of the European Union; Russia, Norway and Iceland are not. However, Norway and

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson, Benedict (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London & New York





Iceland are states that, unlike contemporary Russia, define themselves as European and are members of the European Economic Area. In some ways, the European Union acts as a political community - and to an extent it can be called both sovereign and imagined. Yet, the idea of a shared European identity remains complex and many Europeans, when asked about their identity, identify primarily with their national identity or perhaps with the regional identity and only then as European.

It can be argued that the Baltic Sea Region identity is in many ways a constructed one, created by the Baltic Sea itself. Some of this identity is based on some historical roots such as the Hanseatic League, Vikings or the Kalmar Union. However, the Baltic Sea Region is also a very diverse region where multiple conceptions of identity collide.

In 2011 Bernd Henningsen wrote an essay for the Baltic Development Forum on identity in the Baltic Sea Region.<sup>2</sup> He argued that an element of we-feeling can be identified but that at present there is no common identity – however, there are possibilities and necessities to construct such an identity.

The concept of identity itself, as also exemplified by Henningsen's essay, is open to much interpretation. In the context of this essay it is generally assumed that a shared identity within the Baltic Sea Region will be the outcome of a conscious human construction. Therefore, identity construction will be inevitably linked to region building.

## Region Building in the Baltic Sea Region

After the end of the Cold War new political opportunities emerged and region building in Northern Europe became a highly politicised item on the agenda.

In the early 1990s, Germany and the Nordic countries started to practise specific, both interest- and identity-motivated region-building politics in the context of the Baltic Sea Area. These region-building efforts were directed towards engaging Germany, the Nordics, the Baltic States, Poland and Russia “in a new mode cooperation after the historic tensions between Germany/the Nordic States and the Soviet Union/Russia, and Baltic States and Russia, which in many cases were only sharpened as a result of the Cold War experiences”<sup>3</sup> The Baltic Sea Region initiative rapidly grew during the 1990s and its region building and identity building efforts are in many ways closely linked.

The 1990s in Europe witnessed a new trend towards regionalism. European regions and cities gained influence, authority and developed bigger budgets, and an increasing devolution of authority took place all over Europe. In 1997, John Newhouse wrote in *Foreign Policy*: “Regionalism, whether within or across national borders, is Europe's current and future dynamic”<sup>4</sup>. In 1994, the European Union (EU) created the Committee of the Regions. It was specifically designed as the assembly of local and regional representatives,

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2Henningsen, Bernd (2011) On Identity – No Identity. An Essay on the Construction, Possibilities and Necessities for Understanding a European Macro Region: The Baltic Sea, The Baltic Development Forum, Copenhagen

3Aalto, Pami (2006) European Union and the making of a wider Northern Europe, Routledge, London, p.23

4 Newhouse, John (1997) “Europe's Rising Regionalism“ *Foreign Affairs* <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/52645/john-newhouse/europes-rising-regionalism>

providing sub-national authorities and units with a direct voice within the EU's institutional framework.

At the same time, it became necessary for Europe to rethink its policy towards the European periphery; this became even more evident following the accession of the A8 countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) in 2004. As a result Europe's periphery and its borders had moved further east but at the same time challenges arose to create a new kind of identity that would, at least on a regional level, include some of the European periphery. This was seen as to not only help ensure peace and stability in the long term but also create a better environment for businesses and economic development. Cooperation beyond the national level, for example between regions and municipalities, became an inevitable necessity. This paved the way for further cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region, which not only included entire countries, but also the coastline regions of Germany, Poland and north-western Russia. For these countries Baltic Sea region matters were often a significantly more important on a regional level than on a national level.

## **Different Approaches: Norden, Northern Dimension, Council of the Baltic Sea States and the European Union**

There are a number of political organisations that are governing policies and interest related to the Baltic Sea Region and in many ways they reflect the particularities of this region, a

macro-region where micro-regions, regional organisations and interests collide. The Baltic Sea Region specifically, and the European North more generally, is home to multiple region-building attempts based on a number of narratives –thus, creating complex and multi-faceted identities.

One of those region-building projects is Norden, also known as the Nordic Council, a geo-political inter-parliamentary forum for co-operation between the Nordic countries founded by Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Norway in 1952. Finland joined in 1955. A common labour market, a passport union, and the establishment of the Nordic Council of Ministers followed. Norden was built on the idea of Nordicity, a degree of northernness that united all five Nordic countries (and their connected autonomous regions) alongside a shared history and many common cultural traits as well as a similar culture, often also understood to present a case of Nordic exceptionalism. Especially during the Cold War the label or brand Nordic became a synonym for their distinct approach in international and economic affairs.<sup>5</sup>

Further South, West Germany was one of the founding members of the European Economic Community - a predecessor of the contemporary EU with the aim of establishing a common European market. The organisation grew quickly in size. In the 1970s, both Denmark and Norway asked to join but Norway's population rejected EU membership twice in a popular referendum. In 1989, the Berlin wall fell and in 1991 the Soviet Union came to an end. This also brought the East, West and North division in the Baltic Sea Region to an end. No longer having to fear the looming Soviet threats, Finland joined the European Union, formally established in 1993, in 1995 – Sweden also joined in 1995.

The fall of the Soviet Union, and the end of the

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<sup>5</sup>Browning, Christopher S. (2007) "Branding Nordicity. Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism" *Cooperation and Conflict*, 42:1, pp. 27-51

Cold War brought the Baltic Sea Region closer together in many ways. The concepts of Nordicity<sup>6</sup> as well as the concept of Eastern Europe<sup>7</sup> begun to look somewhat obsolete, especially when it became clear that the Baltic States and Poland were soon to join the EU and NATO. Europe was moving closer together.

In 1992, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) was founded by all foreign ministers of the Baltic Sea Region. CBSS has twelve member states: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Russia and the European Commission. It can in many ways be seen as an immediate reaction to the geopolitical changes at the end of the Cold War – it was an important step towards more region building and greater cooperation within the Baltic Sea area. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, at that time the German foreign minister, and his Danish counterpart Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, were the main drivers behind this project. CBSS is a flexible organisation, overseeing overall co-ordination of intergovernmental cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Its nature has changed somewhat over the years, moving from earlier efforts to ensure democratisation throughout the region to their own more concrete projects, such as a task force against Trafficking in Human Beings. Moreover, it assumes an important position as one of the horizontal action partners within the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Russia, however, still remained a great challenge for the future of the Baltic Sea Region. Although somewhat weakened by the domestic economic and political chaos of the 1990s, it still remained a powerful player in geopolitics. Russia is a vast country that stretches across an entire continent, and only has a comparatively small share of the

Baltic coastline – yet, many sensed that nothing would move without Russia.

However, this is also the weakest building block within building a Baltic Sea Region identity – Russia is not a Nordic country and it is still in many ways Europe's 'Other'. Finland was particularly keen on 'normalising' its relationship with Russia. Once part of the Russian tsarist empire as a Grand Duchy from 1809-1917, it also felt much Soviet pressure from the early years of its independence until the late 1970s. Nevertheless, contemporary Russia also had the potential of becoming one of Finland's trading partners. Thus, Finland was also a particularly strong advocate for the Northern Dimension (ND) initiative, which was originally initiated by the Finnish foreign ministry in 1997, before it was launched as an initiative between the EU and its partner states Iceland, Norway and Russia. Although the member states of the ND are almost identical to the ones in CBSS, its approach is different. The idea is to strengthen horizontal cooperation among



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6Waever, Ole (1992) "Nordic Nostalgia: Northern Europe after the Cold War" *International Affairs*, Vol 68:1, pp.77-102

7Applebaum, Anne (2013) Does Eastern Europe still exist? <http://www.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=1821>

the various political, economic and social actors within the neighbourhood of Northern Europe. By promoting ND as a kind of Northern European neighbourhood, Russia is not marginalised as a partner on the periphery of the European projects but rather all ND members can be seen as equal neighbours. The Northern Dimension was renewed in 2006, with the intention of providing a framework to promote dialogue and concrete cooperation, to strengthen economic cooperation, well-being and stability and moreover, to promote economic integration, competitiveness and sustainable development in Northern Europe. This renewed co-operation was launched at the EU-Russia Summit in Helsinki in 2006 - succumbing the Northern Dimension effectively to wider European policy strategies and thus, somewhat weakening its original purpose. The Northern Dimension differs from the other region-building attempts discussed here. It can be viewed as an attempt of a region-building dialogue - and less as a region-building strategy that carries specific consequences for the construction political space and identity.

The most recent and perhaps most influential region-building initiative that was specifically targeted towards the Baltic Sea Region is the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) launched in 2009 in order to increase the levels of environmental sustainability, prosperity, accessibility and attractiveness and safety and security within the Baltic Sea Region. EUSBSR will be discussed below in greater detail.

This exemplifies that the European Union is playing an important part in all region building initiatives within the Baltic Sea Region – either as a cooperation partner or as a concrete initiator of policies that require the help of the other initiatives and institutions. Furthermore, this has

repercussions on the construction of identities within the Baltic Sea Region. Any concrete Baltic Sea Region identity that exists is first and foremost, with the exception of Russia, a kind of European identity somehow connected to past and current state and region-building project. Not only is this identity European but more specifically it is Northern European, North-Eastern European or Nordic. The result of a multi-faceted region building approach that comes with various names could create a multitude of multi-layered identities. To some extent all region-building projects in Northern Europe will have contributed to the identity construction project.

## **EUSBSR – The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**

EUSBSR was the first strategy of its kind in Europe, specifically designed to aide cooperation within this macro-region in order to face several challenges by working together as well as promoting a more balanced development in the area.<sup>8</sup> The Strategy also contributes to major EU policies and reinforces policy integration within the area.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the idea was to bring together different actors from different sectors in order to ensure cooperation between all stakeholders and advance region-building, and in turn identity creation, within the region. The strategy was specifically created in a way to ensure full active participation of all stakeholders for a successful implementation. The strategy was first approved in 2009 and it will end its current programme in 2013 - only to be continued with a slightly different organizational structure from 2014 to 2020. The strategy promotes projects that have a macro-

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<sup>8</sup> Following the introduction of EUSBSR the EU launched a macro-regional strategy for the Danube Region in 2011 <http://www.danube-region.eu>

<sup>9</sup> For further information: EUSBSR <http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu>



regional impact and joint initiatives involving partnership from different countries.

In its current form the EUSBSR programme has organized its projects around 4 pillars, which represent the priority areas of the strategy. These are: Fostering innovation, internal and external accessibility, Baltic Sea as a common resource and attractive and competitive cities and regions. From 2007 to 2013, 42 different projects were grouped under these four pillars, all featuring several different partners representing different stakeholders – thus, making all projects examples of cross-regional cooperation, not only in their proposed outcome but also in their organizational set up.

From 2014 onwards the EUSBSR will organise its priority areas around three main objectives: save the sea, connecting the region and increasing prosperity.

In addition to the priority areas EUSBSR is also structured around 5 horizontal actions:

Spatial - encouraging the use of Maritime and Land-based Spatial Planning in all Member States around the Baltic Sea and develop a common approach for cross-border cooperation, Neighbours - to increase the co-operation with neighbouring countries to tackle joint challenges in the Baltic Sea region, Involve - strengthening multi-level governance including involving civil society, business and academia, as well as Sustainable - sustainable development and bio-economy and Promo - boosting joint promotion and regional identity building actions.

These Horizontal Actions operate in parallel with the Priority Areas and take a crosscutting approach on objectives, sub-objectives, priority areas, horizontal actions and flagship projects. Examples include boosting joint place promotion and regional identity building actions. The Horizontal Actions are meant to complement the objectives and Priority Areas.

## **EUSBSR – Creating a Baltic Sea Region Identity?**

The EUSBSR is the first example within Europe of a concrete strategy that has been developed in order to engage in a very concrete macro-region building and thus, also helping to foster a common macro-regional identity. As already stated above, all projects within the EUSBSR reach across the entire macro-region, not only in their intended goals but also in their organisational set-up. This crucial bit of information may be known to all project partners involved – yet, different initiatives within the Horizontal Actions may be required in order to communicate purpose and results of these projects to the public.

Within the EUSBSR there are a number of projects that are specifically concerned with identity building. As the most targeted examples, ONE BSR or its predecessor BaltMed Promo, both projects are specifically concerned with building a regional identity by creating promotional Baltic Sea pilot products for tourists, talents and investors.<sup>10</sup> In the case of ONE BSR one part of the project explicitly focuses on branding and identity building. Both of these projects were grouped under the priority area attractive and competitive cities and regions.

Yet, in many aspects other projects also contribute to identity building and construction – although they may not appear to do so obviously. These are specifically projects that take into account the Baltic Sea Region's geography. Geography can be one of the defining factors of identity and in the case of the Baltic Sea Region, the Baltic Sea itself. All projects targeted towards saving one of Europe's most polluted waters could in this context be seen also as a central component to creating, and more so maintaining an identity within the region. Projects like AQUAFIMA, an attempt to integrate aquaculture and fisheries

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10 For more see <http://www.baltmet.org/baltmet-promo> and <http://onebsr.eu/>

management towards a sustainable regional development, or PURE, a project on the urban reduction of eutrophication to improve the state of the Baltic Sea, can also function as a building block within the construction of a shared Baltic Sea Region identity.<sup>11</sup>

Another area of importance is transport and the improvement of infrastructure. The people of the Baltic Sea Region need to feel connected, and geography in itself might not be sufficient - therefore, a good transport infrastructure and improved connections are needed to help strengthen the we-feeling of the inhabitants of the macro-region. The Rail Baltica Growth Corridor (RBGC) is an important infrastructure improvement project alongside the European priority Rail Baltica as part of Trans-European Transport Networks.<sup>12</sup> Once the Rail Baltica project will finally be realised it will provide a long needed transport link between Finland, the



Baltic States, Poland and the rest of continental Europe.<sup>13</sup> The creation of Rail Baltica will provide new possibilities of economic growth in the region and RBGC will help fostering additional cooperation. Not only rail connections, also improved accessibility of the Baltic Sea Region by air transport, will promote region and identity building. The transnational partnership of BALTIC BIRD aims to improve airside accessibility of

peripheral Baltic Sea Regions, leading to greater economic and social integration and cohesion, as well as to improve regional development in terms of economic growth and ecological sustainability.<sup>14</sup> Accessibility and connectivity are of even greater significance to those living in the peripheral areas of the Baltic Sea Region, such as North Karelia in Eastern Finland, where an improved transport infrastructure could create gateways to the macro-region as a whole. A project like BALTIC BIRD does not merely aim to improve transport infrastructure, it also actively helps to brand peripheral parts of the Baltic Sea Region for purposes of tourism and investment. Place and region branding is, thus, another area that is linked to identity construction in the Baltic Sea Region, which has also become an essential component within EUSBSR.

## ONE BSR

ONE BSR, the One Baltic Sea Region project, aims to boost the competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region. The project's goal is to use the inspiring diversity of the region as part of a broader marketing strategy – for foreign investors, tourists and locals alike. It is also one of the most important projects to analyse when examining the identity-building component of the EUSBSR. The project consists of several work packages. One work package of the project is specifically concerned with attracting more foreign investment to the region. The underlying idea is to generate concrete collaboration projects between national and regional investment promotion agencies (IPAs). This is achieved through a number of thematic meetings that are hosted in different Baltic Sea Region cities in which regional and national IPAs are invited to participate.

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11 <http://www.aquafima.eu/en/> and <http://www.purebalticsea.eu>

12 <http://www.rbgc.eu/frontpage.html>

13 For more information about Rail Baltica <http://www.rail-baltica.com/pub/>

14 <http://www.baltic-bird.eu/index.php>

Another feature of the ONE BSR project is specifically focused on talent attraction and talent retention. Best practices, of how talent retention in the Baltic Sea Region can be achieved, are developed. In this context, optimisation of the triple helix cooperation is the project's main objective, to facilitate better policy-making processes and to provide tools that will make cities, development agencies, businesses, universities and ministries to work better together.

Furthermore, tourism features high on the agenda as part of ONE BSR. What can be done to make the Baltic Sea Region an even more attractive tourist destination? As part of a pilot project the Baltic Sea Region is packaged as an interesting round trip destination for the Japanese and American tourism market.

The last work package within ONE BSR focuses specifically on the locals, the inhabitants of the Baltic Sea Region. Out of all EUSBSR projects this specific work package focuses entirely on the identity building dialogue within the Baltic Sea Region. It was recognised that despite the significant amount of work on identity building that was accomplished, as part of BaltMet Promo much had remained empty talk. The failure of past identity building attempts within the EUSBSR was attributed to the lack of communication with the wider public and the lack of active engagements with the region's citizens. ONE BSR has therefore launched two initiatives that are aimed at engaging better with the region's population: Firstly, newsWave ([www.newswave.eu](http://www.newswave.eu)) an online news portal that gives a daily overview of the latest news and views within the European macro-region and secondly, the ONE BSR Bloggers. The ONE BSR Bloggers are Baltic Sea Region locals who blog about their daily life and their experiences around the Baltic Sea. With a heavy emphasis on social

media, this particular work package is perhaps best suited to promote the identity building dialogue within the region – although all other work packages also engage also in region- and identity building efforts.

## Region Branding

As previously mentioned, as part of BaltMet Promo, a report was published by the Baltic Development Forum that analysed place branding and place promotion efforts within the Baltic Sea Region.<sup>15</sup> It was established that the Baltic Sea Region needed a brand story that was at the same time credible and inspiring. At the same time the brand story was required to be promoted by all stakeholders and a clear communication strategy, which was supported by all stakeholders, was the precondition for the success of such a brand story. The report surveyed a large number of activities, networks, organisations and projects that contributed to marketing and branding the Baltic Sea Region. It came to conclusion that the diversity within the region had so far hindered a jointly identified set of priority areas that would help to promote a shared and clearly focused image of the region to the outside world. The BSR Stars programme, a flagship within the EUSBSR that aims at strengthening competitiveness and economic growth through innovation.<sup>16</sup> BSR Stars is guided by the long-term vision of branding the Baltic Sea Region as an internationally competitive region, which can turn its great diversity into a competitive advantage by highlighting each country's individual strengths that complement each other. Region branding is by no means identical with identity building – yet, they face similar challenges when they seek a common voice in a region that is to a large extent characterised by

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<sup>15</sup> Andersson, Marcus (2010) Place Branding and Place Promotion Efforts in the Baltic Sea Region – A Situation Analysis, Baltic Development Forum, Copenhagen

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bsrstars.se>

its diversity. The Baltic Development Forum, since its creation in 1999, has attempted to brand the region as “The Top of Europe” through its annual summits and publications, most notably the annual State of the Region Report. It functions as an independent networking organisation for business, governments, regional organisations, academia and the media to discuss and collaborate on issues of regional importance. As previously region branding does not equal identity construction – however, a region that succeeds to establish a brand that reaches beyond a set of ideas, norms and practices will stimulate the construction of a mutual identity. Not only public bodies and intergovernmental institutions, but also non-governmental organisations will be able to further region branding and identity building in this context.

## Horizontal Action: Balticlab

Balticlab is a flagship project under Horizontal Action (HA) Neighbours of the EUSBSR, which seeks to increase the co-operation with neighbouring countries to tackle joint challenges in the Baltic Sea region.<sup>17</sup> HA Neighbours is one of the latest examples of concrete region building within the EUSBSR. It was created in 2013 to bring stakeholders in the EU member states and neighbouring countries, especially the North Western territories of the Russian Federation as well as Norway, together “in a constructive, mutually advantageous manner”<sup>18</sup>.

Balticlab is a new concept that was created by the Swedish Institute and CBSS to support and employ young entrepreneurs, and those involved in creative industries, to increase exports, revive national branding and economic growth in the Baltic Sea Region countries. Before the creation of Balticlab there was a lack of networks that would allow bringing young entrepreneurs and

professionals from creative industries together. Balticlab provides a platform for people to work together on a regional basis, providing them with tools and perspectives that are needed to manage macro-regional cross-border collaborations in areas related to the participants own interests, but linked to the EUSBSR. Overall, Balticlab hopes to facilitate a link between policy makers and policy enactors and those advocating and seeking change and innovation. The first generation of ‘Balticlabers’ came from Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden and the project proved hugely successful that a bigger follow-up project was designed that will also include individuals from Latvia and Estonia. Balticlab 2.0 will be bigger in size but thematically more focused. By engaging young, creative and entrepreneurial citizens from a number of Baltic Sea Region countries and making them part of a shared network, Balticlab contributes actively to identity building efforts within the Baltic Sea Region and creates a we-feeling among its participants. Since the project is also reaching out to Russia, it creates a feeling of a shared identity that is not exclusively limited to the EU member countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

## Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that region building and identity construction in the Baltic Sea Region can be seen as closely linked. This is the outcome of a number of different region-building projects of which the youngest one, EUSBSR, can be seen as the most successful one. Nevertheless, any successful identity construction that has taken place within the Baltic Sea Region must be seen as inevitably linked to the bigger European project. The EUSBSR can be seen as an initiative that has not only helped to concretise region building efforts within the macro-region but also as something that furthers the building of a common

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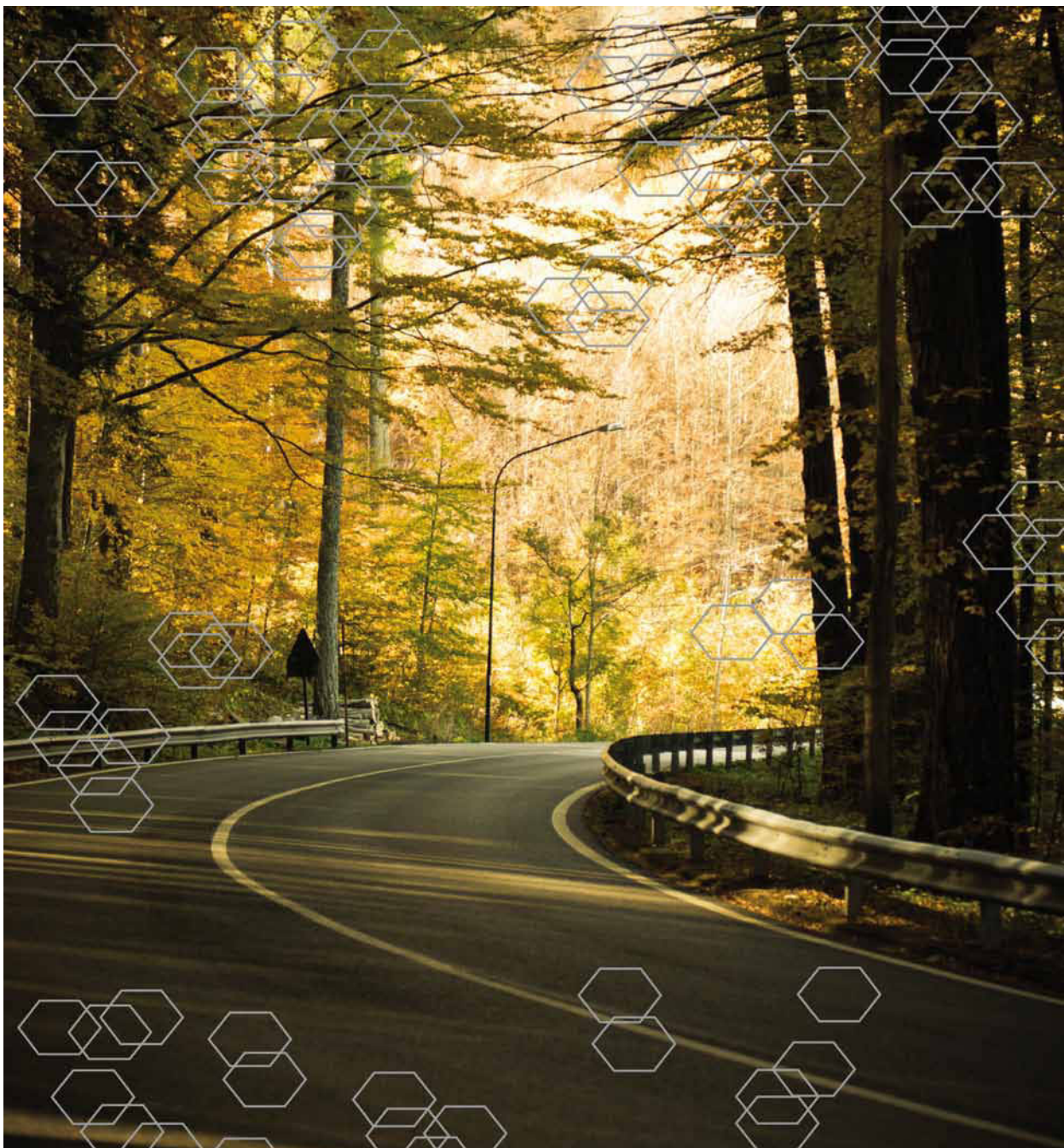
17 <http://balticlab-online.eu/>

18 <http://groupspaces.com/eusbsr-neighbours>



identity. Although the construction of a common identity remains a project to be fully complete, the projects that are promoted within the Strategy are vital stepping-stones to successful identity building. However, it can also be observed that not all projects are in practice equally suited to foster identity building in the region. Communication of concepts, ideas and project outcomes to a wider audience as well as active engagement with locals in the Baltic Sea Region are essential components for successful identity building – otherwise many

concepts will remain empty words. Based on these conclusions, ONE BSR and Balticlab could be seen as extremely important examples of projects that aspire identity building outside the field of high politics and show much needed engagement with the public. Both projects should be considered as an inspiration for all future identity-building efforts within the Baltic Sea Region. Moreover, innovation as a driver for a common feature for the macro-region and intelligent region branding can help fuelling this process.



# Contributors

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